



Konrad  
Adenauer  
Stiftung

# Culture Dialogue and Civil Consciousness

Religious dimension of the  
intercultural education

Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development

Konrad Adenauer Foundation

# **CULTURE DIALOGUE AND CIVIL CONSCIOUSNESS**

Religious dimension of the  
intercultural education



**Tbilisi  
2010**

*Culture Dialogue and Civil Consciousness: Religious dimension of the intercultural education*

Civil integration in the multiethnic and multireligious environment is one of the key focuses of Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development (CIPDD). Two international conferences held on the July 4-5 and December 22, 2009 were dedicated to this issue. CIPDD is grateful to Church Development Service (EED-Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst) and South Caucasus office of Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAS-Konrad Adenauer Stiftung) for their financial support. Their input was crucial to organize the conference on intercultural education and its role in developing civil consciousness.

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# INTRODUCTION

Cultural diversity is a standard characteristic of contemporary society. "Standard" does not necessarily mean "desirable". It refers to the situation where contemporary person is doomed to live in the environment of neighbors having different skin color, speaking different language or with different accent, praising different God (or none). Cultural differences may become the reason of alienation and distrust between people, though the ideal for contemporary society is cultural diversity to be a treasure to celebrate and be proud of, rather than a problem to overcome.

In Georgia we love saying that ethnic and religious diversity is our historic feature and it never was a source of a problem. There is a truth in it but also false self-appeasement. Problems related to cultural diversity have different connotation in contemporary "modern" society. Issues that were less important during middle ages – or even totalitarian Soviet communism, providing peculiar mixture of modern and traditional-feudal structures and thoughts – are becoming problematic for contemporary societies, where the level of communication and interdependence between people is significantly raising. This is more relevant for democracies, as the vote of a person whose

language you do not speak and whose God you do not praise, can decide who will be your president.

Cultural diversity requires development of an adequate policy and education policy is one of the major aspects of it. On the one hand, it should imply respect of different ethnic and religious groups, while, on the other hand, provide equal opportunities for success to everyone despite their origin and beliefs in a given society. To combine these goals is not easy. Many countries, even those with better established liberal values and democratic institutions than us, face difficulties.

All contemporary societies are multicultural, but each of them is differently multicultural. Therefore we should study other experiences, but find our own solutions and be aware, that they will always be arguable. Argumentation will last long and no recipe will solve problems "once and for all".

This book presents results of discussions organized by Caucasus Institute for Peace, Democracy and Development and Konrad Adenauer Foundation. It shows that our discussion over these issues is becoming more professional and concrete. It also increases the possibility that county policy as well as society's attitude toward cultural diversity will become more sound and adequate.

Ghia Nodia

# WELCOME SPEECH BY

HEAD OF THE REGIONAL OFFICE FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE IN THE  
SOUTH CAUCASUS OF THE KONRAD – ADENAUER – FOUNDATION

*Katja Cristina Plate*

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to welcome you as guests on behalf of Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation to our joint conference with CIPDD on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education.

We are all aware of the importance of Intercultural Education to secure peace. The countries around the Black Sea area are facing special challenges. In this regard being a traditionally multiethnic society or at least living in a multiethnic society with considerable minorities, we are today focusing on the broader subject of religious dimensions.

In the region around the Black Sea we can find outstanding examples that Christians, Muslims and Jewish populations are living over centuries in a peaceful coexistence. It is our joint task to ensure, that this coexistence remains peaceful for all the following centuries.

As Resident Representative of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation to the South Caucasus, I am especially delighted that issues of Intercultural Education gain such a big attention.



Our Foundation is bearing the Name of Konrad Adenauer, the first chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany. We are committed to the Conservative-Christian Democratic way of thinking, to Christian core values and ideas that drove the chancellor. Our Foundation was founded in Germany. Since 1955, we are worldwide partners in the promotion of Peace, Freedom, the Rule of Law, the implementation and protection of Democracy. Furthermore we foster the European idea and the idea of the Social Market Economy. Everyday, in over 120 countries around the world, we are standing up for these values.

As we are committed to the German Conservative-Christian Democratic political way of thinking, the concerns of churches and religious communities are of special interest and importance for us.

The Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation is – for example – supporting the dialogue between the German Christian Democrat Union and Jewish Communities; we are actively engaged in the dialogue with the Muslim communities in Germany, in Europe and Worldwide; the joint initiatives with the Christian Churches are countless. One of the latest events was the foundation of a working group on social ethics with the representatives of the Orthodox Church from South-eastern Europe. Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation is also actively supporting the dialogue between the Orthodox Churches in Europe and the European Peoples Party, the umbrella-party of the European Christian democratic parties.

Discussing the Religious dimension of intercultural education therefore is a very important issue for Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation and me personally.

Therefore the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation owes gratitude to CIPDD namely to Ghia Nodia and Sopho Zviadadse for their great intellectual and organizational contributions without which this conference would not be possible.

Now, I am really looking forward to the presentations you have prepared. I wish us all a fruitful and interesting conference.

Thank you

# FACING COMMON CHALLENGES

CENTRE FOR DEMOCRATIC DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CULTURE, KYIV,  
UKRAINE

*Olexandr Butsenko*

*Intercultural dialogue is a necessity for our times. In an increasingly diverse and insecure world, we need to talk across ethnic, religious, linguistic and national dividing lines...*

White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue<sup>1</sup>

The modern Lithuanian philosopher, historian of ideas and a deputy of the European Parliament, Leonidas Donskis, has introduced in his recent book a term of "troubled identity". The book published in 2009 is entitled *Troubled Identity and the Modern World*, and the author indicates that "no other identity exists in the modern world. The shifting identity is always troubled, and the troubled identity is always shifting"<sup>2</sup>. We live in the shifting world, and our personality reflects all changes, uncertainties and contradictions of our time. The speed of these transformations grows each year with the development of new technologies and means of

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<sup>1</sup> White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. "Living together as equals in dignity". Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008. P.3

<sup>2</sup> Leonidas Donskis. *Troubled Identity and the Modern World*. PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, NY, 2009. P. 10

communication. However, the centuries-old confrontation between tradition and modernity is lasting. We can meet global trends and brands in every supermarket in any small town but at the same time “over the past century, the number of nation states has quadrupled to almost 200, creating more borders to cross”, as it is stated in 2009 HDR.<sup>3</sup>

Present European values we can see as “a very intense dialogue between tradition and modernity”<sup>4</sup> which shape the modern collective identity. And if there is a European identity to be realized, one can read in the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*, it will be based on shared fundamental values, respect for common heritage and cultural diversity as well as respect for the equal dignity of every individual<sup>5</sup>.

So, speaking on cultural identity it’s impossible to imagine it as or to squeeze it into a single culture. Almost each individual in our world is to some extent in contact with several cultures even in ordinary life, and, of course, in her or his creative self-realization. Persons often make themselves up while acting in several cultures, all of which are involved in a dialogue<sup>6</sup>. For instance, an eminent film director, Sergei Parajanov could be example of the canon as a continuing rediscovery of self in the world of multiple identities and a shared space of cultural identity. He was born into Armenian family in Tbilisi and spent much time in Ukraine and Georgia, finally settling in Armenia. He spoke several languages, and all of these countries regard him as having been one of their own.

Other striking example could be an American social psychologist Edgar Schein. His father was a Hungarian living in the part of Slovakia that later merged into Czechoslovakia and was a Czech citizen and obtained a Ph.D. at the University of Zurich in experimental physics. His mother, the only daughter of a German civil engineer from Saxony, was also interested in Physics and ended up at the University of Zurich where they

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<sup>3</sup> Human Development Report 2009. Overcoming barriers: human mobility and development. UNDP, NY, 2009. [hdr.undp.org](http://hdr.undp.org), P.2

<sup>4</sup> Leonidas Donskis. *Troubled Identity and the Modern World*. PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, NY, 2009. P. 17

<sup>5</sup> *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*. “Living together as equals in dignity”. Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008. P.3

<sup>6</sup> Leonidas Donskis. *Troubled Identity and the Modern World*. Palgrave MacMillan, NY, 2009. P. 19

met, fell in love and got married in 1927. E.Schein was born there in 1928 and spent six years in Zurich, then in Odessa where his father run an institute from 1934 to 1936. The next destination stations in the scientist's life were Prague, Chicago and the whole world<sup>7</sup>.

This story shows a person who has established himself as a creative scientist due to the basic and permanent dialogue of different cultures and languages presented in his inner world. What is true for individuals is, obviously, true for communities and nations. Intercultural dialogue is therefore important in managing multiple cultural affiliations in a multicultural environment. It is a mechanism to constantly achieve a new identity balance, responding to new openings and experiences and adding new layers to identity without relinquishing one's roots. Intercultural dialogue helps us to avoid the pitfalls of identity policies and to remain open to the challenges of modern societies<sup>8</sup>.

Historically, Ukraine is a multiethnic state. According to the last census (2001), representatives of 133 nationalities are residing here. The interrelations between them reflect the Ukrainian social milieu formed during the past century as well as a public policy which has inherited main features of former approaches. Political and economic events, wars, interrelations with neighboring countries and powers, ruling policies – these and many other factors shaped the ethnic composition of the population<sup>9</sup>.

After 1989, and particularly after 1991 declaration of the independence, the composition of Ukrainian population suffered radical changes resulting from: 1) the return of the deported nations and minorities as well as a part of the Ukrainian diaspora; 2) the repatriation of various nations; 3) the search-of-a-job migration of Ukrainian citizens irrespective of their nationality; 4) the migration from East to West with Ukraine

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<sup>7</sup> Management Laureates, Vol. 3, Edgar Schein, *The Academic As Artist: Personal And Professional Roots*, Arthur G. Bedeian, Ed., 1993, with permission from Elsevier Science. Website: <http://www.jaipress.com>

<sup>8</sup> White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. "Living together as equals in dignity". Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008. P.17

<sup>9</sup> Olexandr Butsenko. *Transversal Study: Cultural Policy and Cultural Diversity*. National Report. Council of Europe. DGIV/CULT/POL/trans (2003) 7, Strasbourg, 2004. P. 7

as a staging post; 5) the migration from former Soviet republics to Ukraine: new diasporic minorities; 6) the migration to Ukraine from eastern countries under the war or in crisis; 7) the internal migration – to the capital or industrial centers, to towns from rural areas. In other words, Ukraine has faced challenges common to different countries in Western, Central and Eastern Europe, all challenges of new epoch related to migration processes, globalization, economic and social transformation. It means that old approaches to the management of cultural diversity are no longer adequate, as it is stressed in the *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*.

The term “Intercultural dialogue” was introduced by the Council of Europe in 1980-s in the field of social work aiming at the citizens involvement into policy making process. By the end of 1990-s and the beginning of 2000-s, after critical expansion of the Council of Europe membership, the issue of intercultural dialogue became one of the pivotal in the new European discourse because of the increasingly pressing question of the ‘meeting of cultures’, provoked both by the movement of people and by the increasingly porous nature of our national identities. We are living through an osmosis of cultures facilitated by travel, technology and the interconnectedness of our contemporary economies and cultures<sup>10</sup>. Intercultural policies and intergroup relations are getting more and more important at the European policy level. The Year for Intercultural Dialogue, 2008, was the logical outcome of modern European aspirations. The Year aims to promote Intercultural Dialogue and to raise general awareness of the importance of developing an ‘active European citizenship’. The European Commission declared the year 2008 as the “Year of Intercultural Dialogue” and supported many European, national and local initiatives to improve and promote the awareness and intercultural relations throughout Europe. Ukraine joined the all-European initiative although with some delay, and in spring of 2008 the Presidential Edict on the Intercultural Dialogue was issued. The inspiring Action Plan was adopted by the Government. But consequently the Year has passed without visible changes in existing approaches and policies, and development reports described ordinary programmes and events – festivals, concerts, forums, exhibitions, etc. – which had been

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<sup>10</sup> Exploring Intercultural Dialogue. <http://www.cultureactioneurope.org/lang-en/think/intercultural-dialogue>

repeated for years, but this time – under the title of Intercultural Dialogue. Perhaps, the main reason of such situation was unawareness and even more – ignorance of new ideas, as well as inability to fit existing positive experience in a new framework. For example, when European experts came firstly to the city of Melitopol they were amazed with conflict-free culturally intertwined multinational society. It is naturally to meet in the local city council, among teachers, medics, and local leaders people with different ethnic, cultural and religious background. When European experts asked local people to share their secret it was their turn to be surprised. Paraphrasing the Socrates' thesis that each man is a bearer of enormous knowledge and skills without suspecting it, we can say that each community has its secret which could be discovered with the help of leading questions or right questions. To do it, it is necessary to use understandable and commonly adopted terms and definitions.

There is no accepted definition for Intercultural Dialogue. The term is an adaptation from other terms, all of which remain current, such as multiculturalism, social cohesion and assimilation. The best formulation at the moment is perhaps the terminology used by the Council of Europe in its White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, which states:

‘Intercultural Dialogue is understood as an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage’<sup>11</sup>.

Intercultural Dialogue is increasingly seen as one of the ways to promote mutual understanding, better living together and an active sense of European citizenship and belonging. Intercultural dialogue can only thrive if certain preconditions are met. To advance intercultural dialogue, the White paper argues, the *democratic governance of cultural diversity* should be adapted in many aspects; *democratic citizenship and participation* should be strengthened; *intercultural competences* should be taught and learned; *spaces for intercultural dialogue* should be created and widened; and *intercultural dialogue* should be taken to the *international level*. These are five policy approaches and recommendation for

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<sup>11</sup> White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. “Living together as equals in dignity”. Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 2008. P.10

policy orientation or, as White paper says, five distinct yet interrelated dimensions to the promotion of intercultural dialogue, which involve the full range of stakeholders<sup>12</sup>. The ambition of the White paper is to provide a framework for the development of policies and practices for diversity management which is in compliance with human rights. The White paper emerged with a massive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders at all levels of governance, policy fields and civil society.

Intercultural dialogue offers a fresh outlook on community integration. In contrast with assimilation which charges exclusively migrants with the burden of integration, and multiculturalism which was light-hearted with regard to integration, interculturality presupposes efforts and compromises on the part of both migrants or newcomers and the host community. What does interculturalism mean in terms of real policies, how governance institutions and services evolve in order to respect its principles – these and other questions the Council of Europe took up in 2008 when it launched, jointly with the European commission, the Intercultural cities programme – a life-size laboratory to develop and test a model for intercultural integration at the local level. Intercultural cities is based on the idea that diversity should not be feared or simply be tolerated but celebrated and positively developed as a source of dynamism, creativity and growth. The original concept of the “Intercultural City” was developed by British think-tank Comedia (including the ideas of “intercultural lens”, the “10 steps to an intercultural city analytical grid” and “indicators of interculturalism”).

Why exactly city communities were chosen? As the working group of United Cities and Local Governments stresses in a recent document developing the idea of Agenda 21 for Culture, “Cities cannot defend teleological discourses on the “cultural identity” of their citizens, as nation-states do (or used to do). Cities have always been the point of destination of immigrants, who, after a few years, become inhabitants and citizens. The identity of cities is obviously dynamic: it has always balanced the expression of traditional cultures with the creation of new cultural forms”<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. P. 25

<sup>13</sup> Culture and sustainable development: examples of institutional innovation and proposal of a new cultural policy profile. United Cities and Local Governments, 2009. <http://www.citieslocalgovernments.org> and <http://www.agenda21culture.net>

It is true even for cities in so-called homogeneous or closed country like Japan. Yasuyuki Kitawaki, a Director and Professor of the Center for Multilingual Multicultural Education and Research, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, former mayor of Hamamatsu city from 1997 to 2007, initiated in 2001 the establishment of the Committee for Localities with a Concentrated Population of Foreigners. At the beginning, 13 cities experiencing common problems caused by a sudden increase of new-comer foreigners constituted this Committee, now their number reached 25 cities. In 2001, they adopted so called Hamamatsu Declaration which called for "the establishment of a truly symbiotic society based on the respect of rights and fulfillment of duties that are mandatory for healthy urban life, amid deepening of mutual understanding, and respect for each other's cultures and values between Japanese and foreign residents". It refers to an integration policy concept, which aspires to establish a new society consisting of both indigenous people and foreigners, and also to the multicultural notion of mutual understanding and respect for each other's cultures. Therefore, the Hamamatsu Declaration can be understood as the announcement of the municipalities' intention to promote a "multicultural social integration policy". This November the meeting between European Intercultural cities network and Japanese multicultural localities was carried out in Japan. Japanese experts proposed at this meeting, a term *tabunka-kyôsei* (multicultural symbiosis). *Tabunka-kyôsei* shares with the intercultural-city approach the notion of diversity as a source of dynamism, innovation, creativity, and growth. As you know, symbiosis means the integration of two or more organisms in a mutually beneficial union. Symbiosis means the ability of a system to absorb various kinds of disruption and stress and to continue developing after an abrupt change. In the case of an ecosystem, such as a forest, this may involve coping with a storm, for instance, or a fire, or pollution. And in the case of a human society, it may be about coping with political unrest, economic or a natural disaster.

The city of Melitopol is a typical Ukrainian city of South-Eastern Ukraine with highly diverse population: per 157 thou inhabitants about 100 nationalities. After joining Intercultural cities programme, Melitopol started to rediscover its resources and assets, to reshape its strategy and to make re-branding (Honey City, European Intercultural City). As many other Ukrainian cities, last two decades Melitopol faced the challenges to revise development plans, resources and even the city



brand. By the end of 20-th c. the city was know as an industrial and agriculture center with large and small enterprises creating local welfare. During last years most of them ceased or reduced drastically their activities. The city should find out new ways and resources for its renovation. The city multinational nature and its intrinsic "secret" of peaceful and fruitful coexistence of different nationalities appeared one of the most important resource. As a result, it led to the participation in the Intercultural Cities Programme. The local team has published the calendar "Year for Intercultural Dialogue" and a booklet "We are Melitopol", also they created a special web-site.

As Sofya Averchenkova, a Council of Europe expert, underlined after visiting Melitopol, "Considerable work has been done in the city organizations that receive public support. Under support of local authorities there were established 20 nation-cultural communities in the city that are united into the Association of Melitopol nation-cultural communities headed by the mayor. The local authorities contributed to the creation of favorable conditions for national minorities' free advance, for the development of their ethnic cultures, religious originality. The most active communities and the Association of national communities have taken appropriate rooms on long lease absolutely free. All national minorities have equal political, economic, social, spiritual and cultural rights. During the two-day study visit, literally every person we met mentioned, that „Melitopol is an intercultural city where more than 100 nationalities live together in peace". Such unanimity and the genuine pride they take in this new brand are very important"<sup>14</sup>. But in the most cases there is no yet clear understanding what do intercultural policies mean in reality and how is it possible to measure their impact on various fields of everyday life. S. Averchenkova is right indicating that "Even among those who are directly involved in the project there are few people who perceive the difference between the intercultural approach and the Soviet theory of national convergence. As a result, the intercultural agenda has been reduced mostly to cooperation between the city government and national cultural societies and to events providing for the latter a space to showcase their creativity"<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Sofya Averchenkova. Intercultural Cities Programme Analytical Grid for the City of Melitopol, Ukraine. June, 2009

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

The local Laboratory of sociological studies, a scientific department of Melitopol State Khmelnytsky Pedagogical University, realized in 2009 a survey of Melitopol inhabitants ***Peculiarities of local population ethnic self-awareness***. According to the survey, 22% of respondents were born out of the city in the first generation, 17% – in the second generation. 68,3% arrived from other cities in Ukraine, 31,7% – from other countries. 3,5% newcomers appeared during last 10 years. Such phenomena as the number of intercultural families (64,9%), reflects the city flavor. The culture of inter-ethnic communication is the important indicator of the interculturality. It shows in real relations and attitude to “other” culture and otherness. Generally, 83,3% of respondents are satisfied with relations with other nationalities living by their side (completely satisfied – 32,8%, satisfied – 55,5%, dissatisfied – 7,3%, completely dissatisfied – 1,0%).

The further participation of the city of Melitopol in the Intercultural Cities programme would consist of three main directions: development and realization of flagship projects; training, research and best practice exchange; and development of international network through small and medium-scale joint projects implementation in various fields. At the very beginning, Melitopol (on the basis of workshops and public discussion) made the decision to realize three flagship projects within the frames of new intercultural city policies. They are: intercultural park, intercultural local bus, and intercultural business centre. Now, the local community is on the way to develop the first of mentioned initiatives, this is intercultural park.

The idea of regenerating the city park was on the agenda as well, although at that stage it was not related to the intercultural development – the dream was to turn it into a Disneyland-like theme park. Only when Melitopol joined the programme and was invited to develop flagship projects, did the park issue come to the forefront, as the city decided to opt for infrastructure projects<sup>16</sup>. As the first practical step to develop intercultural park idea was the Future City Game under the license of the British Council organized in May-June 2009 by the City Council, Democracy through Culture Development Centre and the Centre for Urban History of East Central Europe (Lviv). The participants (five teams of 5-6

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

persons of different age, profession, gender and nationality) were invited to generate ideas of how to regenerate the city park and convert it into an intercultural park attractive to Melitopol citizens as well as for tourists passing through the city to Black Sea and Azov Sea shores. The game participants presented their own dreams and opinions of city inhabitants by interrogating them when prepared their designs. Thus, there are now 5 future park visions, which could be used along with city plan as a background for professional park development plan. With this aim, in September 2009, Democracy through Culture Development Centre and Stadslab, a European urban design laboratory (Tilburg, Netherlands), with Council of Europe support, organize the visit to Melitopol of Stadslab director, Marc Glaudemans, to discuss possibilities for organizing designing workshops "Intercultural Park". The next step will be the international master-class in April 2010 the announcement of which has appeared in European media.

Two other programme directions presume:

- the active and regular involvement in ICC activities research university laboratories, which could provide data for decision-making, monitoring and evaluation, maintaining at the same time open public discussion;
- organization of a set of training for media (how to cover conflict issues, intercultural approaches, etc.), city administrators, social workers, law and order officers (conflict resolution, openness, participatory policies), as well as case studies (study tours) examination, scientific conferences and seminars;
- implementation of joint projects and initiatives with other European intercultural communities: artistic exchange, art exhibition and tours, students and school exchange and visits, lectures of policy-makers or experts, public workshops, etc.

All this could be a solid base for a targeted municipal programme "Intercultural Melitopol", which will involve various stakeholders and players in local community using result accountability principles in each component.

Summarizing: the intercultural dialogue and interculturality could be a solid and efficient ground for development policies of local communities elsewhere in the modern world. Such policies should embrace all sphere of community life, first of all, education, social institutes, and culture.

With this aim it's necessary:

- to establish common language and commonly adopted terms defining desired results
- to collect and learn best practices
- to have real achievements with joint projects

# RELIGION, PLURALISM AND ATTITUDES ON THE OTHER\*

UNIVERSITY OF WUERZBURG, GERMANY

*Hans-Georg Ziebertz*

In theological discussions during the last two decades, the question has often been posed and discussed, how the relationships between religions can be conceptualised if these religions operate concurrently with terms such as pre-eminence and uniqueness. In the context of this theologically productive phase, Johannes A. van der Ven and I developed and repeatedly employed a scale with which we measured the attitudes toward the plurality of religions and their worldviews. In the center of the scale are the following models: mono-religious, multi-religious, and inter-religious. Our interest was to measure attitudes of people in terms of how they deal with religious pluralism. In the following I do not argue that these four models represent four different types of theology, but rather that these models represent people's attitudes toward dealing with religious plurality. The context of discovery and the context of application was that of practical theology and religious education, rather than systematic theology. The goal was to explore how people construct their worldview on religious truth in light of the fact that there exists a plurality of claims of truth. We assumed that different positions about the self-consciousness of religions would

have influence on civil attitudes. The devised scale was employed several times. This article documents the empirical findings of the 2002 study in relation to earlier findings in 1994 and places them in a larger socio-cultural context in which I can show, how these perspectives relate to cultural and religious pluralism, xenophobia and the European culture. The models and the concept of the study will be described, followed by a description of the research questions and the empirical results. This article will then conclude with further reflections. Although these reflections depart from the Western European point of view with primarily Catholic and Protestant Christian traditions and an Islamic community of about 4-7 percent in different countries, the problem raised in this paper can easily be transformed to a Christian Orthodox context. The problem included in the theoretical models will be similar in the Orthodox tradition.

## 1 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the following considerations, it cannot and should not be attempted to work out the breadth of the formation of theories regarding problems of religious plurality. The goal is more modest. It regards, in the sense of the formation of an ideal type, the description of three arguments that serve as a platform for an empirical study. A criterion for ideal types is that they can be clearly differentiated from one another, without it being able to be said that doing so (in their ideal-typical form) reflects a reality. One can react more or less positively or negatively to each ideal type so that, empirically speaking, a large variety of attitude patterns are possible for each one. The models of dealing with religious pluralism are described in previous publications.<sup>1</sup> I will not repeat it here; rather, I will summarise the main arguments.

To avoid misunderstandings, I wish to clarify that the *mono model* is no representation of the position of the Catholic Church. First, there is no

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<sup>1</sup> See J.A. Van der Ven – H.-G. Ziebertz (eds.), *Religiöser Pluralismus und Interreligiöses Lernen*, Weinheim/Kampen, Kok Pharos, 1994; *idem.*, *Jugendliche in multikulturellem und multireligiösem Kontext. SchülerInnen zu Modellen interreligiöser Kommunikation – ein deutsch-niederländischer Vergleich*, in *Religionpädagogische Beiträge* 35 (1995) 151-167; *idem.*, *Religionspädagogische Perspektiven zur interreligiösen Bildung*, in H.-G. Ziebertz – W. Simon (eds.), *Bilanz der Religionspädagogik*, Düsseldorf, Patmos, 1995, pp. 259-273.

one position of the church, but a variety of concepts with different nuances. Secondly, if we take into account the theological discussion, the variety of concepts increases. On the other hand, if one were to say to which principle of the presented models Catholic positions refer most, then it would be the mono model. What does this model mean? Proponents of the mono model do not necessarily think that there is only one *religio vera* and that the other religions are completely without justification, wrong or even inferior, imperfect, incomplete or temporary. Perhaps fundamentalist thinking tends toward this. Fundamentalists cling to an exclusive view: there is only one absolute and universal religion – which is their own, and it is through this lens that they interpret their religion. From a fundamentalist perspective, the term mono-religious is a pleonasm, as it presupposes the existence of other religions and one's own as just one among many. From a fundamentalist point of view, this is not possible. It is inherent to the mono model that one should take many different religions into account and consider that they actually communicate with one another. The question then is how is this exchange developed and realised, and should it be? Within the mono model, this is known as the so-called inclusive approach. Behind this view lies the recognition that one should adopt a positive attitude towards members of other religions and approach them with an open mind, because their personal faith may contain stimulating ideas and elements of the Christian faith, even if they are not aware of them. Within the Catholic Church, this concept, fixed in the Second Vatican Council, was an important move forwards from a formerly hard, exclusive approach (*extra ecclesiam nulla salus est*). People outside the Catholic Church and outside Christianity can be redeemed and live in God's mercy. The inclusive thinking takes into consideration the personal faith of the religious individual as a member of a non-Christian religion. This interpretation is often described as soft inclusion and a different emphasis is represented by the idea of hard inclusion. This term, applied to non-Christian religions, does not concern itself so much with individual faith (*fides qua*) as with the systems of faith of these religions (*fides quae*). The motivation, however, is the same. One has to take a positive approach towards the non-Christian religions, because their systems of faith contain certain valuable ideas, elements and components that belong to the core of Christianity, although the Christian aspects of these systems of faith are not recognised as such. The basic idea of the inclusive approach of the mono model recurs in Christology, in the

principle of the incarnation, in which Christ is universally present in everything that is considered valuable in this world. Self-reference is a very important indicator for the operationalisation of the mono model. To be clear, this model is not exclusively a religious one. We also could elaborate the mono principle as mono-cultural, mono-ethnic, etc.

The *multi model* differs in many aspects from the mono model. The principles of the multi model regarding how to deal with religious plurality are equality of religions and their truth claims, comparison of dimensions of different religions, and certain relativism. The reason to take the multi approach into account is that in the literature and in empirical studies, it is said that this thinking is widespread in our modern societies. Theoretically, we can find this concept developed in both psychological and philosophical considerations. Theologically, the multi model is not existent, because theologies (as religiously committed reflections) would not establish a model that is based on a distant relation and a certain degree of relativism. However, the multi model could apply to religious studies, and beyond this, this model can be expected to be empirically existent. From an academic standpoint of reflecting the plurality of religions, the objective of the multi model is not religious truth (as it is in the mono-religious model) but comparison. It aims at neither diligence in the search for the truth nor the search for the real meaning. The actual motive is curiosity and the pursuit of knowledge. The aim is to receive cultural information about religious experiences, feelings and the behavior of believers so as to understand the motivation of religious people to whom one may or may not feel personally attracted. A comparison of this data is made so that an insight into differences between religions may be gained on the one hand, and points of resemblance determined on the other. If we turn to the empirical side and the multi model is represented in attitudes of people, what could this attitude imply, and could religiously affiliated people think so? First, the multi model could represent a general interest in religion(s). Religion is a topic on the public agenda and a topic in cultural-political reflections, as in Huntington's "clash of civilizations." People can be curious to know more about religion(s). This can be valid for both religiously and non-religiously committed people. People can "construct" the relation between religions as equal and relative, because they are like trees whose roots reach down into a common primal ground. They can construct religion(s) as an emotional expression of the



human search for happiness and joy. This is to say that religions are culturally different, but their function is the same. The multi model can be seen as a direct opposite to the mono model.

Thirdly, we establish the *inter model*. The main principles of this model are relation, process, and changing perspectives. Theologically, we can see that within the Catholic tradition there are many contributions to the inter model after Vatican II. In a certain sense, the inter model is a reaction to the mono tradition. In a mono-religious perspective, the encounter with other religions takes place within a framework that corresponds to the views of the Christian religion. The other religion is placed within the limits of Christian concepts. The criteria of this model correspond to the I-perspective of Christian believers. There is little or no attention given to the You-perspective directed at other religions, and little or no attention to coordination between the I and the You. The multi-religious model is based on a neutral It-perspective, thereby distancing itself from the religious involvement of the individual. The question is often raised if there is a neutral, objective It-perspective which does not include an I- and You-perspective. Proponents of this so-called objectivity and abstraction think that this does in fact exist. The inter model interprets the It-perspective as being just as much bound by situation and context as the I- and You-perspectives. Theologically, the inter model wants to overcome the narrowness of the mono model, but takes the aspect of the commitment into account. The inter model wants to overcome the neutrality-approach of the multi model, but takes the aspect of "the other(s)" into account. Thus, the inter model states that there are always I-perspectives and one or many You-perspective(s). The inter model describes a process of interaction aiming for the development of insight and it maintains a concept of truth based on relations and an assumption that humans cannot formulate the last word about truth. Participation in such a process results from one's religious commitment, but of course, motivation also can arise from intellectual interest. Theologically, the inter model implies the pursuit of mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect, but also stands for reflection about oneself and for self-criticism. Religions do not meet in a static way; they have a history and an inner plurality. The requirement for reflection about, and criticism of, the self has to do with the view that one's own religion is also a contextual construct throughout history, which, in retrospect, can even demand partial self-destruction at certain moments.

Again, these three models are conceptualisations of different ways to cope with religious plurality. They reflect neither three distinctive theological schools, nor will they function as boxes in which we can place concrete people. The construction principle is creating ideal-types to which every respondent can answer more or less positively or negatively. For inter-religious learning within religious education that is established in the context of theology, theological reflections about the inner nature of religious approaches cannot be neglected. At the same time, theology is not sufficient. Educational programmes need to include concepts of pedagogy, didactics, sociology, psychology, and anthropology – they need to at least start from the pupils' understanding as it is. An empirical study has been carried out in order to explore this understanding.

## **2 THE CONCEPT OF THE EMPIRICAL STUDY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The following section concerns itself with conveying the outlined models in an empirical research conception. In doing so, it is important to edit these models with an ideal type of focus and to change them into short sentences. This step from conceptualisation to operationalisation marks the way from the theoretical to the empirical level of cognizance.

The data that will be analysed in this article was collected in a 2002 study of 1925 students in the eleventh grade at comprehensive secondary schools.<sup>2</sup> The average age of the respondents was 17. The study was conducted at 53 schools in seven German cities (Augsburg, Würzburg, Dresden, Rostock, Aachen, Dortmund, and Hildesheim). Stratification criteria for the selection of the cities consisted in the characteristic of being a regional center and having a differentiated distribution in terms of denominational membership. The survey was directed toward secondary schools in order to research the opinions of young people who belong to the better-educated portion of society, and who could potentially take over influential positions in the future.

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<sup>2</sup> For an international comparison in 10 European countries see H.-G.Ziebertz/W.Kay (eds.), *Youth in Europe*; Vol 1 (1995), Vol 2 (2006) and Vol 3 2008, Münster (Lit Publisher)

Questionnaires with just fewer than 300 items that contain scales of attitudes toward life and religion were methodically utilised. This article focuses specifically on one scale, in which the above-illustrated models are operationalised. Four items were formulated for each of these models, whereas eight items were used for the mono-religious models, four dealing with soft and four with hard inclusiveness<sup>3</sup>.

The expectation is, firstly, that the trichotomy of the models can be empirically detected, and secondly, that it can be presumed that the respondents see less of a difference between the soft and hard inclusion, but rather that they identify both perspectives as variants of a mode of thinking. We assumed that the multi model differentiates itself from the mono model because it rejects the notion that one religion could be superior to another. Both models could be associated in different ways with religious commitment, in that respondents who are characterised by the mono model report a higher commitment than those characterised by multi model. Theoretically speaking, the reason for this must lie in the fact that, in the multi model, religious distance is not only possible, but can serve as a method, whereas the mono model is inherently commitment-oriented. These two models are the actual antipodes: the assertion of one truth against the relativisation of many truths. The inter model surpasses the two others. Given the commitment that is innate to the inter-religious model, it is not as clearly distinguished from the mono model as it is from the multi model. A dialogue concerning questions of truth must contain an exchange, in which one's own truths must be integrated. However, the inter model must still be distinguished from the mono model in that it refers to more perspectives than solely one's own perspective. In terms of the relationship to the multi model, it can be shown that a positive correlation exists, because in the practice of changing perspectives, a partial and temporal distance from one's own standpoint (I-perspective) must inevitably occur.

The respondents could react to the items according to a five-point scale: agree strongly, agree, not certain, disagree, disagree strongly. The scale

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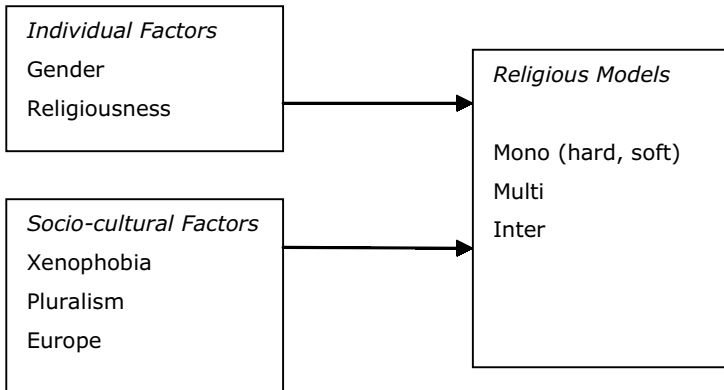
<sup>3</sup> See also H.-G. Ziebertz, *Religious pluralism and religious education*, in *Journal of Empirical Theology* 6 (1993) 82-89; and for a recent measuring in The Netherlands, P. Vermeer – J.A. van der Ven, *Looking at the relationship between religions. An empirical study among secondary school students*, in *Journal of Empirical Theology* 17/1 (2004) 36-59.

of intervals such as the one described above hinders the formation of three distinct categories into which each respondent must fit. It is possible to more or less agree with the statements. Empirically, this means that new models could potentially be formed because of the answering behaviour.

In addition to the religious-pluralism scale, additional concepts and items were included in the analysis in order to place the religious orientation into a larger context. To begin with, two variables can explain the differences in attitudes: firstly, the gender of the respondents, and secondly, the degree of their religiousness/secularisation. A scale exists for an additional group of concepts, which pertain to inherently more complex subject matter. The subjects of this scale are three socio-cultural contexts. First is the scale of xenophobia. As already mentioned above, the mono perspective could be related to fundamentalism in extreme cases. Our question is how and if fear of strangers is related to the three models. It is probable that xenophobia, when it can be identified, is connected to the mono model. Xenophobia can be understood as the refusal to accept perspectives other than one's own. The second problem with the three models relates to the evaluation of pluralism. From the mono perspective, pluralism is a problem; from the multiperspective, assumed; and from the inter perspective, a duty. Because of this, the evaluation of pluralism must be negative in the first case and positive in both of the other two cases. Thirdly, statements about Europe were included because the problem of interaction with foreigners on a political and cultural level is of special importance in light of the expansion of Europe. Analogous to feelings toward pluralism in the mono perspective, there could also be hesitation regarding the expansion of Europe, while from both of the other perspectives, a positive stance on the European process is possible.

Thus, the concept of the study is organised as follows:

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**Figure 1: The conceptual model**



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Out of this presumption, it is possible to formulate concrete research questions for the empirical study that should be answered by the analysis. In some cases, a comparison can be made to a 1994 study of 900 students that used this same scale. The research questions are as follows:

1. Can the concepts of mono, multi, and inter be empirically verified?
2. Are the concepts mutually exclusive, or do relationships exist between them? Have there been relational changes during the time period between 1994 and 2002?
3. How are the concepts evaluated? Have there been differences between 1994 and 2002 with respect to their acceptance and rejection?
4. What influence does the gender of the respondent have on the acceptance or rejection of the concepts?
5. What influence does religiousness have on the acceptance or rejection of the concepts?
6. Do connections exist between the acceptance and rejection of mono, multi, and inter and attitudes toward xenophobia, religious and cultural pluralism, as well as on the political level regarding the coalescence of Europe?

### **3 EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

The empirical analysis was conducted in regard to the 6 survey questions.

#### **3.1 Empirical Proof of the Concepts Mono, Multi and Inter**

The empirical results show (see tab. 1) that we are dealing with three separate factors. A major factor is created out of the mono model, in which the two elements of hard and soft combine. In the respondents' perception, there is no distinction between hard and soft inclusion. Both aspects together constitute a concept (MONO). A further important factor is formed from the four items of the inter model (INTER). All factor loadings are located in the area of 0.80. The third factor consists of the four items of the multi model (MULTI). In all three scales the reliability is between good and very good. Thus, we can work empirically from a mono, multi and inter-religious model. This is no different from the analysis of the 1994 data.

**Tab. 1: Empirical Findings of Proof of the three Models Mono, Multi und Inter**

Concept	Item	Mono	Inter	Multi
Mono-h	My religion contains the one, true light of redemption	<b>.921</b>		-.120
Mono-s	Compared to other religions, my religion contains the supreme salvation	<b>.917</b>		-.112
Mono-h	Only in my religion can people attain true salvation.	<b>.914</b>		
Mono-s	Compared to other religions, the deepest truth lies locked in my religion.	<b>.907</b>		-.115
Mono-h	Only in my religion do people have access to true redemption.	<b>.896</b>		
Mono-h	The only way to true salvation is revealed to mankind in my religion.	<b>.896</b>		-.123
Mono-s	My religion is the best way to salvation compared to other religions.	<b>.837</b>		
Mono-s	Compared to my religion, other religions contain only part of the truth.	<b>.775</b>		
Inter	Before finding authentic (real) redemption, religions must enter into dialogue with each other.		<b>.839</b>	.160
Inter	The real truth can only be discovered in the communication between religions.		<b>.820</b>	.158
Inter	The way to real salvation can only be found in a dialogue between the religions.		<b>.769</b>	.191
Inter	God may only be found in the meeting between religions.		<b>.755</b>	.192
Multi	Religions are equal to each other; they are all directed at the same truth.		.114	<b>.758</b>
Multi	There is no difference between religions, they all stem from a longing for God.	-.155	.141	<b>.736</b>
Multi	All religions are equally valuable; they are different paths to the same salvation.	-.223	.309	<b>.679</b>
Multi	Within religion as a whole, my religion is only one possible way to redemption.	-.204	.352	<b>.579</b>
	Alpha	.96	.83	.73
	Eigenvalue (Variance 71 %)	6.7	3.4	1.2

Legend: Mono-h = Mono-hard; Mo-s = Mono-soft

Extraction: Analysis of major elements. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser-Normalization.

The rotation is converged into 5 iterations.

The factor loadings show that four items of the mono model have negative loadings on the multi model. This already signals a tension between both concepts. The four mono items belong to the soft as well as to the hard dimension. This shows that there is no special difference

between the two dimensions within the mono model and, vice versa, three items of the multi model have negative loadings on the mono model. We can also see that there are double loadings between the multi and the inter model. These loadings are positive, which indicates the experience of a certain connection between the statements. Because the second loadings are more than .20 below the first loading, we can accept the result.

### **3.2 Correlation between models**

We have further presumed, firstly, that there is a difference between the mono and the multi model, but also between the mono and inter models. However, we have assumed that the inter model lies closer to the mono-religious model than the multi-religious one does, because inter always requires a certain degree of commitment. The following table of correlation values shows the result (see tab. 2). The values that we obtained in a 1994 study are indicated alongside in brackets.

The result shows a strong relation between the multi and inter-religious models with  $r = 0.45$ . This correlation is considerably stronger than in the previous study of eight years ago. This means that for the respondents of today, both models belong very close together. There is a statistical probability that the respondents who endorse one model also endorse the other relevant model.

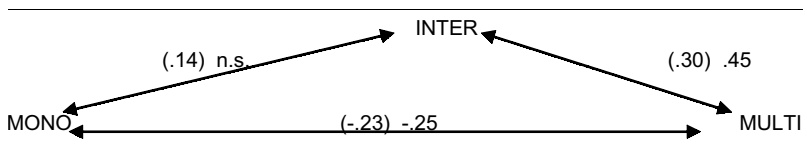
That there is a negative correlation between the multi and the mono model could be presumed after theoretical considerations. With  $r = -.25$  the difference between the two models is slightly more pronounced than eight years ago. That means that, in the eyes of the respondents, both models seem to be more incompatible today than they were eight years ago.

Finally, it has been assumed that there is a difference between the mono and the inter model. The hypothesis assumes that this difference would not be as pronounced as between the multi- and mono-religious models. Eight years ago, the correlation was with  $r = .14$  slightly positive, but now there is no longer a significant relation. Our theoretical assumption is reflected fully in the 1994 outcome, but only partially in that of 2002. Today, the mono model seems to be isolated from the other two.



However, the inter model is, on the whole, less distant from the mono than the multi one is. From that point of view, the theoretical consideration that multi is more strongly differentiated than inter from mono holds true. The shifts inside of the eight-year comparison period are nevertheless striking. What does that mean for the commitment aspect, which is implicit in the inter model and which should justify the proximity of this model to the mono-religious one? We may assume that less and less respondents consider it necessary to explain commitment exclusively and inclusively. It appears that diversity itself (inter corresponds strongly with multi) is the platform from which accord and unity are sought – unrelated (and partly in opposition) to a certain faith tradition. Do these changes represent a move in the direction of a post-modern religiousness?

**Tab. 2: Connections between the 2002 Models (Correlation Values)  
(Coefficients for the 1994 Sample in Parentheses)**



### 3.3 Evaluation of the Models

Before we draw any further conclusions, we will have a look at the mean values (see tab. 3). The analysis of the mono model brings to light that the German students in 2002 reject this model. Their response rated 1.89 on a five-point scale (see above for explanation). The pupils are critically opposed to the fundamental assumptions of a line of thought that no longer seems plausible to them within the context of a contemporary society. They refuse to attach added value to one particular religion. The analysis shows that the mono-religious model is perceptibly more negatively evaluated than eight years ago. The shift further into the negative half of the scale corresponds to more than half a point (0.55).

What the pupils prefer is rather different. For them, the multi model is clearly in the positive range of the scale. To the statement "all religions

are equally valuable, they point to different roads leading to the same salvation”, they respond positively with a mean value of 3.35. Here, a further comparison with the data from 1994 shows a small shift in that the multi model today is viewed slightly more positively. The difference here is an increase of 0.07.

What do our pupils think of the inter model? Have they discovered any difference at all between the inter-religious model and the other views on offer? The first answer is “yes”. With a value of 3.03 the interreligious model is viewed much more positively than the mono and not as positively as the multi-religious model, but the model itself is viewed neither positively nor negatively. When we compare this result with the analysis we made with the same scale in 1994, we see a slight decline of 0.15.

The above table shows that German pupils clearly have a preferred model: the multi model. Religions are equal and relative; no one is superior. This model excludes considerations of the value and truth of religions. They are impartial to the approach that religious education should be conceptualised as a journey exploring the different religions by dialogue. They are less convinced that an incontrovertible answer to them can already be found, such as could be adopted in the mono-religious model. They themselves do not want to be too preoccupied with religion. In comparison with the data from 1994, this intention is clearer today in 2002. The best way of dealing with religion in education seems to them to be offered by the multi-religious model, which admits to “interest at a remove”. In 1994, the German pupils, by contrast, registered a “double peak”; for them, the multi-religious (an objective approach to religion) and the inter-religious model (participation in the inter-religious dialogue) seemed to be almost equally important. In 2002, the denominational ties seem to be weaker and the presence of ideological diversity has become the norm. The inter-religious model is no longer identified as a transformative concept, which goes beyond the mono and the multi-religious concept. This assumption, which is part of the discussion in the theology of religion, seems too “theology-laden” for the pupils who were interviewed.

**Tab. 3: Mean values of Mono, Multi and Inter (1994 and 2002)**

	MONO		MULTI		INTER	
	mean	sd	mean	sd	mean	sd
2002 Sample (n = 1912)	1.89	0.94	3.35	0.88	3.03	0.91
1994 Sample (n = 916)	2.44	0.90	3.28	0.87	3.18	0.88

### 3.4 Differences of Means by Gender

In the 2002 sample, there was a slight majority of male respondents. It is noticeable that male respondents differentiate much more strongly within their group than female respondents. The standard deviation is around 0.15 points over that of the female respondents. The analysis of the gender differences reveals two significant results and one insignificant result (see tab 4).

**Tab. 4: Attitude Differences by Gender**

	Female M	(N=864) sd	Male m	(N=1052) sd	Significance
Mono	1.77	.85	2.04	1.02	* *
Multi	3.47	.85	3.23	1.01	* *
Inter	3.05	.87	2.99	1.00	ns

\*\* Values are on a 0.01 level (2 sided) significant.

The insignificant result regards the inter model. Male and female respondents differentiate only slightly in the evaluation of the inter model and this difference does not lie in a relevant area of probability. Significant differences can be seen between the young men and women in the evaluation of the mono model, which is much more negatively judged by women than by men. However, women evaluate the multi model much more positively than men do. This means that women experience the polarity between mono and multi more strongly than men do—although it is also noticeable in men, if one takes into consideration the 1.2 point difference between the means. The difference between mono and multi lies at a value of 1.7 points.

### 3.5 Evaluation Differences regarding Religiousness

We want to find out what influence religious self-determination has on the attitude towards the education models. First, we used two items on a five-point-scale of the religiosity of the pupils' mother and father. It was possible to put these two items together statistically. We then asked the pupils if they would describe themselves as religious. A cross tabulation of both parents' and pupil's religiosity allows 5 types to be identified (see fig.2).

**Figure 2: Types of Religiosity**

		Religiosity of the Parents		
		low	indifferent	high
Religiosity of the pupils	low	<i>Group 1 both parents and pupils are non-religious</i>		<i>Group 3 pupils are non- religious and parents are religious</i>
	indifferent		<i>Group 5 both pupils and parents are indifferent to religion</i>	
	high	<i>Group 2 pupils are religious and parents are non-religious</i>		<i>Group 4 both pupils and parents are religious</i>

1,349 respondents could be clearly positioned in the five types (see tab. 5). We see that 428 pupils in the second generation are non-religious, and their parents were also not religious. At the same time, there is also evidence of the opposite result: 92 pupils describe themselves as religious even though their parents were not religious. They came into contact with religiously affiliated questions without having any religious socialisation at home. 185 pupils answered that they are not religious but that their parents are. The biggest group of 564 pupils describes both themselves and their parents as religious. The second biggest group of 460 respondents represent neither explicit religiosity nor its opposite, secularisation.

**Table 5: Number of respondents in the groups**

	N
Group 1 <i>both parents and pupils are non-religious</i>	428
Group 2 <i>pupils are religious and parents are non-religious</i>	92
Group 3 <i>pupils are non-religious and parents are religious</i>	185
Group 4 <i>both pupils and parents are religious</i>	564
Group 5 <i>both pupils and parents are indifferent</i>	460
Sum	1349

The question is whether and how the evaluation of the three models is related to the religious types. First, we will analyse the mono model, which had a mean value of 1.89 for the whole group. Table 5 shows that 4 subgroups rate the mono model more negatively than the average. Only group 4 has a less negative attitude and these are respondents who describe themselves and their parents as religious. There are significant differences between group 4 and all the other groups. Nevertheless, the value of group 4 is also in the negative half of the scale, but with a higher standard deviation. This means that there are respondents within the "religious" group who deviate more than a whole point in either direction. It is interesting that no structural proximity can be seen between the newly religious (group 2) and the continuously religious (group 4), whose approval of religion is not based on an emphasis of the I-position. We can see that an intergenerative religious background in which parents and pupils describe themselves as religious guarantees the most positive attitude towards the mono approach.

Tab. 5: Evaluation of the Mono Model in terms of Degree of Secularisation/Religiousness

	N	mean	sd	mean	sd
Group 3: 1st generation secular	185	1.61	0.80		
Group 2: new religious	92	1.76	0.89		
Group 1: 2nd generation secular	428	1.78	0.91		
Group 5: indifferent	460	1.80	0.86		
Group 4: religious	564			2.17	1.04
Significance (Scheffé procedure)		0.34		1.00	

Subgroups for alpha = .05

The multi-religious model is viewed positively by all the groups in our typology (see tab. 6). There are two groups below the average of 3.35 who both have the same mean-value of 3.24: the group of non-religious pupils in the second and first generation. The largest group, pupils and parents who describe themselves as religious, view the multi model more positively (3.43); on a similar mean value is the group of religiously indifferent pupils and parents (3.45). The group that is the most positive towards the multi model is the group consisting of the "new-religious": pupils who describe themselves as religious although their parents are non-religious. For them, the information-based concepts sound most attractive. There is a significant difference between this group and the first two groups. The new religious have been less conditioned by a traditional religious socialisation, in which environmental and institutional factors have been embedded into a faith structure with the expressed goal of developing an also ideologically validated I-perspective. They describe themselves as religious in the middle of a pluralistic religious world that is necessary to observe and in which it is imperative to attempt to live. The religious and indifferent respondents occupy here a middle place.

Tab. 6: Evaluation of the Multi Model in terms of Degree of Secularisation/Religiousness

	N	mean	sd	mean	sd
Group 1: 2nd generation secular	428	3.24	0.80		
Group 3: 1st generation secular	185	3.24	0.88		
Group 4: religious	564	3.43	0.93	3.43	0.93
Group 5: indifferent	460	3.45	0.85	3.45	0.85
Group 2: new religious	92			3.50	0.91
significance (Scheffé procedure)		0.14		0.94	

subgroups for alpha = .05

The inter-religious model is twice evaluated negatively (see tab. 7). Firstly, pupils who are non-religious, but whose parents reject the approach of exploring the religious world by dialogue negatively evaluated the inter-religious model. This is perhaps because too much commitment is expected in the inter approach. The attitude towards this model is a little less negative among the group of respondents whose parents were already non-religious. The other three groups view the

inter model slightly positively. In particular, group 4 (both parents and pupils are religious) is mostly in accordance with this model. They are at significant odds with the non-religious parents and pupils.

Tab. 7: Evaluation of the Inter Model in terms of Degree of Secularisation/Religiousness

	N	mean	sd	mean	sd
Group 3: 1st generation	185	2.85	0.93		
Group 1: 2nd generation	428	2.91	0.88	2.91	0.88
Group 2: new religious	92	3.06	0.94	3.06	0.94
Group 5: indifferent	460	3.08	0.88	3.08	0.88
Group 4: religious	564			3.14	0.92
significance (Scheffé procedure)			0.12		0.13

subgroups for alpha = .05

We can summarise that a continuous religious socialisation through the family leads to a less negative attitude towards the mono approach. Young people who do not have a religiously affiliated family but have interest in the plurality of religions prefer the multi approach in which no commitment is needed. Pupils who are religious and who also describe their parents as religious discover its great worth in the working dialogue of religious plurality. They can bring their own positions into the discussion. The fact that the first generation secular students (group 3) disagree with the inter model the most strongly can be associated with the emancipation from religious ties. If a tradition already exists regarding the degree of secularisation (second generation), then commitment is no longer such a large problem (group 1). For the new religious (group 2), the challenge of religious plurality is not recognisably relevant to a working dialogue. This could mean that the character of new religiousness is, above all else, individualist and privatised, that religious activities are more strongly motivated by personal searching than developed by historical religions and their respective claims of truth.

### 3.6 Mono, multi, and inter in a socio-cultural context

The last research question deals with the connection between the models of mono, multi, and inter, and the attitudes toward xenophobia, religious

and cultural pluralism, and (on a political level) the coalescence of Europe. Regarding the inclusion of these concepts, it then makes sense to examine religious concepts central to theology, and to connect them to areas with which religious attitudes must be communicated in every day life.

### *Pluralism*

Four positively formulated items were chosen from the scale of pluralism that was used in the 2002 study. The cultural and religious diversity in Germany is considered a virtue that enriches and adds colour to life. Furthermore, because of this diversity, all are confronted with questions of where they come from and of their own roots. The respondents consistently answer these items positively, with the item "The many religions in Germany are an enrichment" receiving the least amount of agreement. This is likely due to the continuing debate over Islam and the potential danger of religious fundamentalism that is communicated in this item. This scale can also be responded to with the help of a five-step answer scale. The standard deviation turns out to be higher, which shows greater differences within the group of respondents. Altogether, it can be gathered that those researched have a positive stance regarding religious and cultural pluralism. The reliability of the scale is good (alpha .75).

### *Xenophobia*

In a cultural and economic perspective, the presence of "the stranger" is closely related to pluralism. Thus, plurality can be seen, above all else, in varying value convictions, religious backgrounds, customs, etc. For this study, the stranger has been reduced to the problem of xenophobia. The scale consists of ten items that focus on fear of strangers, specifically regarding foreigners. The standard deviation makes it clear, that a large difference of opinion exists in the group of respondents. However, the evaluation of specific items also produced very different results. The items are however still reliable as a scale, in that they will still measure the same issues (alpha .90).

### *Europe*

The third scale brings up the political discussion of the coalescence of Europe in terms of its consequences for the individual, social, and political



life. Parameters relevant to pluralism also arise in this, including the question of whether the expansion of the national space into international relationships will put pressure on the personal perspective and how the growing diversity can be handled. Four positively formulated items were chosen for the analysis, in which the amity between nations, the expansion of personal opportunities, European integration, and the improvement of standard of living are all discussed. Europe is a "normal" fact of life for young people. Their educational abilities were measured in a European comparison (PISA), and spending a year abroad and having international contacts is a popular trend, even for secondary school students. However, it is also clear that the expansion of Europe does not have only positive effects. Firms can much more easily relocate their production sites to countries with lower taxes where jobs are worth less or eliminated altogether, etc. Germany's role in Europe is only mediocre in many areas. Europe has many positive sides, but often it is not without certain ambivalence in the personal perception. The scale is reliable (alpha .71).

### *Empirical findings*

We will look now to the relationships between these scales and the models of mono, multi, and inter. It is probable that differing socio-cultural perceptions are related to the three models. It is assumed that the mono model could be perceived, in a fundamentalist view, as anti-pluralistic and xenophobic. The multi model, on the other hand, perceives the present diversity as a good thing, and for the inter model, plurality is a challenge and a duty: to pluralistically search for lasting convictions. The results of the data analysis are very insightful on this matter (see tab. 8).

Tab. 8: Socio-Cultural Context of the Religious Models (Correlations)

	Pluralism	Xenophobia	Europe
MONO	-.28**	.23**	n.s.
MULTI	.34**	-.09**	.12**
INTER	.34**	-.13**	.16**

\*\* Correlations are significant on a level of 0.01 (2-sided).

Let us first look at the first horizontal row of the mono-religious model. There is in fact a negative correlation between the mono-religious

perspective and the evaluation of pluralism. A person who thinks mono-religiously tends away from cultural and religious pluralism. Since it is not possible to make causal explanations off hand, it functions the other way around as well: a person who tends away from pluralism favours a mono-religious attitude. Both attitudes converge at the point that it is because of the dominance of the personal perspective and the refrain from changing perspectives that a religious truth or a cultural facet is accepted as valid. This results in the restriction of alternatives, which is expressed in the negative correlation value. The relationship of the mono-religious model to xenophobia makes this finding even more startling. This point concerns a positive correlation, meaning that a xenophobic stance is related to a mono-religious attitude, and the other way around. Not only a modern pessimistic anti-pluralism, but also a broad qualitative sharpening in terms of animosity toward strangers is associated with the focus on the personal perspective. These three parameters represent, for the questioned students, a school of thought that the majority of them reject: the defence of a self-centred ideology that is against the presence of diversity and the visible threat posed by strangers. The "political Europe" is not interrelated with this attitude, and represents an independent question.

The correlations between the multi and inter models are parallel for the most part, with only gradual differences, and therefore can be discussed together. In terms of pluralism, there is an identical positive correlation value. This, presumably, implies that both models have a principally positive stance toward plurality, even if the modes of handling pluralism are different. Both models reacted negatively in regards to xenophobic statements. Even if the values turn out to be only slight, the negative sign is still enlightening. It means that the approval of multi or inter precludes the approval of xenophobia. Who ever thinks multi- or inter-religiosity tends away from animosity toward strangers, and this stands for the inter-religious even stronger than for the multi-religious. Both religious models are positive in terms of the political perspective of Europe, meaning that both models imply a positive attitude toward Europe and intend to shape it positively—and this too stands more strongly for the inter-religious than for the multi-religious. The mode of coming to terms with plurality can be referred to as an explanation; it is a more active concept for the inter model, because communicative understanding about that which is valid is the fundamental principle of this model.

### 3.7 Evaluation of the Research Questions

At the end of the empirical analysis, in reference to the research questions, we can ascertain the following:

- (1) The concepts of mono, multi, and inter can be empirically proven.
- (2) There is a positive correlation between the multi and inter models, while the mono and multi models are mutually exclusive. There is no significant relationship between the mono and inter models. The comparison to the 1994 data showed that the inter model no longer stands in any kind of relationship with the mono model, so that the dialogue no longer recognisably relates to the personal perspective of one's own beliefs, but rather identifies much more strongly with the multi model.
- (3) The evaluation of the concepts shows a preference for the multi model, followed by the inter model, while the mono model was clearly rejected. When compared to 1994, this rejection is noticeably stronger. The multi model, on the other hand, was rated much more positively today than in 1994, and the inter model somewhat less positively than in 1994.
- (4) The gender of the respondents had significant influence on the acceptance or rejection of the concepts. Women rate the mono model more negatively and the inter and multi models more positively than men.
- (5) The influence of religiousness on the acceptance or rejection of the concepts does exist. The continuously religious see the mono model the least negatively and rate the inter model the most positively. Newly religious people approve of the multi model the most.
- (6) Finally, the three models are associated with additional socio-cultural attitudes. The mono perspective is anti-pluralistic and xenophobic, and for the multi and inter perspectives, the opposite is true. Furthermore, both of the latter models are related to pro-European thoughts.

## 4 DISCUSSION

Finding means of exposure to plurality can today be considered one of the elementary and indispensable tasks that all human beings must face, in the same way that they must come to terms with political and

religious institutions. It is evident that no particular opinion can be generalised and claimed valid, and that a quantitative dispute with plurality can mean little to suppress or shut out these particular interests. Pluralism as the ordered configuration of plurality has no Archimedean point at its disposal out of which it can derive the rules for a life in diversity that promise to be shared by all. The pluralistic configuration of plurality must place personal interests and interests of common welfare into relationship with each other and negotiate understandings between the two. In these times of modernity (or post-modernity), these no longer have a quasi "super-temporal" character, but rather, when they can be found, are temporary and limited to specific sectors of plurality and never to plurality as a whole.

Religions are affected by these developments.<sup>4</sup> As worldview communities, they represent a specific particular interest par excellence that they, in many different ways, connect with a claim of truth or even a claim of validity for all. If this is the case, for example, in radical Islam or in fundamentalist groups in Judaism or Christianity, then the tensions are apparent. It is easily discernable that it is difficult, especially for religions, to define their relationship to plurality and to develop positive exposure to plurality. It stands for them that they must, out of the perspective of a world view community, bring their personal perspective into equilibrium with other personal perspectives without hardening in terms of fundamentalism or, to the other extreme, losing their profile through the levelling of their own convictions.

It must be observed, in the societies of all western countries that with plurality growing ever more conscious, monopolistic worldviews become strained. The end of the meta-story, as expressed by Lyotard<sup>5</sup>, represents this issue very concretely. In a post-modern perspective, a return to such dominant ideologies is not only impossible, but also undesirable. In that sense, Lyotard proclaimed the programme "war of the whole." The problem arises as to how understandings should be met in modern society if the "fragment" serves as a starting point. Does it not come

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<sup>4</sup> See G. Adam, *Interreligiöser Dialog und Wahrheitsgewissheit des Glaubens*, in M. Schreiner (ed.), *Vielfalt und Profil. Zur evangelischen Identität heute*, Neukirchen-Vluyn, [Neukirchner Verlag], 1999.

<sup>5</sup> See J.-F. Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Minneapolis, University of Minneapolis Press, 1984.

close to the well known adage of "throwing the baby out with the bathwater" if one changes an ideologically uniform community into its opposite, regardless of whether it is political-ideologically or religious uniformly inflated, where concepts such as wisdom are treated as if they are irrelevant. It appears that religious communities are faced with the problem of discovering every mode possible in the search for understanding and in marking differences, and without living and working together, this becomes difficult in the conditions of globalisation, if not altogether impossible. The secure, private, known, and trusted world is increasingly exposed to be fiction, and the global village is not yet a clear-cut, definable reality in the world of individual experience. Both exist, but the way in which lines of interaction should be drawn is still a fathomable project on the micro-level as well as on the macro-level.

The three models of mono, multi, and inter handle this problem in their own ways. They stress the security of their own ideology (mono), the equal validity of all positions (multi), and the perspective of interaction, that the greatest chance for individuals and the collective to reach a satisfactory working through of plurality (even pluralistically) exists in the active dispute with the different perspectives and in the changing (inter). It is evident that this is a complex problem for Christian theology in general, and for the Catholic Church specifically<sup>6</sup>. Practical theology cannot solve this problem, but it is its duty to identify a theory while practicing the coping strategies that are available in lived religion regarding instructed religion. If this project has made it clear that young people take no pleasure in the mono-religious perspective, then it is valid to judge these connections. The restriction to the personal perspective seems anti-modern, because it is not compatible with the composition of modern life, whose basic constant is plurality and the diversity of cultural and religious understandings. A religion that wants people to feel like they belong, must give off the feeling that it has a principally positive commitment to modernity. It must affirm the diversity of the inner and the outer. It is both theologically and ecclesiastically clear that this does not mean the approval of every characteristic of diversity, but it can be seen as a duty to have dialogue with that which is valid. The danger exists that a religious community that does not cultivate this

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<sup>6</sup> See E. Klinger, *Fragen und Probleme gegenwärtiger Religionstheologie. Ein Lagebericht*, in *Diakonia* 33/2 (2002) 90-97.

competence will contribute to people ignoring the relativisation of all claims<sup>7</sup>. The empirical findings show that this process is already underway. It can be recognised that we undergo a move towards the inter approach. The more the pressure grows on the individual to come to his or her own integration of differences in the context of diversity (including religious diversity), while at the same time the more and more people experience that a return to unity is out of the question for the above stated reasons, the larger the possibility of resorting to the multi model instead of the inter model. If the policy of the church ignores this problem, the church community in the future could be attractive for those who need a closed and secure world, and meanwhile, the pluralist believers escape. If systematic theology ignores this problem, its theories lose empirical evidence.

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\* By some changes this paper was published under the title "A Move to Multi? Empirical Research concerning the Attitudes of Youth toward Pluralism and Religion's Claims of Truth" in: Didier Pollefeyt (ed.), *Interreligious Learning*, Leuven: Peeters, 2007, 3-24

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<sup>7</sup> See F. Schweitzer, *Christus und die Welt der Religionen. Aufgaben interreligiösen Lernens*, in *Jahrbuch Religionspädagogik* 15 (1999) 159-172; and H.-G. Ziebertz, *Interreligiöses Lernen*, in F. Schweitzer – R. Englert – U. Schwab – H.-G. Ziebertz (eds.), *Entwürfe Einer Pluralitätsfähigen Religionspädagogik*, Freiburg, Gütersloh, 2002, 121-143.

# THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN BUILDING INTERCULTURAL DIALOGUE AND A TOLERANT SOCIETY

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In the academic community it is widely held that most conflicts are based on confrontations between peoples belonging to separate collective identities based on race, ethnicity or religion<sup>1</sup>. Religion has great influence on the escalation of conflict, as well as on its dynamics and resolution. Most studies focus on the destructive role of religion. Differences in the religious affiliation of opposing parties were also highlighted by media while analyzing this particular conflict. Religious differences were often considered an obstacle to conflict resolution and peace-building. Thus, though all religions claim to espouse peace, they also serve as a means to legitimize hate and violence.

Interest toward the positive role that religion can play in the process of conflict resolution and peace-building has risen sharply throughout the last decade. The importance of the peaceful coexistence of different religions is not

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<sup>1</sup> Abu-Nimer M. Conflict Resolution, Culture, and Religion: "Toward a Training Model of Interreligious Peacebuilding". In *Journal of Peace Research*. Vol. 38, no. 6, 2001, p. 685.

overvalued while taking into account the reality that religion is one of the main aspects of the individual and collective identities of the opposing parties.

It is also clear that religion becomes a political issue in conflict situations – in the interpretation of holy texts, more attention is paid to claims supporting tensions than to calls for peaceful coexistence.

Religious norms and values are key aspects of cultural identity. Similar to other cultural values, they too can push humans towards both confrontation and reconciliation; religious ceremonies are also important tools for overcoming confrontation and promoting cooperation. Accordingly, it is important not only to study religious traditions, but also to present them to society. Negative stereotypes must be overcome and trust among adherents of different religions must be strengthened.

In the era of globalization, the development of intercultural exchanges and the promotion of intercultural and interreligious dialogue are considered to be among the most important preconditions for ensuring the peaceful and harmonious coexistence of the peoples of the world. This is based first of all on the fact that intensive interaction between different groups and individuals is the most important paradigm of our era: contacts between different cultures and religions are becoming closer and different groups are becoming more and more interrelated in this respect. Nowadays it is impossible to find a homogenous society in which all members represent the same culture and religion. According to professor Hasan Salame, a political scientist, migration and tourism rates have increased dramatically over the last century, while information technologies permanently push for opposition towards “others” that can be found everywhere to the extent that it is impossible to avoid. It is a paradox that, as much as globalization promotes financial and economic integration, it also supports cultural and social disintegration. People establish new borders in an effort to differentiate, detach and distance themselves from others (representing other cultures), as being close to them creates discomfort<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Salame Gh. “Respect for Cultural Diversity is Prerequisite for Dialogue”. *Expert Meeting “towards Mainstream Principles of Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue in Policies for Sustainable Development”*. May 21-23, 2007, UNESCO, Paris



Studying the role of religion as a contributor to intercultural dialogue is an important step in researching culture and peace-building. It is also important to mention one key issue: It is widely accepted that a weak understanding of views of different cultural and religious groups leads to negative stereotypes which in turn encourage intolerance. Negative stereotypes developed on religious grounds play an extremely dramatic role in conflict escalation. Moreover, notions based on similar stereotypes significantly hinder conflict resolution and jeopardize possibilities for peaceful coexistence. As far as awareness of worldviews and beliefs about "different" and "other" remains still, they will always be considered as a threat. In this respect the key impediment is the limited understanding of one's own and other people's religious traditions, rather than religion itself.

Given the above, the importance of intercultural and interreligious dialogue is steadily rising. Dialogue is the only way to raise mutual awareness and overcome negative stereotypes. In 2006, the Council of Europe introduced a definition for intercultural dialogue: "open and respectful sharing of views between individuals and groups of different cultures that ensures deeper understanding of worldviews of others". Accordingly, dialogue is now considered the new security paradigm. Interreligious dialogue plays a key role in the peace building process because, as noted above, it is considered one of the main reasons for conflict, according to Hans Kiung.

We think that the best opportunities for promoting interreligious dialogue and peaceful society can be found in religious traditions. Thus, it is important to study these traditions and present them to society. This is necessary in order to overcome negative stereotypes and establish trust among different religions. Discovering religion as a unifying rather than divisive label of identity, is the way to overcome thinking that is framed by stereotypes.

This is most relevant for Islam, Judaism and Christianity. These three monotheist religions are capable of laying the groundwork for developing an interconnected identity rather than a confrontational one. Thus, the main aim is to transfer the teachings and values of these religions into a source of peaceful coexistence.

According to Dr. Kronish, given that dialogue can be based on a reality that is shared by individuals, the illustration of similarities and commonalities of these three religions is crucial for establishing mutual trust<sup>3</sup>.

As far as intercultural and interreligious dialogue is seen as a dialogue between individuals representing different cultural and religious identities, the success of this process mainly depends on participants' perceptions about similarities and commonalities, on the one hand, and differences and diversity, on the other.

Harry Triandis, one of the most prominent authors of intercultural research, says that contact is especially positive and fruitful when participants perceive each other as similar. The positive experience of interrelation intensifies interaction, which, in turn, enhances the perception of similarities<sup>4</sup>.

As moral and religious traditions are considered to be the source of values that guarantee individuals' right to a safe and dignified life, it is necessary to conduct a comparative study of these traditions in terms of tolerance, acceptance and respect towards others in order to discover areas of commonality and overcome negative stereotypes.

I would like to point out that the major differences between religious traditions are the factors that support dialogue rather than confrontation. As mentioned by Arjun Appadurai, researcher of cultural anthropology and globalization, dialogue is a form of relationship and agreement, which cannot be based on full understanding and total consensus in reference to all differences<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Presentation at Hamlin University School of Law, November 16, 2007

<sup>4</sup> Triandis H.C. *Culture and Social Behavior*, McGraw-Hill, Inc, 1994, p. 237-238

<sup>5</sup> Appadurai A. *New Stakes for Intercultural Dialogue. The Risks of Dialogue. Expert Meeting "towards Mainstream Principles of Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue in Policies for Sustainable Development"*. May 21-23, 2007, UNESCO, Paris.

# APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN POST-COMMUNIST BULGARIA<sup>1</sup>

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The 1989 overthrow of Todor Zhivkov destroyed the monopoly of militant atheism in Bulgaria. The return of religion to the public sphere, however, was not a single act, but a long lasting process of restoring memories and practices from the pre-Communist period and their accommodating to the contemporary conditions and needs of Bulgarian society. In the first years after the end of

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<sup>1</sup> This article presents a summary of research on religious education in Bulgaria conducted within the framework of the REVACERN Project supported by the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Commission and presents updated version of previous publications by the same author. See: D. Kalkandjieva, "Religious Education in Bulgaria Today" In: *Religiöse Dimensionen in Schulkultur und Schulentwicklung*, eds. Martin Jäggle, Thomas Krobath, Robert Shelander (Hg.), (Vienna: Lit, 2009), 481-488; "Religious Education in Bulgarian Public Schools: Practices and Challenges" In: *Education and Church in Central and Eastern-Europe at First Glance* (Debrecen: CHERD, 2008), 167-179. The author of this article was also a member of a special Commission, appointed by the Bulgarian Minister of Education, established with the task to prepare a concept for the introduction of religions education in Bulgarian schools.

Communism people crowded churches, prayer houses, mosques and synagogues not only in a search for God, but also in an attempt to manifest their break with the totalitarian past. As a result, religion was often perceived as an antipode of Communism and thus one's religiosity was often regarded as a sign for his or her predisposition to democracy. Even the leaders of the former Communist Party found it appropriate to take part in the Easter Liturgy, held in the Patriarchal Cathedral "St. Alexander Nevski" in Sofia on April 15, 1990, just two months before the first free elections in Bulgaria since World War II.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, religion was kept away from public schools until 1997, when the first experimental religious classes were allowed. This act was also influenced by an alleged link between religion and democracy. The second government of the Union of Democratic Forces introduced optional classes of religion as one of the measures for rejecting the Communist past and restoring the continuity with the pre-World War II development. Until 2010, however, the students enrolled in them do not exceed 2 per cent of all Bulgarian school boys and girls.

### **WHY RELIGION IS NOT WELCOMED IN THE SPHERE OF EDUCATION?**

The weak interest in religious classes in Bulgarian public schools is a complex result of historical, political, economic, social, legal and organizational factors. The initiators of the study of religion in school were not able to benefit from the pre-Communist traditions in this sphere. From the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878 to the eve of World War II, religious instruction was not a priority of the national governments, which policies were characterized with pro-western and secular orientation. For about 60 years, priests were not allowed to teach in schools, while religious instruction was limited to the children from the first four grades, who attended such classes one hour per week. Only in 1938 the Bulgarian state changed its attitude to the study of religion in school and allowed religious instruction and Bulgarian Orthodox Church history to be studied in the upper classes, including gymnasium. After the Communist takeover, however, religion was banned in school. In this way, it is

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<sup>2</sup> *Chervenata vlast sreshtu vyarata [Red Power against the Faith]* (memories and documents), published in Discussions Forum "De zorata?", available in: <http://de-zorata.de/forum/index.php?topic=675.0>. Last use on February 24, 2010.

difficult today, even for the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to organize such classes or Sunday schools due to the lack of historical experience. More different is the situation of religious minorities who enjoy internal autonomy in the pre-Communist period and organized their own faith instructions either within the minority schools, Muslim, Catholic or Protestant, or in special Sunday schools at their prayer houses.

In short, contemporary Bulgarian society has a limited historical experience in the sphere of the religious classes at the level of public schools. Moreover, in the past they served different aims – to prepare the children from a separate religious community to learn about their own faith and to develop skills to practice their particular faith tradition. Nowadays, the study of religion is challenged by a series of new requirements. In legal terms, “religious institutions are separate from the state” and education in public schools is secular.<sup>3</sup> Under these conditions it is impossible to introduce a confessional religious instruction on regular basis in public schools. At least, such classes cannot be mandatory, but only optional. In addition it is a task of the school to prepare students as not devoted believers but as mindful and responsible citizens. If the pre-Communist Bulgarian Constitution (1879-1947) declared Orthodox Christianity as the dominating religion in the country, the 1991 Constitution (Art. 37) abandons the Stalinist formula of “freedom of worship and of atheist propaganda” and promotes real freedom of religion.<sup>4</sup> In addition the Bulgarian membership in the European Union requires respect to the European Declaration of Human Rights that presupposes the principles of pluralism and tolerance, i.e. the Bulgarian Orthodox Church cannot enjoy special status or privileges justified by its historical role or by presenting the majority of Bulgarians.<sup>5</sup> This means that religious classes in school should give knowledge and develop skills necessary in the communication between the adherents of various religious traditions. This need becomes even more important in the age of globalization and intensive domestic and international migration. It

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<sup>3</sup> See the Bulgarian Constitution of 1991, art. 13.1 and the Law on People’s Education of 1991, art. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Bulgarian socialist constitution of 1947 (art. 78) and of 1971 (art. 53)

<sup>5</sup> According to the last national census (2001), 82,6 per cent of Bulgarians are affiliated with Orthodoxy, 12, 2 per cent – with Islam, while the adherents of the other faiths count 1,3 per cent together. There are also 3,9 per cent of citizens registered as irreligious.

seems that there is a profound difference in the tasks of religious bodies and public schools in the teaching of religion. The former have to train the children of their adherents to be faithful believers, while the latter – to prepare the school boys and girls for the challenges of a multi-religious world.

At the same time, both, the religious institutions and the state suffer from the lack of cadres able to teach religion on confessional as well as on intercultural grounds. The Bulgarian Orthodox Church cannot use its priests for this purpose due to two reasons. Its parishes outnumber in times the number of priests, i.e. one priest often serves in more than one parish and thus he is not able to combine his duties with those of a teacher. Most priests have no pedagogical training and experience. Only recently the faculties of Orthodox theology have made efforts to fill this gap in their curricula, but in most cases the pedagogical courses are led by former professors of catechism, who slightly changed their previous lectures. There is no cooperation between theological and pedagogical faculties for the purposes of the study of religion in public schools. The 'secular' university scholars face also problems to prepare courses designed for the future teachers of religion. On the one hand, religion was taboo in the academic milieu during Communism. On the other, there is shortage of empirical research about the development of religious life in Bulgaria during the last century. This situation creates theoretical, epistemological and practical difficulties that impede the development of a new school discipline dealing with religion. In addition the curricula for such a discipline has to take into account the specific religious demography of Bulgaria, where the study of Orthodoxy should be combined with that of Islam, confessed by the second big religious community in the country.

The negative attitudes to the study of religion in public schools in Bulgaria appeared under the influence of different worldviews and experience. Many people consider that religion has no place in school – the temple of science. Still only a tiny group of them take radical atheist stand, while the others will support religious instruction but in Sunday schools, established at the corresponding religious communities. There are also financial considerations. The study of religion in school is paid by the state budget, not by those of the various religious institutions that are separate from the state. Therefore, the tax payers should be

asked whether and how to use their money in the system of state education. By this moment an optional and confessional study of religion in public schools seems to be a working option that respects the rights of parents to choose the religious orientation for their children and the principle of freedom of religion. Meanwhile an intercultural study of religion remains an open task for the state authorities, university scholars and school teachers.

Not less important reason for the mass abstention from religious classes roots in the post-1989 developments in the religious sphere. In 1992, the leaderships of the two biggest religious communities in the country – the Orthodox and the Muslim ones split into hostile camps, accusing each other of various sins, especially collaborationism with the Communist regime. This undermined the confidence of many Bulgarians in their religious leaders. These conflicts had much more profound effect on the Orthodox community, which still is not able to solve it. Meanwhile, it was quickly overcome by the Muslims whose religious divisions were not bound with political ones. In the Orthodox case, the schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church brought about the establishment of two parallel leaderships: the Synod of Patriarch Maxim and the so called Alternative Synod. Moreover, this division was linked with the political struggles in post-Communist Bulgaria. The Synod of Patriarch Maxim received the support of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and thus was accused of collaborationism with the former totalitarian regime, while the Alternative one was regarded as a tool for the democratization of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and was backed up by the Union of Democratic Forces. Every time when one of these political parties came to power, the corresponding Synod took the control over the capitals and properties of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. In the next years the conflict escalated so much that now its solution depends on the decision of the European Court of Human Rights on the case of Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church (Metropolitan Inokentiy), expected in 2010. Being in a deep crisis, the Bulgarian Orthodox Church – the biggest religious institution in the country, is neither able to organize effective Sunday schools at its own parishes, nor to act as an effective partner in the elaboration of a national concept on religious education in public schools. The two synods also developed different views on the nature of religious classes in public schools. The Alternative Synod is more open to way of teaching that promotes interreligious dialog, while the Synod of

Patriarch Maxim insists on a traditional confessional faith instruction. The latter is supported by the Grand Mufti's Office that also prefers a confessional approach to the religious education of the Muslim students. As a result, religious education in public schools did not make great progress since the end of atheism.

### **WHAT HAS BEEN DONE SINCE 1997?**

In the spring of 1997, the interim government of Stefan Sofianski, associated with the democratic forces, established "Commission on religion" at the Ministry of Education.<sup>6</sup> It had to prepare a concept for the study of religion in public schools. Written by representatives of the Sofia Faculty of Theology, it reduced the term "religion" to Eastern Orthodox Christianity. The concept also suffered from internal contradictions. On the one hand, it stated that the new discipline would not be an Orthodox or another indoctrination which is a monopoly of the officially registered religious institutions in the country (Part 2, §4, §7). On the other hand, it required the classes of religion to be taught only by theologians, i.e. the graduates of the Faculty of Theology (Part 3, §13), whose training was limited to the Orthodox understanding of religion. Their knowledge on the other religious traditions is insufficient and often does not recognize any views that differ from the Orthodox one.<sup>7</sup> The Faculty's curricula includes only one mandatory discipline dealing with the other religious denominations, called "History of religions" (45 academic hours) and one optional – "Non-Orthodox Christian denominations" (45 academic hours).<sup>8</sup> This state of affairs questions their literacy not only in non-Christian religions but also in non-Orthodox denominations.

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<sup>6</sup> Ivan Denev, "Religious Education in Bulgaria," *Religious Education within the Context of the Common European Home. International Symposium on Religious Education, Held in Bulgaria*, I. Denev and Engelbert Gross eds., (Sofia, 2004), 20-21.

<sup>7</sup> In 2002, the award of Cardinal Walter Kasper as Doctor Honoris Causa of Sofia University provoked some students and members of the teaching staff of its Faculty of Theology to protest against this act with an open letter, where they stated that the only theology that could exist was the Orthodox one.

<sup>8</sup> The Faculty curricula is available in Bulgarian in its website: <http://www.uni-sofia.bg/faculties+bg/theology+bg/curriculum+bg.html>. Last use on April 7, 2008.



The school discipline "Religion" was introduced in the autumn of 1997 in the form of optional classes on Orthodox theology. Next year it was expanded to all middle school grades and the number of the students visiting these lessons reached 25,000. The escalation of the schism in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church in 1998, however, chilled the enthusiasm of many parents and the number of the students enrolled in religious classes dropped in the next years despite the expansion of the discipline. In 1999, the study of religion in public schools was enriched by introducing classes of Islam. They, however, were designed for the Muslim students in the regions with compact Turkish and Pomak (Bulgarian speaking Muslims) population and thus remained geographically restricted. Provoking an exceptional interest among the Muslim children the study of Islam inspired their Orthodox classmates to join with similar enthusiasm in the classes of Christianity. In this way, the level of attendance there was much higher than in the schools situated in relatively religiously homogenous areas where the average attendance does not exceed 1 per cent.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, the confessional approach to religious classes revealed some negative effects. It drew up new lines of division in the schools situated in religiously mixed regions. The religious lessons split the classmates into Orthodox and Muslim groups. One of them had its religious instruction in classrooms designed with Christian items and symbols, while the other – in rooms suitable for the study and practicing Islam. In a similar way the former were taught by alumni from the faculties of Orthodox theology, while the latter – from those of the Higher Institute for Islamic Studies, established in Sofia in March 1998.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the knowledge of religious identity and difference, received during these lessons, was not combined with skills how to deal with it in the everyday life.

In 2003, the Ministry of Education made an attempt to improve the social effect of religious classes in public schools by changing the

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<sup>9</sup> In 2005/06, religious classes were attended by 10,000 Christian and 4,000 Muslim students. See: "Only 14,000 children take classes in religion," newspaper *Standart*, September 5, 2006, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup> This Institute was a successor of a semi-higher school for Islamic education that existed from 1991 to 1998. See: <http://islambgr.googlepages.com/higherislamicinstitutesofiacity>

Regulations concerning the application of the Law of People's Education. The study of "religion" was allowed in two forms as a "mandatory-optional" and as a "free-choice optional" discipline in all public schools (Art. 4, §3).<sup>11</sup> On this basis, in 2003, the classes of religion were expanded to the last school years (IX-XII class). The Regulations define that "Religion" has to be studied in the terms of philosophy, history and culture through the educational material distributed in different school disciplines (Art. 4, §2). This intercultural or interdisciplinary approach, however, remained a dead letter because the state authorities were not able to overcome the confessional approach in the organization of religious classes. In June 2003, Mr. Vladimir Atanasov, then Minister of Education, issued Instruction No. 2. According to its Art. 3, para.3, these classes have to be organized on the basis of the concepts of teaching "Religion" and "Religion-Islam," developed under the pressure of the leaderships of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Muslim community. The discipline "Religion-Islam" was specifically designed for Muslim students. In agreement with this confessional approach, Art. 11 defines that the graduates of the faculties of [Orthodox] theology and the Higher Institute for Islamic Studies are the only professionals eligible to teach these disciplines.<sup>12</sup> This means not only a confessional separation of classmates within the framework of public school, but also an Orthodox or Islamic indoctrination (or faith-teaching) of students which contradicts the constitutional and law principles for secular education. Although this approach satisfied the two religious leaderships as a guarantee for their spiritual monopoly over the religious education of the children from their communities, it turned to be counterproductive. The number of the students attending religious classes declined. In 2006/07, both disciplines, "Religion" and "Religion-Islam", were attended only by 16 667 students (12,925 from the I-IV classes, 2,748 – from the V-VIII classes, and 994 – from the IX-XII classes), i.e. by less than 2 per cent of all Bulgarian students.<sup>13</sup> Such classes were available in 10 per cent of the Bulgarian public schools. The discipline was taught by 207 teachers, 14

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<sup>11</sup> Regulations for the Application of the Law of People's Education, *State Herald*, No. 15, February 24, 2003. The text is available in Bulgarian in Internet: [http://rio-lovech.hit.bg/index\\_files/PPZNP.htm](http://rio-lovech.hit.bg/index_files/PPZNP.htm). Last use on February 15, 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Instruction No. 2, issued by the Ministry of Education on June 23, 2003, *State Herald*, No. 60, July 4, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Official statistics of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education.

of whom were specialists in Islam.<sup>14</sup> Meanwhile, the other, over 90 registered, religious communities in Bulgaria organize and maintain religious instruction for the kids of their adherents at their own premises and at their own expenses.

### **IS THERE A SOLUTION FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN A PLURALISTIC SOCIETY?**

The lack of results from the 2003 reform in religious education drove the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Grand Mufti's Office to unite their efforts in the sphere of religious education. They referred to the Ministry of Education with request to make religious training compulsory for the students, belonging to their religious communities. Such requests provoked sharp criticism in society, especially among the Orthodox lay people who were deeply disappointed by the long lasting conflicts and social passivity of their hierarchy in the other spheres of life. Therefore, in 2007 the Ministry of Education set up a special Commission to develop a new concept on religious Education. The Commission consisted of experts in religious studies (Christian and Islamic), historians, philosophers, teachers and theologians.

The new concept differed from the previous ones in many ways. The old ones were written by people appointed directly by the Holy Synod of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church or with its consent. The new Commission was initiated by the Bulgarian Parliament and established with a special order of the Minister of Education. Moreover, it had the potential of elaborating an interdisciplinary approach to the problems of religious education. It created the first concept that took into consideration the legal framework in which religious education can be carried out in public schools. It paid attention not only to the national legislation but also to all international acts ratified by Bulgaria. It was based on the principles of religious tolerance and pluralism, freedom of religion and consciousness, children rights, the secular nature of Bulgarian state and education, etc.

The Commission did not propose a mechanical restoration of the pre-Communist models or an imitation of the existing models in other

<sup>14</sup> Marina Hristova, „Islam is taught in the classes on world religions“, [newspaper] *Novinar*, 31.03.2007, p. 1-2.

Orthodox countries such as Greece, Romania and Russia but an original concept that is in conformity with Bulgarian specific features, with some weaknesses and strengths that have been omitted by the authors of previous concepts. It departed from the old paradigm of religious instruction or "teaching of religion" and proposed a new one – "teaching about religion(s)".<sup>15</sup> According to it, the discipline of "Religion" is aimed at bringing up citizens who are aware of the local and world religions, able to work together with people of different beliefs for the realization of common social and public projects and to respect the secular state. Religious classes should also assist student's value orientation. The interdisciplinary and multicultural approach proposed by the Commission allows "Religion" to be introduced as a mandatory discipline in the curricula of public schools. The members of the Commission agreed on mandatory study of religion in the first seven grades (I-VII) and facultative one – in the last four (VIII-XII) grades of the public school. It also expanded the group of people who can teach religious classes, i.e. not only theologians, but also historians, philosophers and specialists in other social sciences were included. It proposed the development of special MA programs preparing teachers for these classes.

The publishing of the Concept in the spring of 2008 provoked hot debates in Bulgarian society. Some people, mostly from religious minorities and atheists, rejected it because they were afraid that a mandatory teaching of religion will be used by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church to indoctrinate or proselytize their children. Some nationalist parties also opposed the concept due to its pluralistic and multicultural orientation that would undermine the Orthodox identity of the Bulgarian nation. Their main criticism was against the study of Islam by Orthodox children, foreseen by the new concept. On their turn, the Synod of Patriarch Maxim and the Grand Mufti's Office did not accept the concept as well. They protested against a mandatory teaching of religion on multicultural grounds to small children. In their view, these children should first receive a religious training in their own faith and only later on could study about other religious traditions.

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<sup>15</sup> See *Religious Education in Europe*, Peter Schreiner ed., (Münster: International Commission on Church and School (ICCS) and the Comenius-Institut, Protestant Center for Studies in Education, 2000.

In the spring of 2008, the Synod of Patriarch Maxim proposed its own contra-concept.<sup>16</sup> It stated that “the upbringing of a free, moral and initiative personality” is impossible without the cultivation of Orthodox Christian faith of the ancestors of contemporary Bulgarian nation. It claims that the Bulgarian Orthodox Church has been “the mother-guardian” of Orthodox Bulgarians throughout centuries and as such has special rights over religious education. Only graduates of the Orthodox faculties must be allowed to teach this discipline in public schools. Their training and their salaries are expected to be covered by the state budget. In addition, the whole educational system in Bulgaria must be based on Christian values. The religious classes should be organized on confessional grounds. The Synodal concept is open to a compromise in the case of non-Orthodox students and offers three major disciplines: “Religion-Orthodoxy”, “Religion-Islam” and “Religion” (a kind of secular religious studies).<sup>17</sup> The Bulgarian Orthodox Church allows a possibility for the other religious communities to organize their own religious classes in public schools.

According to the Synodal concept, all students from the twelve grades of the Bulgarian public schools must have mandatory religious classes twice a week. The same rule has to be applied for kindergartens. The students in the elementary schools will study Orthodox rituals, prayers and holidays, in the middle school – Orthodox ecclesiastical history and in the high school – historical and philosophical grounds of Orthodoxy. The other world religions can be studied only in the twelfth grade. The curricula and handbooks will be under Synodal supervision.

These radical and unrealistic requirements of the Synod increased the resistance of Bulgarian society not only to this particular concept but also to that of the interdisciplinary Commission, appointed by the Ministry of Education. A sociological survey, conducted in March 2008, revealed that although 96 per cent of Bulgarians are affiliated with one or another religion only 7 per cent of those are regular church-goers and other 24 per cent have never visited a church, mosque, synagogue or any other prayer house. It also reveals that 61 per cent of Bulgarian citizens appreciate family as the most important moral-building factor,

<sup>16</sup> Published in Bulgarian: [http://www.mitropolia-varna.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=869&Itemid=29](http://www.mitropolia-varna.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=869&Itemid=29). Last use on February 15, 2010.

<sup>17</sup> This proposal was supported also by the Grand Mufti’s Office.

18 per cent – the national traditions, 7 per cent – science and only 4 per cent – religion.<sup>18</sup> The constant insistence of the religious leaderships for compulsory religious instruction provoked a decline in the general support for religious education in public schools. It dropped from 70 per cent in March 2007 to 55 per cent in March 2008. There is also a strong public opinion against allowing clerics to teach religion in public schools. As a result, none of the concepts was approved and the situation in the sphere of religious education in Bulgaria remains unchanged, i.e. it embraces about 2 per cent of Bulgarian school boys and girls, mostly in the first grades.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Since the 1990s, the study of religion in public schools has become one of the most debatable issues in the Bulgarian public sphere. It raises many questions but still there is no comprehensive answer to them. On the one hand, there is a search for continuity with the pre-Communist times. On the other, that past lacks patterns applicable in the contemporary conditions, i.e. in a secular state and in pluralistic society. The end of atheism does not mean necessarily a return to the model of dominating Orthodoxy. Bulgarian citizens are free to confess and practice their religions but must respect the secular nature of the state. Despite the traditional character of their religion the Orthodox majority needs to respect the adherents of other faiths or irreligious worldviews in the same way as its own members. People have to learn to deal with the differences of their recovered religious traditions and to work together for common social causes. The return of religion on the public scene made also possible an intertwining of the interests of religious institutions with those of various political and economic forces, which is a new challenge for post-Communist societies.

As a result, many approaches to religious education appeared. Divided by civil and canon law, religious institutions and the state authorities face difficulties to find common grounds for organizing religious classes in public schools. In the post-atheist space, religion becomes a public force and thus it attracts political and economic interests. Therefore, it is

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<sup>18</sup> The survey was made by the National Center for Studying Public Opinion (Sofia, March 2008)

important who and how will teach religion to the young generation. Finally, the end of Communism is also the end of atheist society with its ideas for proletarian internationalism. This change requires a new vision of nation, national interests and national identity in a pluralistic society and in a globalizing world. The pre-Communist patterns of dominating Orthodoxy are out of date, while new ones are not still elaborated. Bulgaria, as most societies where the majority of people are affiliated with Orthodoxy, assumed the constitutional formula of Orthodox Christianity as traditional religion without declaring special privileges to its institutions and communities. In practice, however, Orthodoxy is perceived and treated as an inherited feature of the national identity. All biases concerning the non-Orthodox religious traditions erupt in the discussions on religious education when the issue of national identity is at stake. Therefore, the accommodation of the value of pluralism with the religious aspects of national identity seems to play a growing role in the debate for religious education not only in Bulgaria but also in the other Eastern European societies in the forthcoming years.

# INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN GEORGIA

CENTRE FOR CIVIL INTEGRATION AND INTER-ETHNIC RELATIONS,  
TBILISI, GEORGIA

*Shalva Tabatadze*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Intercultural education is one of the most important areas of education in the 21st century. Intercultural sensitivity is not an inherent quality. In the historical context, intercultural encounters have always gone hand in hand with bloodshed, violence, ethnic cleansing, repression and genocide. Intercultural education has emerged as an instrument to challenge the above-described “natural” negative attitudes and promote peace and tolerance in intercultural relations.

The internationalization of education, seen as a response to globalization, has become one of the top priorities for educational institutions and national governments. The globalization process, market-led economy and free competition are major factors behind the internationalization of education. Under such circumstances, the education system and educational institutions must assume social responsibility to redesign their education process in order to help Georgian students become more competitive in the



international labour market. The education process should aim to educate and prepare citizens for living in a multicultural and diverse world and working in multi-cultural and diverse organizations and companies. This aim cannot be achieved without intercultural education.

This Policy Paper reviews different aspects and problems related to intercultural education. The essence and objective of intercultural education, its origin and transformation stages on the European level are described in the first chapter. The second chapter examines problems related to intercultural education in Georgia. The third chapter deals with policy planning and implementation problems in the field of intercultural education, while the last part of the Policy Paper presents a vision of how the intercultural education policy can evolve in the future.

### **INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION: ESSENCE, OBJECTIVES, THE ORIGIN AND TRANSFORMATION STAGES**

It would be wrong to think that intercultural education aims only to normalize relations between people, help pupils and students from different cultural backgrounds communicate and interact with each other, or give pupils and students from minority groups the opportunity to preserve their identity and culture. These are the results of intercultural education rather than its paramount goal. The main objective of intercultural education is to educate pupils and improve their academic achievements.

Generally speaking, intercultural education is necessary in order to facilitate the integration of young people from both the dominant ethnic group and minority communities in a modern multi-ethnic society and help them become intercultural individuals capable of adequately responding to the challenges and requirements of a multi-ethnic environment. Intercultural education seeks to shape the worldview and attitudes of the youths on the basis of such values as humanity, responsibility, solidarity, mutual understanding, democracy and tolerance.

Intercultural education has two distinct functions: 1) it recognizes, respects and accepts diversity as a natural part of human life; 2) it promotes equality and human rights, opposes all forms of discrimination, and facilitates the development of values that can become the basis for equality and justice in the society.

In this Policy Paper the term "intercultural" is used to refer to teaching and learning methods and approaches based on democratic principles and values, and designed to foster cultural pluralism in a multi-cultural society. These approaches stem from the idea that the main mission of education is to unlock and bolster every pupil's intellectual, social, and personal potential. Intercultural education includes four interrelated postulates: 1) it is a movement for equality; 2) it is a movement for a new school curriculum; 3) it is a movement for building intercultural competence among individuals; 4) it is a movement against discrimination.

On the European level, according to Professor Caesar Bircea, the development of intercultural education policy can be divided into three different phases.

1) Education policy for migrants – experimental classes to educate migrants (1972-1984). This policy has changed old approaches and terms. Earlier, for instance, migrant children were defined as "culturally disadvantaged". Under the new policy, they are referred to as "culturally different". Just at that time the Council of Europe launched its project "Education and Cultural Development of Migrants".

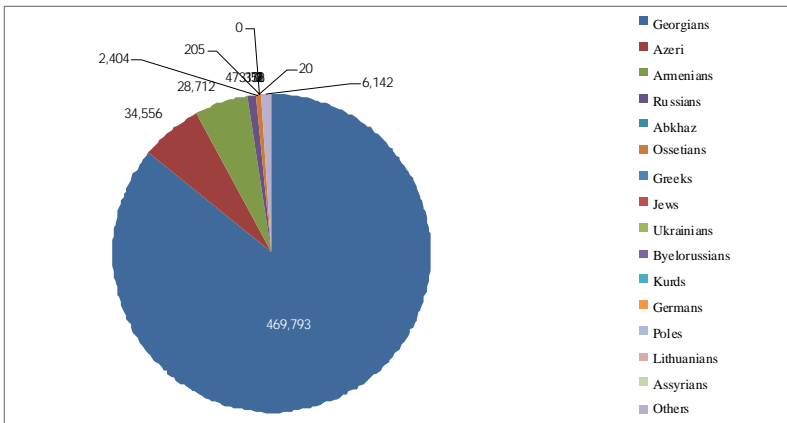
2) Protection of minority rights in the context of intercultural education policy. Global changes in the 1990s and the break-up of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia led to the creation of new states and emergence of new minorities. Consequently, the paradigm of the European intercultural education policy shifted from educating migrants to protecting minorities. At the policy level, Europe adopted the Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992 and Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1995. Simultaneously, the Council of Europe carried out a major project, "Democracy, Human Rights, Educational and Cultural Aspects of Minorities".

3) The third phase set a new intercultural education paradigm. During this stage top priority was given to teaching youngsters how to live together. The education policy shifted focus from protecting minority and migrants' rights to providing education to every child and teaching them how to live together in a multicultural world in the era of globalization.

The education system should take account of the multicultural parameters of a given society and contribute to peaceful co-existence and positive interaction between different cultural groups. Georgia is a multicultural country. That is why it would be useful to analyse multicultural/intercultural aspects of education in the Georgian context.

**CURRENT PROBLEMS OF INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION IN GEORGIA**

Georgia is an ethnically, religiously and linguistically diverse country. This diversity has a strong impact on the country’s national education system. For instance, there are 234 non-Georgian-language public schools in Georgia at present – 11% of the total number of public schools (Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2009). Ethnic diversity in the national education system reflects the wide cultural diversity of the Georgian society. The following diagram shows what nationalities, sorted by quantity, are represented in the country’s schools.



Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2007

According to the Ministry of Education and Science, about 72,000 pupils of Georgian public schools come from minority groups. The percentage of the teachers of non-Georgian schools is also important. There are 68,779 teachers in Georgia: of them 6,541 – 9.5% of the total – work in

non-Georgian-language schools (Ministry of Education and Science, 2007).

Article 4 of the Law of Georgia on Secondary Education stipulates that “the language of instruction in secondary educational institutions of the country shall be Georgian, while in Abkhazia either Georgian or Abkhaz”. Under Paragraph 3 of the same article, “those citizens of Georgia who are not native speakers of Georgian have the right to obtain complete secondary education in their native language, in line with the national education curriculum and the Georgian legislation”. A Georgian language course is mandatory for all secondary educational institutions of the country, while the teaching of two languages – Georgian and Abkhaz – is compulsory in educational institutions of Abkhazia.

In cases that fall within the purview of international conventions and agreements Georgia is signatory to a foreign language can be the prime language of instruction in a secondary educational institution. A Georgian language course is mandatory for such educational institutions too, while the teaching of two languages – Georgian and Abkhaz – is compulsory for such institutions in Abkhazia.

The law on secondary education protects every pupil from any form of discrimination and gives all pupils the freedom to speak their native language. Namely, Article 13 (Paragraph 2) of the law bans religious indoctrination, proselytising and coercive assimilation in schools. But this provision does not prohibit the celebration of national holidays and historical dates in schools, or any other activity designed to promote national or general human values. Paragraph 6 of the same article states that “the school must create and protect the atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect among pupils, parents, and teachers regardless of their social, ethnic, and religious background, language, and worldview”. According to Paragraph 7, “the school must protect, on the basis of equality, individual and collective rights of minorities to speak their native language freely and preserve and express their cultural identity”.

Article 18 (Paragraph 1) of the law guarantees freedom of conscience and religious worship for pupils, parents, and teachers. Paragraph 2 of the article requires that “pupils, parents and teachers shall be never obliged to do anything that contradicts their beliefs, conscience and religion”.

Different aspects of intercultural education are addressed in the National Education Goals Report, dated 18 October 2004. Here is an extract from the Report: "Communication with individuals and groups: the basic purpose of secondary education is to teach basic communication skills to future members of the society, including non-native speakers of Georgian, and help them develop organizational and teamwork capabilities and grow up as law-abiding and tolerant citizens. Mutual respect, understanding and learning are vitally important in a modern, dynamic, ethnically and culturally diverse world. The school must teach its pupils the ability to protect human rights and treat people with respect – it will help them to preserve their own and others' identity. Youngsters must be able to use the theoretical knowledge of basic human rights in practice and adhere to these principles in their everyday lives".

The development of a pupil's intercultural competence is part of the social sciences, foreign languages, and the native languages syllabuses. For instance, bringing up tolerant and dignified citizens aware of their civil rights is said to be the main objective of teaching the social sciences. At the same time, cultural and religious aspects are given a prominent part in social sciences. "The study of society must acquaint the pupils with the diversity of people's experiences, from ancient times to the present day, and tell them about their country's contribution to the progress of civilization. Pupils must learn political, social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of Georgia and other countries of the world. Using this knowledge, they should be able to analyse major past and contemporary historical or geographical events and similarities/differences between different historical epochs and the evolution of different societies". Moreover, "viewing historical processes from different perspectives (political, social, economic, cultural, religious), explaining why historical events and/or people's activities are interpreted in different ways, and comparative analysis and assessment of different interpretations can help foster essential civil skills: the ability to develop and justify own position, critically assess own behaviour, and respect different opinions, nationalities, religions and cultures".

Publishers of school textbooks are obliged to meet multicultural education requirements in their products. In particular, the National Centre of Assessment and Educational Programmes issued Order 072 on 30 March 2009, on the criteria to evaluate school textbooks, which includes the

following clause: "a school textbook must take into account racial, ethnic, linguistic, gender, religious, political and other differences, depending on national, ethnic and social background, origins, property and social status, and place of residence. A school textbook should encourage non-stereotypical and diverse thinking and views among pupils".

Professional teaching standards, introduced on 21 November 2008, also incorporate requirements of multicultural education: "a teacher must be competent in inclusive education and able to use multicultural and multi-linguistic approaches and principles in classroom". Subject-specific pedagogical standards, first of all the standards for teaching Georgian as the second language, social sciences and foreign languages, address intercultural aspects in more detail.

The Georgian government's National Concept and Action Plan for Tolerance and Civil Integration, signed on 8 May 2009, is part of the intercultural education policy. The education ministry's 2009 Strategy and Action Plan for Multi-linguistic Education was another step towards integration of minorities. On the basis of this document the ministry created its Multi-linguistic Education Programme, which was endorsed on 31 March 2009. In the framework of the programme, a bilingual education project was piloted in 40 non-Georgian-language schools of the country.

Georgia is a member of various international organizations that deal with problems of intercultural education. As a member country, Georgia supports and adheres to decisions and policies of these organizations. The Council of Europe is the most important of them. It has adopted four fundamental documents in recent years that include instructions on the intercultural education policy for CoE member states. Namely, intercultural education was a major theme of the final declaration signed at the 21<sup>st</sup> session (Athens, 10-12 November 2003) of the commission of education ministers. Other documents include Wroclaw Declaration (9-10 December 2004), the action plan approved at the third summit of the heads of state and government (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005), and Recommendation 1720 on religion and education issued by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 4 October 2006.

According to the Athens Declaration, the Council of Europe should:

- a. relaunch conceptual research on intercultural education with a view to adapting terminology and clearly defining the content and context of intercultural education;
- b. help to build understanding of the European dimension of education in the context of globalization, by introducing respect for human rights and diversity, foundations for managing diversity, openness to other cultures, inter-religious dialogue and "Euro-Arab dialogue";
- c. step up efforts in the area of content of learning methods and teaching aids, in order to provide the member states with examples of educational tools making it possible to take the intercultural dimension of curricula into account;
- d. develop analytical instruments and identify and disseminate examples of good practice emphasising intercultural and pluralist approaches, in school textbooks;
- e. develop programmes aimed at communication and mutual understanding, particularly through language learning and by encouraging awareness raising for the added value of linguistic diversity in multicultural societies;
- f. encourage the member states to introduce the intercultural dimension in their education policies, in order to enable appropriate consideration of dialogue between cultures;
- g. encourage research focusing on social learning and cooperative learning in order to take into account the "learning to live together" and intercultural aspects in all teaching activities;
- h. support initiatives and experiments with democratic governance in schools, particularly through partnership, youth participation and cooperation with communities, parents and civil society;
- i. develop quality assurance instruments inspired by education for democratic citizenship, taking account of the intercultural dimension, and

develop quality indicators and tools for self-evaluation and self-focused development for educational establishments;

j. identify models of good practice in the areas of democratic governance and quality assurance in schools and prepare their potential users to be able to make use of them;

k. strengthen intercultural education and management of diversity within its programme of in-service training for education staff and encourage member states to contribute to that programme by organising seminars on topics directly linked to the aims of the present Declaration;

l. devise and promote work methodologies that are suitable to integrate into states' own initial and in-service training programmes the principles of non-discrimination, pluralism and equity;

m. recognise the potential of ICTs as a tool for promoting intercultural learning in a global context;

n. develop educational strategies and working methods to prepare teachers to manage the new situations arising in our schools as a result of discrimination, racism, xenophobia, sexism and marginalization and to resolve conflicts in a non-violent way;

o. encourage the development of professional competencies for the teaching profession, taking account of skills existing within a team linked to the roles of learning facilitator, mediator, counsellor, partner and human resources manager;

p. foster a global approach to institutional life in order to create a community of students, taking account of the hidden curriculum, school atmosphere, a school's organizational ethos and non-formal education;

q. encourage member states to acknowledge that managing diversity is not a problem in schools alone, but concerns the whole of society, particularly with regard to policies implemented in the social, family and migration fields."



Recommendation 1720 on religion and education prepared by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also gives valuable advice to the committee of ministers on how to introduce intercultural education into the European education system.

Judging from the current situation in the country and its declared policies, Georgia has a diverse learning environment and aspects of intercultural education are addressed in the government's all major education policy documents. It is important, however, to analyse in depth the current diversity of the education system and put into practice the declared intercultural education policy.

### **PROBLEMS OF MAKING AND IMPLEMENTING INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION POLICY**

It was not until the 1990s that Georgia became able to carry out independent education policy. But intercultural education and relevant discourse began only in 2004. This policy had two clear hallmarks: a) protection of minority rights; b) integration of minorities. It is noteworthy that in both cases the main target group of intercultural education was a minority community – this factor posed a serious problem. Apart from minorities, the target group of this policy should in all circumstances include representatives of the dominant ethnic group for two major reasons: 1) it is impossible to protect and integrate minorities without the ethnorelative phase of the dominant nationality's intercultural sensitivity; 2) left outside the intercultural education, a majority of the Georgian pupils and students, and consequently the Georgian state, will be unable to succeed in a multicultural and interdependent world. That is why it is crucial to re-adjust the vector of intercultural education in Georgia, just like in Europe. Its focus should be shifted from minorities to all layers of the public, and all the country's citizens must become its target group.

It must be noted that the Georgian context of intercultural education is a very specific one. It is different from, for example, the American context, where the problem is that the number of students from minority groups (non-whites) amounts to some 42%, while teachers from the dominate group (whites) constitute 87% of the total. Respectively,

teachers have difficulty educating students from different cultural backgrounds. Just the intercultural education can provide an effective solution to the problem and help improve academic achievements of racial and ethnic minority students.

The Georgian case is different. There are about 72,000 non-Georgian pupils in Georgia – 67,953 of them (approximately 94%) go to non-Georgian schools (pure or linguistically mixed).

Language of instruction	Schools with multi-linguistic sectors		Schools with mono-linguistic sectors	
	Number of schools	Number of pupils	Number of schools	Number of pupils
Azeri	124	27442	94	18462
Armenian	140	15592	124	14944
Russian	135	24512	14	3748
Ossetian	3	165	1	60
Other	2	242	1	37

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2009 (EMIS)

The data on teachers shows similar figures. More than 95% of the teachers of non-Georgian schools in ethnic enclaves are non-Georgians, while the majority of Georgian schoolteachers are ethnic Georgians. It is important that the overwhelming majority of the experts of the National Centre of Assessment and Educational Programmes and authors of school textbooks are also ethnic Georgians. For instance, more than 70 authors have been involved in the preparation of textbooks for non-Georgian schools – only one of them is not a Georgian, but an ethnic Azeri (National Centre of Assessment and Educational Programmes). Nearly all authors of the Georgian school textbooks represent the dominant culture (authors of English and Russian language textbooks are a rare exception). The information given above is enough to conclude that new textbooks, created under new educational programmes, may be culturally biased, though it is the result of objective factors rather than deliberate policy since the production of textbooks is regulated by market.

Putting into effect new educational programmes is a serious problem. The Ministry of Education and Science translates educational programmes and textbooks into Armenian, Azeri, Russian, Abkhaz and Ossetian languages. There are three major problems in this regard: a) the quality of translation is substandard; b) translated textbooks are

delivered to schools with delay; c) the education process in non-Georgian schools is based on educational programmes and textbooks of a respective minority's historical homeland. As mentioned above, the Education Ministry's policy on textbooks is governed by the principles of market economy.

Publishers publish school textbooks, in cooperation with groups of authors, in accordance with the National Programme of Education. The textbooks must be authorised for use in the country's educational institutions by the Ministry of Education and Science. Schools are free to choose textbooks for their educational purposes from the list of authorised ones. Parents must buy the textbooks selected by their children's school. The story is different for non-Georgian schools. They receive textbooks from Armenia and Azerbaijan for free and distribute them among the pupils free of charge.

But these textbooks are tailored to the Armenian and Azerbaijani education systems and do not comply with Georgian education standards. As for the textbooks published in Georgia, only the textbooks purchased by the government in the framework of its social assistance programme are supplied to non-Georgian schools. In all other cases the schools have to rely on old textbooks received from Armenia and Azerbaijan – hence inadequate and outdated education process. Efforts are currently under way to gradually overcome this problem. It is noteworthy, however, that in non-Georgian schools the education process is also based on culturally biased textbooks. Even if the problem is resolved, the textbooks will remain culturally biased, in this case in favour of the dominant culture.

Apart from ethnic diversity, Georgia has also a diverse religious landscape. According to the last census, 705,302 residents of Georgia (16.1% of the total) do not belong to the dominant religion, Orthodox Christianity. These include atheists, nihilists and agnostics (National Department of Statistics, Census 2002). Religious minorities usually form their own enclaves and, consequently, their children are concentrated in schools located in these areas. This is not the case in Ajaria, which has a significant population of ethnic Georgian Muslims. Both pupils and teachers come from different religious groups there and, moreover, there are many religiously mixed families in the region.

The above-described aspects clearly demonstrate that despite Georgia's ethnic, religious, linguistic, etc., diversity, its education system consists of several mono-cultural segments. At first glance, it may seem that there would be few problems, if these mono-cultural segments could operate efficiently enough and provide intercultural education for students. But the current reality proves the contrary: as a result of the mono-cultural segmentation, on the one hand, pupils of non-Georgian schools are still not integrated into the Georgian society, while on the other hand, pupils of Georgian schools are not prepared to live in a multi-cultural society and tolerate cultural minorities.

The presence of several mono-cultural segments in the education system is one kind of problem. Another one is that within this mono-cultural environment minorities – even if they have very small representation – are completely ignored by members of the dominant nationality. The present situation in this regard is very hard indeed. About 6% of the non-Georgian pupils attend Georgian schools. All of them, no matter whether they're from an ethnic or religious minority, face serious problems in school for various reasons:

- The policy is well planned but its implementation is far from correct. On the one hand, all education policy documents highlight and acknowledge the importance of intercultural education. On the other hand, however, the incorrect practical implementation of the policy led to the introduction of Orthodox Christianity lessons in public schools (these lessons are often conducted only once) with little consideration for the feelings of pupils from minority groups. It is important to note in this respect that Paragraph 1 of the Article 5 of the Concordat, or a constitutional agreement, between the Georgian Patriarchate and the government of Georgia states unequivocally that Orthodox Christianity lessons must be optional for pupils. It stipulates also that "development/revision of the syllabi and appointment/dismissal of teachers need approval of the Church".

Although the Concordat clearly specifies that Orthodox Christianity lessons should be optional, schools refer just to this document to integrate the lessons into their curriculum. Public schools regularly celebrate religious holidays. The main argument in favour of this practice is that the law on secondary education does not ban celebration of

national holidays and historical dates in school. It cannot be ruled out that schools may expand these unjustified and often illegal activities after the education minister's statement in January 2010, which described the Concordat as a foundation for the national education system. Future actions and policies of the Ministry of Education and Science will show what the minister's statement means. It's not unlikely that at the present stage school administrations may understand it as an encouragement to teach Orthodox Christianity to pupils.

- Diversity and intercultural education are addressed in educational programmes only for a limited number of subjects and there is no common intercultural framework for all subjects.
- Educational programmes offer only general description of intercultural aspects, while in terms of cognitive development there is complete disregard for different phases of the development of intercultural sensitivity.
- School textbooks are often authorized for use in school even if they do not meet the authorization criteria.
- Tenured teachers are not ready to embrace intercultural education.
- There are no special intercultural education training programmes for teachers. Besides, aspects of intercultural education are absent in current teachers' professional and subject-specific development programmes.
- The current training of teachers does not take into account problems of intercultural education.
- Professors and lecturers of higher educational institutions specializing in training of teachers have little, if any, experience of preparing intercultural and inter-ethnic curricula.
- The general public is not aware of the importance of intercultural education. Intercultural education is sometimes seen as anti-patriotic and attempts to promote intercultural education are deemed politically and socially incorrect.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INTERCULTURAL EDUCATION POLICY**

The above-specified problems are quite conspicuous. Accordingly, tackling them must be the main task of intercultural education. As mentioned above, there are three types of problems: 1) the existence of mono-cultural segments within the education system; 2) obstacles to the implementation of intercultural education within these segments; 3) the fact that only minorities are considered main target groups of the intercultural education policy.

To cope with these three types of problems it is important: a) to reform non-Georgian schools and fully integrate them into the Georgian national education system; b) to insert intercultural education, as an essential educational approach, into the field of secondary education. A lot of documents have been prepared on how to integrate non-Georgian schools into the national education system. That is why this Policy Paper is centred on ways to introduce intercultural education as an educational paradigm and offers a brief analysis of the measures needed to achieve the goal.

The important precondition for installing intercultural education as an educational approach is to have a political will and apply practical policy instead of symbolic politics. From the viewpoint of practical implementation of intercultural policy, there are two key areas and most of the recommendations are related just to them: 1) educational programmes and textbooks; 2) training of incumbent and future teachers.

### **1) Educational programmes and textbooks**

Problems of this field were presented in the first part of the Policy Paper. The following measures are necessary to solve them.

a) As mentioned above, aspects of intercultural education are reflected in syllabuses of only some education subjects. But other courses pay little attention to requirements of intercultural education (for instance, maths, physics, ethics, natural sciences). Accordingly, textbooks on these subjects should be revised. ***It would be useful to create a transparent international framework for national educational programmes that must be mandatory for all subject groups.***

b) General and subject-specific national educational programmes include only generalised clauses about intercultural education and there are actually no mechanisms to measure and assess them. **Educational programmes should describe problems of intercultural education in accordance with Bennett's six-stage Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (denial of difference, defence against difference, minimization of difference, acceptance of difference, adaptation of difference, integration of difference), which corresponds to Bloom's Taxonomy of cognitive domain.** Since the Georgian National Programme of Education is patterned upon Bloom's Taxonomy, it would be important to pursue the same policy in this field too and define more measurable and assessable outcomes and indicators in educational programmes in relation to the development of intercultural sensitivity.

c) Although the rules for authorizing school textbooks were created with requirements of intercultural education in mind, in reality textbooks can be authorized even if they do not meet these requirements at all. **The procedure for textbook authorization should pay more attention to aspects of intercultural education and diversity. If this component is ignored, the authorization rules must be revised.**

d) **The National Centre of Assessment and Educational Programmes should engage with publishers and groups of authors more closely in order to ensure that multicultural aspects are explained in textbooks without cultural bias.**

e) **The problem of timely delivery of translated textbooks to non-Georgian schools must be solved once and for all,** so that non-Georgian schools can use textbooks that comply with Georgian educational standards.

f) As mentioned above, the overwhelming majority of the authors of textbooks and education experts are members of the dominant ethnic group – it is the result of objective reality, since distribution of textbooks in schools is based on the market principles. That is why, no matter whether the authors and experts have respective training or not, school textbooks may prove more or less culturally biased regarding intercultural education. Theorists of education (Mejia and Tejada, 2003) have

long advocated fundamental changes in the preparation of educational programmes. Today special attention is given to the participation of ***both theorists and practitioner teachers in the development of educational programmes, because teachers come from different social groups and can be seen as an enormous resource that can handle pupils' interests and needs in a specific learning situation.*** (Maury and others, 1993, p. 27, Mejia and Tejada, 2003). Ricento and Hornberger recommend to give practitioner teachers the central role in the preparation of educational programmes. This suggestion is especially relevant to Georgia's context of intercultural education. ***Subject-specific educational programmes must be created jointly by experts and practitioner teachers, not only by the former. They will balance each other and this factor will make a positive effect on the content of a programme and its ability to incorporate both social and local interests.*** The cultural aspect is crucial to the efficiency of an educational programme. According to Smith-Madox (1998), the use of instructional strategy in a culturally adequate education process can completely change the form and subject of study. Teachers will give priority to energy and effort. They will strengthen cultural identification of pupils and provide them with an opportunity to better express their views, attitudes and knowledge about products or processes (pp. 313-314).

## **2) Training/retraining of incumbent and future teachers**

The training/retraining of incumbent and future teachers is one of the key tools to inculcate principles of intercultural education. Even if educational programmes and textbooks are well composed and designed, teachers have a decisive role to play anyway. That is why it is important to properly train/retrain teachers to make them capable of leading a culturally adequate education process. It is essential in this regard to train future and retrain current teachers. There are several components to be considered.

### *Professional development programmes for incumbent teachers*

There are about 40 accredited professional development programmes focused on teachers' professional skills but only one of them is designed to develop teachers' intercultural competence and teach them the



strategies to conduct culturally adequate lessons. Some 15 accredited professional development programmes are intended for teachers of the Georgian language and literature. However, none of them educates the teachers in integrated transformational approach to the Georgian language and literature teaching. The same is the case with almost 20 accredited programmes for maths teachers. More than 50 professional development programmes are for teachers of foreign languages – only about 10% of them include aspects of cultural dialogue and diverse vision.

The problem is that training/retraining of teachers in the area of intercultural education is unprofitable. Teachers receive 4 state credits for their professional development (two for professional skills and two for subject-specific programmes). Providers of professional development programmes tailor their products accordingly and offer only programmes that are in demand on the market. In these programmes priority is given to the subjects that can help teachers to pass the certification exams. Just the link between the professional development programmes and the certification process has determined the content of the programmes. Here we encounter a widely acknowledged problem: success is measured by results achieved in the certification exams, not by teachers' ability to use modern methodologies and transformational approaches in the education process. Under such circumstances, it would be beneficial to revise the teachers' professional development programmes and the certification process.

1) In ***today's Georgia it is impossible to enter the teaching profession without certification. In a country that lacks professional trainers to train/retrain teachers there must be more ways to become a teacher. For instance, qualified and experienced scholars can be invited to take a teacher's career in their areas of study.*** 2) Teachers can choose a professional development programme on their own (at best it is selected by a school) nowadays, depending on their needs. At first glance, it seems to be an efficient and liberal approach. But teachers' with inadequate qualification can hardly assess their own capabilities adequately. On the other hand, teachers either feel no need to improve their skills and knowledge at all or their motivation is mainly extrinsic, directed only to passing the certification exams (there are exceptions of course). ***Just for this reason the government must***

***oversee the certification process and, in addition, determine which professional development programmes must be mandatory and which ones should be optional. The list of mandatory programmes may include inclusive education, intercultural education, the use of ICT in the education process, etc. These programmes must be designed to develop skills and knowledge teachers need in the XXI century.***

#### *Training of future teachers*

There are serious problems regarding training of future teachers in Georgian higher educational institutions. On the one hand, few Georgian youths are interested in teaching as a career and, respectively, the number of students in pedagogical faculties is very low. On the other hand, the International Association Of Education Initiatives gave Georgia one of the lowest ratings in Europe in 2008-2009 for training of future teachers. Serious measures are necessary, therefore, to improve the training of teachers, including in the field of intercultural education. The following recommendations are offered in this respect: ***1) create a system of incentives to make the teaching career more attractive; 2) toughen requirements and criteria for teachers' professional development programmes; 3) include intercultural education into all teacher training programmes as a mandatory course of study; 4) add intercultural and international aspects into teacher training modules and the syllabus of every subject in all Georgian higher educational institutions; 5) create diverse environment for teacher training programmes for both students and lecturers; 6) organise practical learning sessions for students in a diverse and culturally different environment; 7) retrain professors/ lecturers of higher educational institutions in the development and implementation of intercultural and international educational programmes.***

## **CONCLUSIONS**

In the Georgian case, what is needed is a reconceptualization of intercultural education. The existing diversity can become a valuable resource for the education process rather than a stumbling block to the develop-

ment of the society. To this end, it is important to introduce intercultural education as an educational approach and transform mono-cultural segments of the education system.

It is necessary to abandon the perception of the term "culture" as a static concept of ethnic or religious identity and regard it as a dynamic and constantly changing phenomenon. It is important to understand that individuals have diverse and often contradictory identities, which change and transform over time.

Efficient implementation of intercultural education policy requires revising the vector of target groups and realising that intercultural education intends to give every pupil adequate education, improve their academic achievements, and prepare them for living in a multi-cultural society.

The establishment of intercultural education as one of the key principles of education implies large-scale structural, institutional and interactive reforms. It is a process that requires a lot of time and resources. But now is the time to realise that the current Georgian education system falls far short of the principles of intercultural education. To overcome this problem and ensure progress, it is vitally necessary to phase in transformational curricula in school. To this end, it is essential to change educational plans and textbooks, and overhaul training/retraining programmes for teachers. Besides, it is important to carry out a proper public relations policy designed to raise public awareness of the efficiency of the intercultural education.

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# INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION EXPERIENCES AND PERSPECTIVES FROM GERMANY

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In the following, I want to introduce readers from other countries to the German discussion on intercultural and interreligious education. Moreover, I will also refer to the European discussion in general. My perspective comes from the background of religious education that I understand in a very broad sense, not only referring to the school but also to the family, to congregations and other settings in society (cf. Schweitzer 2006).

In Germany, the discussion on intercultural and interreligious education has started only approximately 20 years ago but it receives more and more attention. In the beginning, migration and the ensuing multicultural composition of society were the main motives behind this discussion. In recent years, however, the focus has shifted towards conflicts between people from different cultural and religious backgrounds in general. This implies that globalization rather than migration has become the background for intercultural and interreligious education.



My main focus will be on the religious or interreligious dimension that is often neglected in the context of intercultural education. In this sense, the two concepts—intercultural education and interreligious education—do not refer to the same questions. Instead, they point into different directions, at least for many observers. As should become clear in the following, I am convinced that the religious and interreligious dimension deserves special attention. This is why I want to begin with some considerations on the relationship between culture and religion in education.

I also would like to add a caveat at this point. It should be understood from the beginning, that a brief statement can not offer more than an outline of a number of issues while other aspects have to be left out altogether.<sup>1</sup>

## **1. CULTURE AND RELIGION IN EDUCATION – PRESUPPOSITIONS**

In many cases, the educational discussion on intercultural education in Germany as well as in other countries has tended to neglect the religious dimension. Practical approaches most often exclude the task of addressing the fact that intercultural encounters include an encounter between different religions and competing truth claims. In this case, culture is considered as a decisive factor because it shapes identities, life styles, basic orientations towards society, including moral attitudes. Contrary to this, religion is seen as something of lesser influence, only important for the private realm and possibly, due to an assumed process of secularisation, more and more on the wane. Recent work in the social sciences, especially in the field of the sociology of religion, has thoroughly challenged this understanding (Berger 1999, Luhmann 2000). Social analysts no longer expect religious influences to disappear. Instead of secularisation they refer to religious pluralization and individualization that are now considered the hallmarks of our times. If this is true, we need a different understanding of the relationship between culture and religion in the field of education as well. Religion can no

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<sup>1</sup> For more comprehensive statements of my views cf. Schweitzer 2006, also see Schweitzer 2004. Due to reasons of space, I have limited the references as much as possible. My earlier books include further references.

longer be subsumed with culture or left out altogether. The expectation that religion will soon have lost most of its influence on people's lives is not based on empirical data. Instead it follows some kind of ideological conviction that should not be confused with academic perspectives.

It is of course not possible here to go into the details of the complex relationship between culture and religion. Both concepts are highly complex in themselves. So some brief remarks must suffice to at least characterize my own understanding.

Culture and religion are not identical. Culture can be understood as the broader framework in which religion or different religions have to be understood. For example, we may think of the different shapes Christianity has taken on in different cultural contexts, for example, in different countries or even different continents. This understanding of culture as a framework into which religion is placed, is of central importance for the process of religious indigenisation, for example, of Christianity or of Christian denominations in different countries or regions—a process that has received sometimes controversial attention in the churches. In this perspective, religion is the dependent variable while culture operates as an influence that is independent of religion. Culture determines what a religion will be in any given situation.

Yet from a different point of view that is equally valid, culture can also be seen as an expression of religion. Religious convictions contain the power of shaping an ethos and of influencing values, of directing social interactions as well as producing or at least directing legal systems in a certain way. Religion determines the shape of culture.

Given these contradictory views that are both possible, it is most adequate to speak of an interplay between culture and religion while it must also be understood that culture and religion can never be treated as fully independent variables. Culture and religion tend to be intertwined. Quite often it is difficult to distinguish between culture and religion in the case of national traditions, especially in cases in which there is only one cultural and religious tradition to be found in the history of the country. And the same holds true for individual persons who are as much influenced by a certain culture as by their religion.

Another way of describing the interplay between culture and religion could refer to the concept of dialectics. Since culture and religion are mutually interrelated, their relationship can be called dialectical. They influence each other at many different levels and in different respects. To consider the one as dependent on the other, especially in the sense of variable, does not do justice to the interrelations between culture and religion.

In the following, however, my focus will be on interreligious education. This does not mean, however, that the intercultural dimension should be neglected. Yet for reasons of space, the limitation to the religious dimension is unavoidable here.

## **2. THE GROWING NEED FOR INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION – THE PRESENT SITUATION**

Interreligious education is taken more and more seriously throughout Europe and beyond, due to the effects of migration and globalization but also due to recent experiences of tension and conflict. Especially after 9/11, it can hardly be doubted that there is a need for tolerance and mutual recognition, for understanding and respect between people with different religious orientations and from different religious backgrounds. This new awareness of the need for such attitudes has also led to a new openness for interreligious issues among politicians. Consequently, we can observe a number of attempts in the field of European politics to become more open towards religion in education and to develop approaches that are inclusive of interreligious education. This is clearly the case with the Council of Europe. Several activities and publications supported by the Council testify to this new policy (Kias 2007, also see Council of Europe Publishing 2004).

Most of all, we can observe a new educational insight or awareness that has led to more positive views of interreligious education. Attitudes of tolerance and recognition, understanding and respect do not result automatically from a multicultural and multireligious society or from encounters between different people in everyday life. If this was the case, all tensions between different people would long have been resolved, especially under the influence of globalization that brings together people from all kinds of different backgrounds. However, since

it is clearly not the case that all conflicts would have disappeared, the attitudes desired must obviously be supported quite carefully and quite intentionally from early on—in kindergarten as well as in primary and secondary schools or in other educational contexts. Education is a key resource for multicultural and multireligious societies. This is why all educational institutions should increasingly consider interreligious education one of their most important tasks. In Germany, most syllabi have come to include such aims, starting at the level of early childhood and including all of secondary schooling (overview: Schreiner et al. 2005). This does not imply, however, that the corresponding tasks are taken up successfully. Much still remains to be done.

It should also be clear that the tasks of teaching for tolerance and respect are not limited to only one school subject like, for example, Religious Education as it is taught in many European schools. This subject should play an important role in this context, especially in reference to interreligious education, but a few hours per week are certainly not enough to achieve tolerant and peaceful attitudes. Attitudes and stereotypes are difficult to change. This is why religion in education—as opposed to Religious Education as a subject—must be considered a general issue and task for all education.

Any general approach to religion that requires the state to deal with religion and religious or interreligious issues will however raise questions referring to religious freedom. Modern democracies are based on state neutrality and on policies that do not discriminate against any religion. The question of the relationship between the state and the churches or religion must therefore also be addressed in the context of interreligious education.

### **3. ISSUES BETWEEN STATE AND CHURCH/RELIGION**

Since many educational institutions in Europe in general and especially primary and secondary schools as well as universities are sponsored by the state, the task of interreligious education raises important and sometimes difficult questions concerning the relationship between church and state or between state and religion. Should the state be allowed to interfere with the beliefs of the citizens? Can such state involvement be reconciled with religious freedom?

The focus of such questions generally is on the relationship between neutrality and commitment in state sponsored education. There is agreement on the need for state neutrality as a presupposition of religious freedom. This freedom can not be achieved if the state identifies with one particular religion while other religions are not treated with equal respect. Yet this obviously is not the whole story. Different views of the place of religion especially in state sponsored schools can follow from this shared understanding, and such views can also have different consequences for the schools and for the students attending them. Such differences tend to mirror the special histories of different countries. They refer to experiences that have become decisive in one country but not in other ones—experiences that can refer to certain constellations between state governments and the church, to times of war or liberation, as well as many other historical developments. In any case, it is not possible to presume that modern democracies can only work in one particular way in dealing with religion. It is no surprise, then, that very different understandings of the relationship between the state school and religion have developed as well.

In some countries like France or the United States of America, Religious Education has been banned completely from public—i.e., state sponsored—schools. In such countries, state neutrality does not allow for religious education within the context of any state related institution. The separation between state and religion is maintained in a very strict or rigorous manner. Yet even in France and in the United States as well as in other countries where state neutrality is put first in education, the awareness of the need for schools to provide an informed basis for religious tolerance is clearly growing. It simply does not make sense to exclude the schools—and consequently the main educational institutions maintained by the state—from a task that has become so central for the future of society. If education is a key resource for multireligious societies, the schools should not be prevented from playing their role in this respect.

In the present, the issue of the relationship between state and religion tends to become more complex in many European countries. It is no longer sufficient to think about this relationship in terms of Christianity and possibly Judaism. Islamic traditions also have to be included with the legal discourse, even if their patterns do not always fit with the

models based on the existing legal systems, among others, in relationship to Religious Education (Aslan 2009). At the same time, this can not mean that the achievements of human rights and of civil liberties should be given up. In this respect, many European countries face new challenges while solutions still have to be found.

Again we may observe that there is more and more agreement on the general principles. Not many people will find it convincing that education should abstain from the intercultural and interreligious dimension. Different opinions, however, refer to what should be considered the best way for addressing religion in education and for overcoming the tensions between neutrality on the one hand and the need for religious education on the other. Teaching *about* religion based on religious studies instead of theology seems to recommend itself as the best way for reconciling neutrality and religious education, at least according to some of the experts in the field of religious education. Others, however, have argued that religious education without commitment will never be able to achieve the aims of interreligious education. Consequently, they argue for learning *from* religion that should enhance the teaching/learning *about* religion approaches. In fact, the relationship between learning about and learning from constitutes one of the core issues in contemporary European debates on Religious Education.

#### **4. NEUTRALITY, COMMITMENT, AND DIALOGUE IN INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

From my point of view, it is indeed an open question if and to what degree a neutral approach to religion in education can really achieve the aims of interreligious education stated above. Information about religion is one thing, attitudes like tolerance and respect clearly are another. While there have been many theoretical debates and numerous recommendations for the neutral approach, for example, following the so-called multifaith model often practised in the United Kingdom, no empirical evidence has become available in support for such claims so far. The results available do not really address the effects of the different approaches or models of Religious Education. Most often, they only refer to the opinions or preferences of the students and of the teachers concerning their views of a particular model (cf., for example, Jackson et al. 2007, Knauth et al. 2008). Yet as has become clear from comparative

research in education like the PISA studies on student abilities, opinions and preferences should not be confused with the actual effects of teaching and learning. If many educators in some of the European countries should tend towards a learning about religion approach, this is more indicative of their possible convictions than of empirical evidence for the superior results of this approach. Moreover, even the preferences of religion teachers have never been thoroughly studied. A recent study in a number of European countries indicates that the empirical picture is not too clear. It seems that many teachers do not follow a clear-cut model that can either be connected to learning about or learning from religion (Schweitzer/Riegel/Ziebertz 2009). In other words, in terms of rigorous research, very little is known about the effects of different models of Religious Education. The debates tend to be more theoretical or ideological than empirical and academic.

From the point of view of religious education theory, a dialogical approach cannot be achieved on the exclusive basis of neutrality. Dialogue can not be based on leaving out the different positions or on excluding the different religious voices altogether like in France where even religious symbols have been banned from the school premises. Dialogical education must include the practise of dialogue in the face of lasting differences. Without such differences, there is no need for dialogue. While impartial information on different religions must play an important role for interreligious education, information alone is not enough.

This is why religious education should be open to both, neutrality and commitment, to information about different religions and to the encounter between different truth claims. This also implies that interreligious education in schools should not try to be completely separate from religious institutions. Otherwise it can only lead to certain attitudes within a school context while the religious institutions will not participate in the dialogue.

Moreover, if Religious Education, as I tend to argue, must be based on children's rights in general and on the child's right to religion in particular (Schweitzer 2000, Schweitzer/Boschki 2004), we must also take into account the question of what children need. While a strictly neutral approach to religion and to religious education may make sense in terms of a certain legal system, it may still not do justice to the needs of

children. Especially in the lower grades, children and young adolescents tend to strive for affirmation and support from adults—an expectation that clearly is personal and relational and necessarily goes beyond accurate information or a detached attitude.

Information about different religions has become indispensable. Teaching about religion is a necessary part of all Religious Education. But there must also be a place for some kind of more personal and committed encounters with religion within the school, from the side of the students as well as from the side of the teacher. Dialogical attitudes require the experience of encountering the other, not only on paper or with media and in terms of neutral descriptions but also in person and in personal engagement.

## **5. DIDACTICS OF INTERRELIGIOUS EDUCATION – A NEGLECTED TASK**

Most of the discussions on Religious Education in Europe in recent years have tended to focus not on the didactics of interreligious education but on the organizational shape that deserves preference. In this relationship, we can speak of didactics as a neglected task—the task of finding appropriate ways for introducing young people—but also adults—to interreligious dialogue.

In other words: Given the emphasis on organizational models and on general issues of neutrality versus commitment, the question of what kind of didactics is most appropriate and most effective with interreligious education has often been neglected. Yet it is easy to see that this didactics must be in line, for example, with children and adolescents of different ages and with different backgrounds or in relationship to different social, cultural, political, and religious contexts. These aspects can be considered the core of a didactics of interreligious education and must be considered most carefully, independently of the organizational model chosen. The didactics of interreligious education refers to the content as well as to the methods of education. It should be based on historical, analytical, and empirical work.

A didactics of interreligious education must do justice to the historical situation of a given society and to the global context. It must also



include critical scrutiny of the traditions that have shaped our thinking and our views of other religions. There is no innocent approach to other religions that would not carry with it the many implicit assumptions that often have developed over many centuries.

Analytically, the place of different religious truth claims requires special attention in interreligious education. The credibility and influence of educational approaches in this field depends on their truthfulness in relationship to such claims and to the religious traditions they come from. Any attempt to superimpose a non-religious framework upon the religions will ultimately not lead to peace and tolerance but to the—sometimes violent—resistance against what is perceived as the colonizing dominance of secular Enlightenment. This is why it is important to understand interreligious education not as an attempt of weakening or softening religious identities (“education versus too much religion”) but of finding a basis for peace and tolerance within the different religious traditions themselves. Moreover, there is the task of specifying the aims and the different abilities that interreligious education should strive for. It is obvious today that peace and tolerance, mutual respect and understanding must feature prominently among such aims. But how can we achieve these aims? What concrete steps must be taken on an everyday basis?

Such questions lead on to the need of empirical evaluations. Interreligious education tends to be one of the fields where good intentions are abundant. Yet how can we make sure that education will really work towards the fulfilment of such intentions? Experience shows that, at least in some cases, education has produced effects that are contrary to all good intentions. In the future, much more empirical work should be done in this respect.

Yet I do not want to conclude with a sceptical note. Interreligious education is a fascinating field. It is well worth our energies. Interreligious education can be one of the main contributions of education for a just and peaceful society. Our children will profit from it as well as society and the global community.

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# CONCERNING PROBLEMS OF INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN CONTEMPORARY GEORGIA

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Intercultural and interreligious dialogue is extremely important for Georgia, as its history has to a significant extent been shaped by its ethnic, cultural and religious diversity. This multicultural reality has recently become a major challenge for many countries around the world, which is understood as multicultural theory/ideology and practice.

Peoples living at crossroads of cultures and civilizations – like Georgia – have historically existed in a multicultural reality. Since ancient times the region was shaped by the borders dividing the areas of different, often conflicting, cultures and civilizations. The Caucasus was both a bridge and a barrier between north and south, east and west. In academic literature it is referred to as one of the most sensitive crossroads in the world.

Historically, the Caucasus has been an area of mass relocations and migrations. Attacks by nomadic people

through Caucasus gorge; migration towards the mountains for better security, and migration from mountains towards valleys for better economic opportunities; seasonal relocation of livestock between mountains and valleys; rural migration to cities; permanent or almost permanent migration of diasporas out of the region and their return to the homeland – these were the continuous movements discussed by R. Suny. These movements were conditioned by population mixture, vague ethnic borders, mixed marriages, multilingualism, changes in ethnic and religious affiliation, even the disappearance of some groups like the Caucasus Albanians<sup>1</sup> In the Middle Ages.

The role of cultural mediator is thrust upon those who live at such civilizational crossroads; in other words, there is the constant process of inflow and outflow of cultural streams. Constant interactions between different cultural traditions are generally not considered a source of confrontation and conflict.

Georgians realized that they were living at a civilizational crossroads and had a role as mediator at a quite early stage. S. Rapp notes that old Georgian historical literature, and in particular "The Life of Vakhtang Gorgasali", clearly shows that the Georgian people have the role of "mediator" to play between East and West. The author argues that pre-modern cultures of the "old world", including various peoples of the Caucasus, represent many examples of cross-cultural exchange and mutual sharing. These people were not just passive recipients; intercultural relations were not an expression of a rapid diffusion coming either from Iran or Byzantium and spreading into neighbouring regions, but rather a representation of multidirectional sharing<sup>2</sup>.

Self identification was more flexible and inclusive in the Caucasus during the Middle Ages before nationalities were clearly defined. Before, there was no general understanding of the term – "other", and being referred to as "other" depended on various factors – political, economic, physiological, and demographic. It is difficult to identify the general criteria

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<sup>1</sup> Suny, R.G. "Provisional Stabilities. The politics of Stabilities in Post-Soviet Eurasia". *International Security*. Vol. 24, No. 3 (Winter 1999/2000), p. 154

<sup>2</sup> Rapp S. "Caucasia's place in the Eurasian world: The testimony of "Life of Georgian Kings". Fourth international symposium materials on Georgian Studies. Tbilisi State University Publication, Tbilisi, 2005, p50.

that stipulated the acceptance or rejection of the "other". The fact that multicultural heritage was cherished rather than denied and opposed throughout the most prosperous period in Georgian history<sup>3</sup>, was not related to some exceptional tolerance imbedded in a particular (in this case – Georgian) ethnos, it was the natural and only possible form of existence for a multiethnic and multiconfessional country. For societies living in areas of complex and changing civilization, tolerance takes shape as a mechanism for adaptation. Moreover, it should be noted that the modern understanding of the concepts of nation, national identification and patriotism are principally different from what they were in the Middle Ages. All these factors shape the above-mentioned flexible and inclusive identification.

The "cultural narcissism" that is often found in "small cultures" – the idea of being unique and different – is a more recent phenomenon. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century and more so during the Soviet period, the intelligentsia of various nations started emphasizing differences and neglecting similarities.

This process was strengthened in the face of the official Soviet ideology, which was based on bringing different people together and establishing a joint Soviet people. The establishment of more or less firm national groups in the union republics and the autonomous units was one of the results of the international and antinationalist pathos of the national Soviet policy. National political and cultural elites were established; the demography of most of republics of the union became more homogenous ("ethnic" – as G. Suny says); national literature, art and historiography had developed, though all of them within the restricted frames of the Soviet system. According to R. Suny, at the end of Soviet rule and the start of post-Soviet period, ethno-nationalism became the only ideological choice for Armenians, Azeris, and Georgians<sup>4</sup>. Later, it would pose serious challenges to the state-building process.

Anti-system sentiments rose among minorities during the "perestroika" period in the Soviet Union in the 1980s. According to researchers, the

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Suny, R.G. "Provisional Stabilities...", p. 159.

main reason was the aggravation of collective identity rather than discrimination<sup>5</sup>. Reviving national stories was one of the major components of the awakening of national identity. These stories used to coexist and sometimes cover over the national narrative. Soviet policy only partly succeeded in suppressing or transforming national myths; in particular, they were not erased, but fragmented and combined into new stories which contradicted the official narrative<sup>6</sup>.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, with the conscious or unconscious search for new identities, two bloody conflicts erupted in Georgia. Conflicts often emerge, are maintained and deepen due to disputes over the interpretation of history: parties differently articulate each other's motives, aspirations and actions that are based on myths, stereotypes and prejudices developed over a long period of time. The deconstruction and revision of history began. New myths emerged together with mutual accusations of misinterpreting "historical truth". A "war of historians" accompanied or preceded the conflicts. Though the new official stories were an answer to imperial hegemony, they seriously influenced the minorities that were left out from dominant groups. Majorities created new versions of history while minorities did the same. We can argue that in the 1990s, ethnocentrism was an attempt to answer the challenges of the new reality and that is how what was once a counter-narrative to Soviet ideology has become legitimized history.

After gaining independence, Georgia as a multiethnic, multiconfessional and multicultural country faced new challenges. Perceiving a common historical background plays an important role in ensuring the integration of ethnic and religious minorities in the society and improving relations with neighbours – and these are the challenges faced during the transition period from ethnic nationalism to civil nationalism. The new reality created by the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century revealed the necessity for underlining the participation of minorities in common history as an important way to ensure their integration in a common civil society based on collective memory.

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<sup>5</sup> Cornell, S.E. *Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. Curzon, 2001, p.62.

<sup>6</sup> Cornell, S.E. *Small Nations and Great Powers. A Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict in the Caucasus*. Curzon, 2001, p.62.

It is accepted that the dominant discourse of the historical narrative is created by the political elite in accordance to its political, economic and social goals, as well as for their justification; political reality effects the construction of historical memory<sup>7</sup>. A shared historical heritage is extremely important for developing a collective ethnic identity; common ancestors bring members of the nation together. Yet in 1882, Ernest Renan defined nation as a unity of individuals that have many things in common and also have forgotten many things.

But the quest to overcome the tradition of ethnocentric historical narrative based on ethno-nationalism has not been easy. Marxist-Leninist methodology was not replaced with a pluralistic and multiperspective approach, it was maintained under a different title and in some cases was established as an eclectic mixture of other methodologies (for instance, local-civilizational).

History textbooks are one of the most important sources for developing national identity and historic thinking. They shape the views of students toward their own nation, its place in history as well as towards others, and in particular their neighbours<sup>8</sup>. School textbooks for social and humanitarian sciences are not considered a neutral collection of information. Howard Mehlinger argues that information concerning the native and other societies, which adults believe should be delivered to young generation, is transferred through textbooks. No other tool of socialization can be compared to the ability of textbooks to transfer to young people a unified, recognized, official version of what they should believe in<sup>9</sup>.

The ethnocentric model of Georgian history was maintained unchanged in post-Soviet pre-reform textbooks. The Caucasus and world context was presented vaguely. The importance of replacing ethnic nationalism

<sup>7</sup> *The Politics of Memory in Postwar Europe*. Ed. by R.N. Lebow, W. Kansteiner, and Claudio Fogu. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2006, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Stojanovic D. „History textbooks and Creation of National Identity“. *Teaching the History of Southeastern Europe*. Ed. by C. Koulouri. Petros Th. Ballidis & Co. Thessaloniki, 2001, p. 27.

<sup>9</sup> Mehlinger, H.D. "international Textbook Revision: Examples from the United States" *Internationale Schulbuchforschung*, No. 7(1985), p. 287.

with civil nationalism was gradually realized on the national level; the difficult experience of the 1990s played a major role to this end.

In April 2005 a new law on education was adopted in Georgia. The reform affected the teaching of history too. The "national goals of general education" state that in the contemporary dynamic, ethically and culturally diverse world, teaching mutual respect and understanding is extremely important for a society to function normally. Serious steps towards overcoming the ethnocentric narrative were taken in consecutive drafted textbooks. Still, adequate representation of the involvement of different ethnic groups in Georgian history remains a serious problem.

A history curriculum is based on the tradition of historiography. Can we argue that textbook authors have been able to refer to the works analysed in accordance to contemporary requirements of historiography, or methodologically accepted principles for presenting materials/data? Probably not. It is difficult to expect that textbook authors could have got beyond historic and pedagogic science. The latter still faces the need for rethinking the theoretic bases of research, approaches, methodology. In addition to all of this, there is the force of inertia, contradictions between generations of authors, in particular – contradiction among factors such as the post-Soviet generation of textbook authors, the tradition to search for only possible historic truth, intolerance toward different positions.

As already mentioned, history textbooks play an extremely important role in the process of identity formation. But there are many other aspects that shape civil and historical thinking. It is accepted that history usually creates bases to justify/legitimize policies. The political dimension inevitably influences the choice of knowledge that should be transferred to future generations<sup>10</sup>. Nowadays, Georgian history is used as a tool for manipulation by different civil/political as well as church forces. Generally, lack of awareness of the problem at the level of

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<sup>10</sup> Schlissler, H. Perceptions of the Other and the Discovery of the Self. What Pupils are supposed to Learn About Each other's History. *Perceptions of History. International Textbook Research on Britain, Germany and the United States*. V.R. Berghahn, H. Schlissler (eds.), 1987, p.27.



society is clearly illustrated by contradictory thinking: democratic values – national values, national interests – interests of Georgian citizens. This is a serious challenge for a multiethnic country.

The issue can be formulated as follows: what does ethnic, cultural and religious diversity mean for contemporary Georgia, passive coexistence and hidden tension, or mutual enrichment and respect for diversity? Two tendencies can be identified: on the one hand, an aspiration for unification – facing the “other”, “foreign/strange” culture and, on the other hand, detaching from one’s “neighbour” – in order to maintain one’s own identity. This is permanent movement between clearly “foreign/strange” and, accordingly, hostile and more “related”, “familiar”, where the threat is imbedded in this “relation”.