Changing Societies – Values, Religions, and Education

A Selection of Papers From a Conference at Umeå University, June 2009

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Introduction

In June 2009 the conference *Changing Societies – Values, Religions, and Education* took place at Umeå University. More than sixty participants from the Nordic countries as well as from other European countries came together. The keynote speakers came from South Africa, Canada, Great Britain, Germany, Norway and Sweden and addressed the conference theme from different perspectives. This was the tenth Nordic conference in a row since 1977 where people in the field of religious education and values education met. A Nordic network, NCRE, Nordic Conference on Religious Education and Values, exists.

 In this issue of *Working Papers in Education, no. 7* we have gathered eight of the conference papers. They mirror the variety of approaches to the conference theme that was noticeable during the conference itself. They also demonstrate the vitality in the field of research on values and religious education in the Nordic countries and elsewhere. In this short introduction we will give a glimpse of the content of these contributions. We will also indicate where presentations from the conference are to be found in other publications.

During the conference each presenter received a response by a colleague who in advance had read the paper and who shared her or his views. Concerning a stricter peer review with anonymous readers, the texts here have not gone through such a peer review process. As editors what we have done is to compile the texts. Each author is consequently responsible for their own text. Let us now turn to the contributions themselves.

Eight papers

In the first one, *Religious education as a tool towards enhancing diversity* by Andersen and Laudrup, Denmark, the results of a survey from 1999 are presented and discussed. It took place among Danish first-year upper-secondary pupils. It asked for their views on the influence of the religious education they have received. Andersen and Laudrup put the results into the framework of the policy recommendations by the Council of Europe towards more of diversity in education. In general they find education to be in line with this. In their interpretation of the aspects of the results they also include changes in attitudes and religious patterns among the pupils.

Religion in new places: Rhetoric of the holy in the online virtual environment of Second Life is the title of the next paper, by Jim Barrett, Sweden. The setting of Barrett's paper is Second Life, an Internet-based, interactive multi-user platform, and the different forms of religious life enacted there. Barett describes, discusses and interprets different expressions of religious activity through the

concept of rhetorical holiness. He describes examples from Christianity, Islam and Buddhism, and finds resemblances between these new expressions of religion and older more traditional forms of symbolism etc.

The third contribution Citizenship education in Denmark, is a paper by Ane Kristine Brandt and Pia Rose Böwadt. Within the framework of the new non-confessional subject "Christian Studies/Life Enlightenment/Citizenship (CLC)" introduced in 2007, the authors have studied examination papers from a group of student teachers in 2008. They analyze these papers according to what this new subject conveys to the students concerning democracy, religion and citizenship. The study is a pilot study and the authors suggest that it could be followed up e.g. regarding the relationship between Christianity and citizenship.

In the fourth contribution, *Religious literacy through writing?* Ola Erik Domaas, Norway, puts children's writing of essays in the 4th and 5th forms of school into the perspective of achieving religious literacy through writing. For his wider theoretical framework he draws on the British discussion on religious education, discussions by Wright (2007) and Jackson (2004). Domaas discusses his findings in relation to the actual Norwegian curriculum where efforts have been made to form a new subject and also to define competences for children to achieve.

Stefan Gelfgren, Sweden, describes in his paper characteristics of media-related religious activities as compared to traditional ones. His study (as well as Jim Barrett's above) is based on activities in Second Life, an Internet-based multi-user platform for religious activity. Gelfgren's paper has the title *Virtual Churches: transforming religious values and practices.* One observation he conveys is that the places for religious involvement he describes in Second Life are dependent on the activity of individual people for the places to continue to exist, and he argues that people do not visit these places because of tradition or because it has become a habit. He sees a need for further studies in the field.

David Lankshear, Great Britain, represents here the participation from non-Nordic countries in the conference that could be noticed this time. His contribution points to the variety of organisation of schools and religious education that is noticeable throughout Europe. Lankshear's paper gives an overview of a process within the Church of Wales where the church has recently reviewed their societal responsibility for schools in Wales; a responsibility that dates back into the nineteenth century. The paper raises questions as to how present-day challenges and a new political situation could be met, a responsibility carried forward, and matters of confessional issues be balanced.

In *Envisioned change and negativity: moral education between utopia and realism* Karin Nordström, Sweden, brings up issues related to the legitimacy of moral education. How can in a late modern society the autonomy of pupils and the activities of school be seen in relation to each other? In the pedagogical situation asymmetry and direction have to be handled vs the autonomy of the pupil. The concrete example from which Nordström takes her starting point is "absenteeism SMS". Schools send SMSs to parents to inform them about their children's absence from schools. Can such actions be defended? What kind of understanding of moral education and relationships do such actions convey? How can autonomy be balanced against pedagogical aims and goals?

Police students' talk about the relevance of religion in policing is a paper by Malin Sefton, Sweden. It has the subtitle Teaching and learning about diversity at the Swedish National Police Academy. In the paper examples are given from fieldwork in the education of police students. The focus of the fieldwork and this paper is the role of religion as one aspect of diversity. The results so far indicate a clear attitude of "us" and "them" vis-à-vis religion and people holding a religious belief. They are the others – they are "them", i.e. the police students regard themselves as not holding religious beliefs. The others are seen as exotic.

Conclusion

These eight papers mirror in different ways societal change and issues related to changes of values, changes in education on values and religions. They also exemplify studies with different methodologies and theoretical approaches. Some are based on conducted research; others are pilot studies and work-in-progress. In this way research as an ongoing activity is reflected through these papers.

In addition to this collection of texts additional material from this conference is to be found in two journals: *PANORAMA, International Journal of Comparative Religious Education and Values,* no. 22; *Educational Inquiry*, 2010. The keynote presentations will be published in *Values, religions and education in changing societies,* eds. Sporre & Mannberg, Dordrecht: Springer (2010).

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In the preparation for the conference and during it staff from the Department of Swedish and Social Sciences and the Department of Religious Studies, both at Umeå University, cooperated. We want to thank all who contributed to this conference and its success. Further, when the printing of this publication takes place, one can still access information about the original conference on the website: http://www.umea-congress.se/changing2009/index.html

We also want to thank those authors who have contributed to this publication by submitting their papers. THANK YOU EACH AND EVERY ONE!

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Articles

1. Religious Education as a Tool for Enhancing Diversity[1]

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Abstract

Over the past 30 years or so scholars in the social sciences and politicians alike have increasingly focused their attention on the effect of migration in European societies. This has resulted in theories of multiculturalism and more recently theories of cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. This paper raises the question of how such theories are reflected in religious education in the Danish school system. Based on analyses of a survey among pupils in their final year in upper secondary schools, it is argued that non-confessional religious education is one way of enhancing religious tolerance.

Key words: non-confessional religious education (RE); cultural, ethnic, religious diversity; religious tolerance; Danish RE

Introduction

The backdrop for this paper is the Council of Europe's aim to change the present school systems from various kinds of mono-cultural curricula towards teaching socio-cultural diversity. In some ways this development may be seen as initiated in 1954 by the ratification of the *European Cultural Convention*, which among other issues stressed intercultural education as well as "cultural and artistic activities, as a vehicle for dialogue", a development which was underlined by *The Faro Declaration on the Council of Europe's strategy for developing intercultural dialogue* in 2005. In retrospect much of the impact of the *Convention* has, however, been on formal issues like the rights to education and the transmission of knowledge of history, arts, religions, and cultures, issues which have too readily been translated into mono-cultural agendas in different subjects taught in schools in various European countries.

The development towards an active focus on the development of teaching socio-cultural diversity did not materialise at the level of the Council of Europe (CoE) until 2003, when the European ministers of education redefined the objectives of educational co-operation in Europe, thereby 'recognising the role of intercultural education' (*Policies and practices* 2008:9). This decision was later reflected by "the heads of state and government" at their summit in 2005 (May 2005) where they recognised "the need to promote a democratic culture and to foster intercultural and inter-religious dialogue both among European people and between Europe and its neighbouring regions" (*Policies and practices* 2008:9). This development is in line with the synchronous global efforts, which are reflected in 2005 in "The Rabat Commitment" and followed up in 2006 in UNESCO's *Guidelines on Intercultural Education.* They stress that culture and education are intertwined and that it is necessary to accept individual pupils' cultural identity as well as to develop their intercultural competences.

One of the initiatives has already materialised in a working group which was appointed to investigate how and how far the teaching of socio-cultural diversity was included in the training of primary and lower secondary teachers (ISCED levels 1 and 2). With reference to the CoE one of the conclusions is the need to "set 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." (*Policies and Practices* 2008:77).

Such research is already underway in Europe (e.g. Schreiner 2002). Sweden is one of the leading countries together with Great Britain (e.g. Jackson 2003 and 2007), the Netherlands (Schiffauer et al. 2004), Germany (Pingel 2000), and Northern Ireland, where there is a continuous effort to develop specific teaching strategies to overcome the efforts of long standing conflicts between national/religious/cultural groups (Richardson 2009).

The present paper investigates how the teaching of religious education (RE) in the upper secondary schools in Denmark has worked towards a general acceptance of varieties of belief systems and cultural belonging among the students who graduated from upper secondary schools around the turn of the century. [2] There are several reasons to look back at that point of time. One reason is that there exists a survey collected among pupils in the last year of upper secondary school in 1999, but a more important reason is that the survey was collected at a point of time when the teaching of RE had the effect of enhancing intercultural understanding. At least we do not know if this is still the case, as the Danish government since 2003 has initiated a number of "canon" projects. The first canon project initiated by the Ministry of Culture was explicitly aimed at the formation of national and mono-cultural canons, and this could have weakened the then general impact of the teaching of RE. Later on the Ministry of Education issued a canon of historical events that was more inclusive and tolerant as it included the 1948 United Nation Declaration of Human Rights. Minor changes in the official guidelines for RE have been made since 1999, but they cannot be seen as particularly relevant with regard to the acceptance of diversity. The effects of a major reform in 2003 still have to be evaluated.

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[2] The focus on diversity in faith and cultural belonging leaves out many other aspects of diversity, e.g. sexuality. The paper does not address the teaching in these aspects of diversity.

RE in the Danish School System

Before we turn to the survey it may be useful to make a brief introduction to the teaching of RE in Denmark so that it may be evident why it is the upper secondary level that is relevant for this argument and not the primary and lower secondary school levels. In Denmark RE is a compulsory subject at all levels except for one year in lower secondary school where the subject is not taught at school, but coordinated with the local minister in the Danish National Church, so that the pupils can prepare for their confirmation in the Evangelical Lutheran Church.[3] In primary and lower secondary schools the teaching of RE has been non-confessional since 1975, but the content of the subject is still predominantly the Biblical narratives of the Danish National Church combined with the pupils' ability to engage in qualified discussions of religious issues as well as religious and non-religious ethical and moral problems. Throughout the primary and lower secondary school levels the subject is named knowledge of Christianity (*kristendomskundskab*) a name which should reflect a non-confessional approach to Christianity (*kundskab* means "knowledge"), but nonetheless stresses Christianity as the main issue of the teaching (e.g. Bregengaard 2006; Hermansen 2006). As some members of other 'acknowledged' religious communities may see this as akin to religious instructions – learning religion - it is possible for these parents (but not for atheists) to have their children opt out of RE. Even if there is an oral exam in RE after the ninth form, it has no consequences for the pupils' exam if they have opted out, as the means of the exam is not calculated – and by the fact that the exam after lower secondary school does not carry any formal relevance for the admission to further studies.

In upper secondary school the aims and contents of RE are different from RE in the primary and lower secondary schools. In 1999 RE was taught along the lines of general preparations for further studies (*gymnasiet* and the Højere forberedelseseksamen (HF)).[4] In accordance with the guidelines RE aims at communicating information in a neutrally informative language and the subject comprises several religions – learning about religion. The curricula point towards the specific situation of Denmark with one common religion, Lutheran-Evangelical Christianity, as well as philosophical and ethical questions in a European philosophical tradition comprising religious as well as non-religious approaches to life[5].

It may be useful to fit RE in the Danish upper secondary schools into John Hull's (2002, and Laudrup 2006) classification of different approaches to RE. He classifies the confessional approach as learning religion. The descriptive, objective and historical approach, which looks at any given religion from the outside, he classifies as learning about religion, whereas his last concept, 'learning from religion' concerns how religion is part of bringing up pupils in a way that makes them fit into society.

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[3] Education is compulsory and may be carried out at home by the parents. This happens very rarely, but in Denmark independent, private schools are supported with a solid part of the running budget for a school, so that it is possible to establish and educate children at independent private schools even for less wealthy parents. This means that a number of alternative educational systems and religious groups have established independent schools. In those schools a core curriculum in math, languages and history has to be followed, but there are no demands on RE at all (e.g. Krabek 2006 and Shakoor 2006).

[4] Besides these schools there are upper secondary schools which focus on technology and business, and here RE is not on the curriculum.

[5] A brief history of the background to this situation is described by Hobel (2002), but it may be added that the neutral teaching based on the approach to history of religions dates further back than the guidelines which he quotes, as some historians of religion have taught the subject with their approach even before it became part of the guidelines (stray information from former upper secondary pupils quoting it during Andersen's 'Open University' classes).

As Hull stresses, there may well be interaction between learning from religion and learning about religion, as the neutral and historically correct information about other religions enables pupils from other religious communities to relate to other religions in a way in which they do not need to accept or to reject faith issues. The present paper will investigate whether there is such collaboration between learning about religion and learning from religion in the teaching of RE in upper secondary schools in Denmark. The specific aim of focusing on information about the Danish situation indicates that the subject is intended to socialise the pupils into Danish society. It then becomes an open question whether the intention is in fact honoured, i.e. that the pupils learn from religion. However, whatever the aims are, discussions in Denmark – and to some degree elsewhere – have been based on normative assumptions rather than on empirical evidence. Little or no evidence has been produced based on studies of the effect of the teaching of RE on how the pupils respond to diversity among religions or if they segregate into their own religious or non-religious communities.

Collecting data from upper-secondary school pupil 6

We chose to investigate the effects of RE on enhancing diversity based on a questionnaire survey of upper-secondary school pupils towards the end of their one year of RE. In addition to a number of questions relating to their faith and religious activities there were a number of questions relating to the pupils' attitudes to the basis of RE in upper secondary schools. We also asked the pupils who had answered yes to the question of whether their attitude to religion had changed since they started attending upper secondary school to explain the type they referred to. In their replies we get their own estimate of the changes and some of their comments relate to previous experiences of the teaching of Christianity in lower secondary school. Their comments have been included in the analysis in spite of the fact that they are seen in retrospect of the pupils' previous education in lower secondary school.

One general methodological problem with surveys is that they only allow relatively few questions on a particular subject and that in order to facilitate the statistical collation, the number of options in answers must necessarily be reduced to just a few options given in advance. Both limitations mean that the respondents' possibility of placing themselves in a meaningful manner is reduced. When it is a question of which party you would vote for if a general election were called tomorrow, this is not too bad because most of us will accept being able to choose among only eligible parties. But when it comes to questions about faith and value systems based on our attitude to the teaching of Christianity and RE, it is a completely different matter. A large number of people would like to react by asking a counter-question 'How God?' or 'What do you mean?' when asked whether they believe in God. We have, however, chosen to retain the wording of the questions, which are similar to the ones in the European Values Survey, which has been carried out a number of times in Denmark. In other contexts this enables us to compare with the rest of the country's total population and this, in itself, is

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[6] This research project, which comprised a total of 1986 upper secondary school pupils, was carried out by RE teachers in one lesson at a number of schools handing out questionnaires for the pupils to fill in. We regard the project as being representative of Denmark, but must point out that there are no schools from the most westerly part of Denmark.

interesting, although it in no way solves the problem of what the respondents actually meant when they answered the questions.

In addition we chose to construct scales in which we combine a number of questions within the same overall theme into one scale in which a number of individual respondents' answers which point in the same direction have been added up so that they express where on the scale that particular respondent is to be found. The advantage of this procedure is that it can neutralise some of the problems relating to the interpretation of some questions by having the individual person's response appear as a collective expression of how that particular person feels about a given subject. The obvious risk is combining questions from totally arbitrary criteria (e.g. our own theological logic or our text book knowledge of history of religions). To reduce the risk we chose to use scales that live up to some relatively strong requirements as to internal coherence, i.e. those used in the statistical test known as a Mokken test. The requirements the test set up imply i.a. that among all the respondents there is a certain level of logical ranking in the questions placed on a scale. In the analyses we cross the scales against other distributions of responses in such a way that the coherence between the scale and a tendency in the responses becomes clear. A memento has to be added here: scales are not to be taken as absolute measures of the subjects they are taken to measure. When we constructed a scale for New Age and a scale for Christian orthodoxy, this does not prevent the presence of New Age-oriented or Christian-oriented respondents who would have answered no to all indicator questions on that particular scale, but it expresses the logic which allows us to use the scales analytically.

Upper secondary school pupils' attitude to RE

It is characteristic of pupils in upper secondary schools that a fairly large percentage of them believe in the bright and positive aspect of religion, such as ideas of man having a soul (66 %), and that there is some kind of life after death (55 %) and God (52 %). Afterlife may be here on earth, which those who believe in reincarnation (39 %) in some cases count on, but generally, the ideas about what life after death will be like are vague, as a much smaller percentage of the pupils expect it to take place at a specific place such as for instance in paradise (22 %) or hell (15 %). This is in keeping with the fact that man is basically regarded as being good, as by far the majority reject the idea of man being sinful. This rejection is more or less in keeping with the rejection of the idea of karma (78 %). Angels who can be protective guardian angels as well as God's punishing messengers are not a generally accepted idea (as it is rejected by 76 %). This might, however, just as well be due to natural scepticism towards the idea of a divine or supernatural interference in the lives of human beings as to pupils fearing a 'messenger' from god. (That the word angel literally means messenger does not necessarily refer to what pupils put into the concept of angel when they were asked – it is perhaps fairer to expect the concept of a guardian angel rather than a punishing angel).

A look at the gender distribution shows that in many cases female pupils are more likely to be positive to religious ideas than male pupils are. It is, however, also very clear that this difference only applies to the positive, light religious ideas, as typically there is no significant difference between how many males and females believe that man is sinful or believe in the Devil or Hell (Table 1).

Table 1.   *Belief and gender*

Percent yes	Males	Females	Total	N	Gamma	Sig.
A God	42	58	52	1717	-.327	<.001
Life after death (in Paradise, by reincarnation or in other ways)	42	64	55	1710	-.422	<.001
Angels	17	29	24	1759	-.342	<.001
The soul	58	82	73	1773	-.538	<.001
The Devil	14	15	14	1774	-.051	N/s
Hell	12	13	13	1774	-.052	N/s
Paradise	20	27	24	1742	-.205	<.001
Sin	19	24	22	1743	-.152.	.010
The resurrection	10	9	9	1745	.058	N/s
Reincarnation	27	46	39	1764	-.391	<.001
Karma	18	25	22	1814	-.181	.002

As RE deals with many different religions, it didn't make sense to ask whether RE should introduce a specifically Christian angle on religion. Instead, we asked independent questions concerning whether the subject should be neutral, should make evaluation of religion possible, whether teachers should be allowed to influence pupils religiously, and whether the pupils had changed their views on religion after they started upper secondary school. Of course, the last question does not refer specifically to RE, but to general changes in the course of their upper secondary school years. The additional question, in which we asked those who felt that they had changed their views on religion over the period to explain how, allows us, nevertheless, to specify how, with regard, also, to what RE may have had to do with it.

Based on the questions two ordinal scales were constructed for Christian orthodoxy and New Age orientation respectively. On the Christian scale there were questions about belief in God, Paradise, sin, the Devil, Hell and resurrection, so that belief in God was the more widespread and belief in resurrection the least widespread. In the New Age orientation questions about belief in reincarnation and karma were applied in the same way.

When these scales were compared with the pupils' attitude to teaching, it turned out that pupils are much more negative to whether the teacher was allowed to try to influence their religiosity, whereas a large part of them were in favour of the subject making it possible for them to evaluate various religions against one another. This did not preclude the pupils emphasising that it had to happen in a neutral atmosphere.

Compared with the pupils' other religious attitudes there was a strong positive correlation between their degree of Christian orthodoxy and their acceptance of allowing the teacher to influence

the pupils' religiosity and a weak positive correlation between their degree of Christian orthodoxy and the subject of RE making it possible for them to decide if a religion was something they might be interested in. Regarding the question as to whether RE should communicate neutral information there was a negative correlation with their degree of Christian orthodoxy in such a way, however, that a vast majority (96 %) were in favour of the subject being neutral (Table 2). It turned out that there was no correlation between the New Age orientation and these questions.

Table 2. *RE and Christian orthodoxy*

Percent yes	Christian orthodoxy							total	N	Gamma	Sig.
	weak	1	2	3	4	5	strong				
The RE teacher ought to influence the pupils religiously?	1	3	3	5	5	0	7	2	1524	-.402	.002
Opportunity for evaluation of religions	60	65	66	72	79	66	60	63	1489	-.112	.007
Should RE be neutral	98	94	93	97	97	97	96	96	1519	.208	.020
Altered view on religion	38	38	47	38	31	24	20	37	1526	.070	N/s

Question: Do you think that the RE teacher ought to influence the pupils religiously?
Is RE supposed to make it possible for you to decide if a religion is something you might be interested in?
Do you think that the subject of religion should convey neutral information about the religions being taught?
Has your view on religion changed after you started upper secondary school?

It turned out that the answers to the questions whether the pupils had changed their views on religion in the course of their upper-secondary school years had nothing to do with whether they were oriented towards Christianity or New Age. In general it is our impression that in every respect a weak or middle strong religiosity seems to be the religious basis that in particular leaves room for religious changes. Other social correlations are possible. The fact that pupils with strong orientations towards Christianity are not as likely to change their religion may be a consequence of a strong religious upbringing. At least it is evident that the pupils' retrospective evaluation of their upbringing as

religious, means that the likelihood of changing religions is weakened. This is, however, open for further investigation, as the correlation only concerns the female and not the male pupils (Table 3).

Table 3.   *Gender, religious upbringing and changes in the view of religion.*

Percent yes	Religious	upbringing				
	Yes	No	Total	N	Gamma	Sig.
Males	31	37	55	720	-.123	N/s
Females	34	41	40	1178	-.147	.043
Total	33	39	38	1916	-.145	.012

Question: 'Were you brought up religiously?'
                'Have you changed your view on religion after you started upper secondary school?'

It seems as if it is particularly the mother's religiosity that comes to the fore, because to a series of questions whether the individual parents were believers, religiously active or spiritually interested respectively, it turned out that there was a correlation between the mothers being spiritually interested and the daughters having changed their religiosity. There seems, however, to be no correlations as far as the father is concerned, just as religiosity and activity had no immediate impact on the their children, regardless of gender. As to the same questions regarding each of the pupils' two best friends' religion, there seemed to be a slight tendency towards female pupils, with spiritually interested friends having an added likelihood of having changed their religion than others.

Whether this indicates a direction for the change of their religion or whether it merely indicates more openness and hence changeability is not easy to say off hand, but the pupils' own comments on how they have changed their religion may serve as an indicator. When it comes to the pupils' own answers it is possible to document that the general tendency is the same whether the pupils have two Danish parents or at least one with a Middle East or Pakistani background. Therefore this is included in the further analysis.

The altered view on religion among Danish pupils and pupils with Middle East or Pakistani backgrounds

In response to the question whether RE in upper secondary school had changed their view on religion, the respondents could comment on which kind of change they referred to. In order to look into whether this change had anything to do with the pupils' ethnic backgrounds, the answers were classified accordingly. We were particularly interested in seeing whether, in the answers, we could find

differences worth mentioning between pupils with two Danish parents and pupils with an ethnic background in the Middle East or Pakistan.[7]

Out of the 1,686 pupils with two Danish parents, 38 % answered in the affirmative that through the teaching they had changed their view on religion. The majority of these describe this change not as a change in their personal religious views, but as a movement towards more openness, tolerance and acceptance. In their answers the vast majority place their answers in the objective, neutral teaching space with words like understanding, insight, knowledge, information and a more nuanced view based on an objective approach to religions. Here it is obvious that precisely the objective foundation of RE has provided the pupils with the ability to become acquainted with other religions, in a safe atmosphere. "...the teaching has given me a chance to relate to the religions and not be lured in by Jehovah's Witnesses." Here the difference between being introduced to 'other'[8] religions through RE and seeking them out for themselves seems to be rather striking.

In general, being introduced to 'other' religions is viewed as something positive. This is partly due to an educational process giving the respondents added insight into religion in general and hence fewer prejudices towards religions and religious people, and it is partly due to this being something particularly good about RE in upper secondary school, which is significantly different from the Christian education in lower secondary school. Whenever the two types of education are compared, this always favours the upper secondary system. "I have got a better understanding of other religions and I think that religion is a far more exciting subject compared to before." The pupils also find it much more interesting and exciting to learn about 'other' religions and to meet with the 'other' religions. Through the trained critical view on Christianity and religion in general their own religious attitudes become crystallised, so that they can make decisions relating to choice and/or rejection. Few change religious adherence either from a Christian to non-Christian or an atheist attitude and equally many find that their own religious convictions have become stronger. "An insight into other religions has strengthened my own faith." Through becoming acquainted with what 'other' religions are, the pupils' understanding of Christianity has deepened together with the fact that similarities are accentuated in a process of added tolerance: "'Other' religions are not so 'strange' after all." Here it should be noted that this tolerance includes not only 'other' religions, but also Christianity. Thus it is religion as such the pupils get a better understanding of through their education. It is evident that the neutral and informative RE with its historical, scientific basis creates openness towards religious diversity in general.

Of the 'other' religions mentioned Islam is worth special attention. Some of the non-Islamic pupils have obviously gained added insight and tolerance, and improved understanding has replaced the prejudices for at least some of the pupils who have been influenced by the public debate. For long

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[7] There was a question regarding the students' religious membership, but we experienced and got oral comments that the Muslims had difficulties relating to the concept of membership, which was also clear from some of their answers. We preferred, therefore, to operationalise the background as to ethnic background to the areas from where most non-European and non-North American migrants to Denmark originated.

[8] In Denmark, in compliance with the Constitution, there is a state subsidised Lutheran-Evangelical Folk Church. One of the consequences of this is that in school curricula Christianity is synonymous with the teachings of the official church. Another consequence is the distinction between on the one hand (Danish) Christianity and on the other 'foreign/strange/religions', which refers to 'other world religions'. In this paper we will refer to these religions as 'other' religions to avoid the Danish term with its derogatory connotations.

Islam has been the focus of heated debates and it is quite clear that at least some of the pupils have brought with them a number of prejudices that have been disproved. Thus a respondent writes the he/she has now understood "..that Muslim women themselves feel they have a good life due to their religion." Another one writes, "The Muslims are not the way they are described in the media."

If the responses from pupils with two Danish parents are compared to the responses from pupils with Middle East or Pakistani backgrounds, it turns out that the deviations from these tendencies are negligible if not simply non-existent. The number of responses is, however, very small and therefore it is difficult to generalise. Out of 46 students with a Middle East or Pakistani background only nine state that their view on religion has changed. Since this is a small percentage in relation to the rest of the group of Danish pupils and the variation between the sizes of the two groups is so large (46 to 1686), it is difficult to deduce anything from this. On the other hand it is clear from the answers that RE has had the same effect on these pupils as on the Danish majority pupils. Or to put it differently: those who do change their view on religion do it according to the same patterns as do the Danish pupils. Here too the respondents speak into, so to speak, RE's neutral and objective space with words like knowledge and insight, more tolerance and fewer prejudices. As an element of secularisation these people also distinguish between their own personal religious points of view and how they perceive religion and religious people in general. A respondent explains it in this way: "You have to act and think morally without basing it on religious views. Religion is an event which sets limits for man independent of whether people believe in God or not, even though he still exists for me."

Generally speaking, through RE in upper secondary school the pupils get the opportunity to become acquainted with 'other' religions on neutral and 'safe' ground, which is a fruitful basis for openness, curiosity, and obligingness. Through the broad approach and the objective scholarly approach to RE, pupils become socialised into a society based on diversity, as values such as mutual tolerance, acceptance and respect are transmitted through professional insight so that understanding replaces prejudice. Whenever the type of teaching is compared to the primary and lower secondary school teaching of Christianity, the pupils point out that RE in upper secondary school is more exciting and meaningful. Through meeting the unfamiliar the pupils are brought to reflect on their own religious views and through that become more aware of their own positions. This is a maturing process which is fruitful in relation to the secular space of RE.

Conclusion

In the light of upper secondary school pupils' reflections on RE in 1999 it is safe to say that the result lives up to CoE's ideal guideline targets regarding religions by moving them in the direction of a higher level of acceptance of other faiths than their own in so far as they come to understand the religious and non-religious aspects of other cultures.

When it comes to social integration generally in Denmark, it is a striking result that upper-secondary RE seems to have that effect by promoting tolerance and democratic awareness. As far as the need for educational tools making it possible to take the intercultural dimension into account, the present study argues that a broadly based RE in a neutral space where pupils can confront other

religious views than their own can enhance diversity and promote open-mindedness, which is one of the targets of the CoE. A further educational gain is that it seems that the broadly based RE comprising neutral information on a number of religions engages the pupils to a higher degree than a focus on a single religion whether it is confessional or not. This is, however, an open question, as the comparison is based on two different levels in the school system and the evidence is retrospective.

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2. Religion in New Places: Rhetoric of the Holy in the Online Virtual Environment of Second Life

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Abstract

This paper discusses three examples of rhetorical holiness from the online virtual world of Second Life. The rhetorical holiness is compared to the representation of beliefs and practices in physical settings. By examining representation of the holy in Second Life it is possible to discuss the shift from older to new media forms in established and therefore comparative contexts. How these movements reflect and affect practices and beliefs is argued as highlighting networks of power and meaning.

Keywords: MUVE, Virtual Worlds, Virtual Religion, Online Spaces, Digital Humanities, Visual rhetoric, Second Life, Close Reading.

This paper discusses a selection of examples of what I term 'rhetorical holiness' created using Second Life (SL), a multi-user virtual environment (MUVE) on the Internet. Second Life is a three dimensional persistent space made up of thousands of islands (called sims).[9] In SL a person is represented by an avatar, a body which they manipulate in the environment. The avatar can travel around the huge space of SL in real time visiting themed sites, buying and selling virtual commodities and participating in social and cultural events with others. The shared online three-dimensional spaces of SL include religiously themed sites where the holy is one of the main defining criteria of interaction. The sites in SL that I have examined are the Buddhist island of "Bodhi Sim: Land of Buddhadharma - a Second Life fansite" and two mosques built in SL; the Sultan Ahmed Mosque and the Cordoba Mosque. Finally the Koinonia Congregational Church of Second Life is a Christian church that operates entirely in SL. For the purposes of this paper, these sites are examined for the use of symbols from three established religious contexts that have been re-deployed in the virtual environment. The purpose of such an exercise is to identify a system of rhetoric within a larger literacy for such three-dimensional virtual environments.

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[9] "The Second Life platform is an Internet-based, multiuser, 3D world construction set that emphasizes creativity, collaboration, socializing and self-government. The Second Life community is a semi-self-governing group of residents who collaboratively create, live and interact in a 3D online world owned and operated by Linden Lab" Brian A. White. "Second Life: A Guide to Your Virtual World" p. 4.

The construction of the holy in online virtual environments has been the subject of some research in recent years.[10] In specific relation to SL, Derrickson (2008) has written on the construction of the sacred, arguing that the "Second Life Mecca sim may be considered a form of sacred virtual space, a result of the detailed reconstructions of spiritually-charged physical loci, and by behavioural regulations encouraged by sim owners in the treatment of those virtual spaces" (1). This paper identifies signifiers of the holy in Second Life, with a focus on the symbolic values represented within the "spiritually-charged physical loci" (holy places) as defined by Derrickson. Within the frame of symbolic values and SL, Shaowen Bardzell has published on the Gorean community in SL (2007, 2008) and its use of objects that operate not just in space, but as a network signifying elements shared in culture.[11] The Gorean sites discussed by Bardzell feature "spiritually-charged physical loci" for those who participate in the sharing of cultural values via symbols.[12] It is such a sharing of symbols, in this case through their acknowledgment as holy, which leads to the concept of rhetorical holiness in three-dimensional virtual spaces. The shared interpretive and interactive values of this rhetoric, as holy, exchangeable and meaningful, should be considered as examples of the literacies needed to participate in the (religious) cultures of SL. In a more general sense, such literacy is new in the contexts of the inscriptive technologies of the west and their role in religion, where books and the written word have dominated since the Protestant Reformation.

Church

Among the themed sites explored in this paper, the Koinonia Church is unique, as it is a functioning place of worship with an appointed clergy and scheduled services. The Koinonia Congregational Church of Second Life is, according to the website, "a safe space in which people from around the world engage in a community of ecumenical faith that represents liberal protestant values where all are valued as sacred children of God" (Koinonia). Architecture is used to indicate this holiness. The relatively sparse features, when compared with other SL sites, suggest that Koinonia is not primarily an image, but is a mediating device for "people from around the world [to] engage in a community of ecumenical faith". A rectangular floor plan and a vaulted ceiling are the first signs that Koinonia, as a virtual structure, is 'church-like' and pertaining to holiness. The central timber vaulted section of the church forms a nave, referencing the cathedral architectural design of the Western European medieval period. Unlike the traditional nave, the nave of Koinonia is devoid of pew seating. The movement from the Koinonia entrance to the cross at the transept of the structure is interrupted by an arrangement resembling a lounge room in the centre of the nave. The cross of Koinonia is without the corpus and instead features a white shroud draped around it that moves as if by a breeze. The imminence of the

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[10] In the research on the holy in online virtual environments the work of Tom Boellstorff (2008) stands out, as does the compendium *Religion Online. Finding Faith on the Internet* (2004), edited by Dawson and Cowan.

[11] Gorean communities in *Second Life* comprise large groups of users who through collaborative work and dialogue embody fictional worlds based upon the 26 Gor science fiction novels (1966-2001) by John Norman (b. 1931). There are currently over one hundred public Gorean Sims in *Second Life*.

[12] One example from the Gorean community of "spiritually-charged physical loci" is that of the 'Home Stone'. It is almost as if the city itself were identified with the Home Stone, as if it were to the city what life is to a man. The myths of these matters have it that while the Home Stone survives, so, too, must the city" (*Outlaw of Gor* – 22). The reference to the Home Stone goes beyond the symbolic and suggests the parallel function of the artifact as both interpretive and interactive (referential and immediate) within the context of the holy.

resurrection, rather than the sacrifice of the crucifixion, is suggested by this arrangement. Virtual cushions and chairs are positioned around a Persian rug with a coffee table in the middle. The presence of the architectural centre in what is, according to the cathedral form, the public section of the structure, indicates a movement away from a spatial hierarchy and its associations with a clergy-led service. The middle point of the arrangement resembles the lounge room of a suburban middle class home, which may indicate the contexts of the Koinonia Church in its "community of ecumenical faith".[13] As a final element, a plinth is situated behind the cross and hard against a wall, and is therefore unusable as a lectern for a single speaking subject. Reading these indicators of place, the focus of the structure is a multi-channel communication portal within the frame of the rhetorically holy, as signified by the architecture and relatively few objects of the place.

Buddhism

The Bodhi Sim: Land of Buddhadhrama is a site in SL "with a focus on Buddhism, with spaces and buildings reflecting each of the major Buddhist traditions" (*About Bodhi Sim*).[14] Bodhi takes up an island and features temples, shrines, pilgrim trails and objects associated with Zen, Varjrayana and Theravada traditions of Buddhism. The signifiers of rhetorical holiness on Bodhi Sim include the lotus, stupa, prayer flag, the action of prostration by avatar, mani stones, thankas, statues (Thai and Tibetan) and a Dung Chen (Tibetan ritual horn), which plays six audio samples. The very large number of interactive objects (they respond to input from a 'visitor') and their detail and intricacy creates a rich multimedia immersive environment that informs visitors about Buddhism. In representing elements of the Buddhist traditions, the Bodhi Sim is a site of rhetorical holiness that functions differently from the Koinonia Church. Its interactive elements impart information on Buddhism through the simulative functions of the site, via the avatar's participation in the signs and rituals. The example I use to illustrate learning through simulative participation is the prostrations of the avatar as it climbs Mount Meru.[15]

In Tibetan Buddhism the act of a three-part prostration at a shrine or temple has great symbolic value.[16] These values are referenced in the actions of the avatar on the Bodhi Sim, where scripted objects allow it to perform prostrations in climbing a representation of Mount Meru, the centre of the Buddhist cosmos.[17] When the avatar performs the dozens of prostrations (each one must be selected from a menu with a right click of the computer mouse) an audio track of the mantra "Aum Mani Padme Hum" plays (*Bodhi Sim*). The actions of the avatar, which is the identity of its operator in SL,

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[13] The users of Second Life, which demands a fast Internet connection and a high standard of computer hardware (CPU, Graphics card etc.), can also be seen to represent a particular demographic of use.

[14] According to the Bodhi Sim website forum, the sim is likely to close at the end of May 2009.

[15] A video of the prostrations of the avatar is here http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9g-kYvK3P-Q

[16] The three-part prostration as depicted in the Bodhi Sim involves "touching the crown [that] symbolizes one's wish to attain the body of the Buddha; touching the throat symbolizes one's goal of attaining the speech of a Buddha; touching the heart symbolizes one's goal of actualizing the mind of a Buddha" (Powers quoted in Fowler 149)

[17] Scripted objects are prims (virtual objects) which contain a data program that causes something to happen in relation to the object.

conform to the traditions of Varjrayana Buddhism. The combination of the actions of the avatar and the audio is a two-fold signifying structure, with the operator of the avatar at the centre. In a simulative sense the operator of the avatar is enacting a practice that is firmly contextualized in established religious and social cultures. While the specific meanings of the prostrations (See Footnote 7) may escape the avatar's operator, the sense of holiness associated with them is more difficult to miss. This sense of holiness is engendered in the relationship between the avatar and its operator, through a perspective that simulates the experience of the prostrations via the avatar. Rather than the pure spectacle of viewing an external body performing prostrations, the operator of the avatar is participating in a manifestation of the holy. Furthermore, the audio of the chanting both reinforces the actions of the avatar as observing the holy, and creates an audile space around the operator of the avatar. The mantra chanting from the Bodhi Sim positions the operator of the avatar in a spatial and temporal context. The avatar is the center of a sonic space that includes the person operating it. In the structure of avatar-operator-action dynamic the features of the Bodhi Sim are experienced in a simulative sense, not a realistic one. Such a simulative experience increases knowledge of the practices of Varjrayana Buddhism.

Mosques

The two mosques Sultan Ahmed Mosque (completed 1616), and the Great Mosque of Cordoba (completed 987) are recreated in SL and feature many simulative elements in relation to the conventions of visiting an Islamic mosque. Two of these elements are referenced in the avatar's washing of feet and hands prior to entering the mosque and the animated scripts for the postures of prayer within the buildings. Each of these functions is similar to the prostrations performed on the Bodhi Sim, whereby a simulated experience in SL is used to convey knowledge of its referent. It is easy to imagine that many non-Muslims have never been inside a mosque, but the features of the mosques in SL provide something of the experience. Through the subjective associations between the avatar and its controller, the etiquette and practices of visiting a mosque are portrayed in an interactive sense.

Each of the SL mosques offer a head scarf or hijab (Arabic: Cover) for female avatars, before entering the mosque. The 'optional' headscarf for a female avatar has the potential to occupy a range of symbolic dimensions and in doing so reinforces the idea that the mosques in SL are holy 'places'. Such a contingency represents an example of Derrickson's "behavioural regulations encouraged by sim owners in the treatment of those virtual spaces" (1). The hijab does signify the observance of the rules of a mosque as a holy place in the physical world, and the SL context it contributes to the overall simulation. In terms of the avatar, the hijab is not simulative in the sense of the prostrations of Bodhi Sim or the washing of feet prior to entering the mosque. Rather the hijab plays a role in the particular identity for the avatar (and its operator) by relating them to the wider communities from which the practice of wearing the hijab comes. The possibility of an avatar wearing a hijab suggests that the veil is a part of identity for those who choose to wear it. The hijab as an aspect of identity is be based on there seeming to be little point in covering an animated figure in a virtual environment, unless that figure reflects the identity of the person behind it. In this way, the simulative elements of SL and other MUVEs are not only consumed media but are also used to express the personal attributes of users.

Conclusions

Rhetorical holiness is expressed in the examples from the Second Life virtual environment through both simulative and representative features. Both of these features are largely enacted through the symbolic, either as individual symbols, such as the cross in Koinonia, or as systems. The prostration by the avatar on the Bodhi Sim is one example of a symbolic system operating in an interactive virtual space. As a contrast, rhetorical holiness is also used in conjunction with the symbolic to frame communication via such virtual environments. The Koinonia Church with it sparse use of interactive objects in comparison to the Bodhi Sim, represents a portal for community and communication. The use of the architecture of Koinonia has the potential to qualify much of the exchanges that are mediated by the place. Finally, in the context of holiness as a rhetorical construction, it is interesting to observe the similarities between the discursive structures engendered by virtual environments and the traditions of religious pilgrimage. The subjectivity created by the avatar, in such configurations as those found on the Bodhi Sim or in the mosques, has similarities with the participatory enacting of narrative that can also be found in pilgrimage. It bears consideration that many of the practices and meanings that can be found in so-called new media have strong parallels in older media forms.

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3. Citizenship Education in Denmark

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Abstract

In 2007 a non-confessional subject named 'Christian Studies/Life Enlightenment/Citizenship' (CLC) entered the Danish teacher education. CLC is the first subject to introduce citizenship education into the educational system. Our analysis of examination papers (summer 2008) provides us with material and documentation that show that citizenship as a subject provides the students with knowledge which is crucial in order to navigate in a society marked by cultural and religious diversity on one hand. On the other hand, the verbalisation of Christianity and Islam is often problematic, especially when democracy is seen in relation to the two religions. The following article is based on an analysis of student teachers' examination papers[18] from the summer of 2008 from all over Denmark. The aim of the analysis is to examine how citizenship education makes itself visible in the Danish Teacher Education in the subject of Christianity Studies/Life Enlightenment/Citizenship (CLC). Further, the article examines what happens when religion, history of ideas and citizenship are mixed in a non-confessional subject.

Keywords: teacher training, citizenship, Christianity studies, Islam, examination papers

State, school and church

A central aim in Danish primary and lower secondary schools[19] is to prepare the pupils to participate in a free and democratic society. 83% of Danish children attend public schooling, and 17% of the students are enrolled in different kinds of private schools. In 1975 a curriculum reform in the Folkeskolen changed the scope of the syllabus. From the beginning of the 20th century the syllabus was aimed at educating Christian citizens, but with the reform in 1975 the scope was aimed at educating democratic citizens. Since 1849 the constitution has allowed religious freedom and freedom of speech, but still the state and the church were knitted together by tradition, economy and the ties between the public school system and the state. In most of the 20th century, church and schools shared the responsibility for religious upbringing of Danish citizens – pursuing together the goal that all Danish people needed to know about and sympathize with the national church called 'Folkekirken'.

From 1970 onwards we observe a loss of understanding of even very basic details of Christianity. For many years the subject of 'Christian Studies' played a minor role in the public schools, and as a

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[18] From a total of 1,405 examination papers we have examined 177. The examinations papers were sent to us voluntarily.

[19] Known as the 'Folkeskolen'

result the children did not know much about biblical narratives or about the historical church as a powerful institution, but on the other hand those themes were not necessary in the Danish life of yesterday, with almost no religion in the public sphere. The lack of knowledge of Lutheran Christianity does not make most peoples' feelings for the traditions and church ceremonies any less strong – that is baptism, confirmation, weddings and funerals. Still a high percentage of the population attend with complete naturalness, (85% are members of the national church), but in everyday life the church does not play a role at all. 2-3 % of the population attend church on Sundays only. The English sociologist of religion Grace Davie characterizes this as vicarious religion (Davie, 2002, p. 19), a phenomenon she finds in protestant countries in northern Europe. In accordance to this, one can talk about 'belonging without believing' (Berger, Davie & Fokas, 2008, p. 15).

Citizenship education in Danish teacher training

In 2007, the subject named 'Christian Studies/Life Enlightenment/Citizenship' – a non-confessional subject – entered the Danish teacher education. The subject corresponds to 17 ECTS and is placed in the first year of the four-year education. The subject is compulsory. It does not correspond to a school subject, but helps the students to fulfil one of the central aims of education, in everyday life as well as in all subjects, namely to provide opportunities for the pupils to be active and democratic citizens. The central knowledge and proficiency areas of the subject are in force at every school of education all over the country, but it is up to the teacher concerned to choose method and literature.

CLC is the first subject to introduce citizenship education into the educational system. One of the subject's aims is to provide teacher students with the qualifications to prepare the pupils in the Danish elementary and lower secondary schools to participate in a society with 'equality, intellectual freedom and democracy'.These goals are pursued through themes such as <u>religion and a critical examination of religion</u> in the light of the criticism of religion from the 19th century and onwards <u>state and church relations </u>illustrated by examples from the Danish history of secularisation discussions of the <u>strengths and weaknesses of democracy</u> – as a golden idea and as a rough reality.

Throughout the subject of CLC the public school system is a dominant perspective. In relation to religion the main focus is on Christianity and especially its impact on democracy, the welfare state and education in Denmark. Other religions are mentioned in the description of the subject, for instance Judaism and Islam, but the aim is not to study Judaism and Islam as world religions, but as minority religions in Europe.

Religion and citizenship in the examination papers of the teacher students

When the teacher trainees attend a school of education, we assume that in general they have the same relation to religion as the rest of society. Supposedly, the majority are members of the national church, but their interest in and knowledge of Christianity is at a minimum. Also, their knowledge of Islam is very limited. The question is now what characterises the students' understanding of Christianity and Islam respectively, and more important, how do they grasp the relation between the two religions and democracy and the welfare state? The importance of this question rises from one of the central aims of

the CLC-subject, namely the student teachers' ability 'to develop the pupils critical sense ... and to make them live together with respect for the values and norms of each other.' (Curriculum Guidelines for CLC, 2007)

At present, religion is high on the media's agenda, and the topic of 'religion in the public sphere' is debated widely in Denmark. How does this affect the students? Our analysis of the examination papers provides us with material and documentation that emphasizes on one hand that citizenship as a subject provides the students with knowledge, which is crucial in order to navigate in a society marked by cultural and religious diversity. Citizenship education and education in religion helps the students to take part in the current discussion providing them with historical knowledge of the importance of the Age of Enlightenment, knowledge of the birth of human rights and a reflecting and critical attitude towards democracy.

On the other hand Christianity is often perceived as a religion, where the central message is to be kind and generous towards one's neighbour. We characterize this understanding of Christianity as 'Feel-good Christianity'. In 'Feel-good Christianity' we often find the notion that the golden rule or the idea of loving one's neighbour exists only in Christianity. Some of the examination papers draw a picture of Jesus Christ as a democrat, who fought for political ideas as tolerance and equality.

This understanding can be found as a part of the identity of the common Dane as well. As another example of 'Feel-good Christianity' we quote from Phil Zuckerman's book *Societies without God* where we find this significant example, 'I believe in the good character of human beings, that is the most important thing in Christian faith. You must not kill another human being. You have to help older people and things like that. I think these are good rules of conduct; that is why I am a Christian' (Zuckerman, 2008, p. 23).

Consequently the 'Feel-good Christianity'-position provides some students with the ability to change perspective according to the religion that is debated. They are able to see democracy, human rights and the welfare state as inherent in Christianity, whereas they see Islam as a hindrance for its believers to join in democratic citizenship. This dichotomy lies as an innate risk in the central knowledge and proficiency areas, where the correlation among Christianity and democracy and the welfare state is stated.

Another basis for the observed one-sided description of Islam is the students' tendency to grasp Islam as a static and homogeneous religion. Islam is described as being incompatible with modernity, secularisation and democracy. The students' limited capacity to analyse is seen in a term used frequently, namely 'the Muslims'. The term shows that the unequivocal and sometimes erroneous notion of Islam might result in an understanding of Islamic groups in European national states and Islamic states all over the world as indistinguishable. Obviously, this is not a problem created by 'citizenship education' – but it is important to notice that this is an understanding which 'citizenship education' should be the first to try to prevent.

Citizenship in the examination papers

In Denmark, as mentioned before, there was no citizenship education up until 2007. However, programs for democratic development have been very common all over the educational system. But the current political position points out that we have too little citizenship activity – in political parties and civic societies, and that one of the serious challenges of our time is the lack of social cohesion. Threats against society are terrorism and radicalisation, and to both of these clusters of problems citizenship education is seen as a valuable help. However, in Denmark it is interesting to notice that the debate about citizenship education has not been intense. Except for very narrow academic circles the issues of Citizenship Education have probably been seen as a natural continuation of the Danish focus on democracy education from N. F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872) and up to today.

The strengths of the Danish Curriculum

One of the strengths of the Danish curriculum *is* citizenship education in the CLC-subject. It is a very special mix of areas**.** At first sight it might be surprising that 'The identity of the subject' is as follows, 'Christianity Studies/Life Enlightenment/ Citizenship is a subject which in a general way qualifies for the job of a teacher. Questions of education and values are seen from a view of the coherence among the angles of the subject: religion, history of ideas and citizenship' (Curriculum Guidelines, 2007)**.** This description of the identity of the subject shows that the correlation between the different academic angles is meant to be an absolutely necessary condition. The central knowledge and proficiency areas emphasize that democracy, education, culture, ethics and religion are part of the description of all three angles. One could say that is all comes into one big melting pot. In other words the questions and dilemmas concerning values and education are seen from this correlation among Christianity Studies/Life Enlightenment/Citizenship. Whereas Christianity Studies is a non-confessional part of the subject, in a way Citizenship is 'confessional', because Citizenship is the state's definition of what is rightfully expected from Danish citizens. Or said in another way: Citizenship is an offer you cannot refuse.

Firstly, what is citizenship in CLC? Analyzing the students' examination papers, we had to find out what citizenship is and what it is not – and that was a lot more difficult than we had expected. Citizenship does not have one place in the educational system where all areas of this subject are tied together. Citizenship does not have its own methods. In the description of the goal of the subject we find ideas and concepts such as citizen, equality, intellectual liberty, democracy. The goal of the subject also includes the students' future ability to teach their pupils with 'respect for different values and norms' and 'a critical approach' – and this is obviously also a part of the goal of Citizenship Education. From the central knowledge and proficiency areas we will mention rights and duties of citizenship, identity of citizenship, and political history as background to democracy and dilemmas. The conclusion is that a lot of topics of the CLC-subject are related to 'citizenship' in a manner that makes it very difficult to tell what citizenship is, and what citizenship is not.

In our analysis we have found that about 25% of the students' examination papers do not mention citizenship or citizenship-related questions at all. On the other hand, 80% of the rest use citizenship as

an opportunity to describe and discuss values and dilemmas, and these are values and dilemmas such as tolerance, a coherent society, cultural differences, religion, secularisation, individual/community and all-round education. To make the point clear, what we have considered to be citizenship is expressed for example in the students' formulations of problems. Here are some of them, 'Do Christian values and ideas provide the background to Danish democracy?' (examination paper summer 2008)[20]. 'How can we continue to have freedom of speech in Denmark, if at the same time we want to show consideration for all religions and cultures?' (examination paper summer 2008). 'In what way do the demands of a religion, and the demands of a democracy differ?' (examination paper summer 2008). 'Why are tolerance and intellectual freedom important concepts for acquiring citizenship competences and education of democracy?' (examination paper summer 2008).

In the following, we will show some quotations from the examination papers we consider being reflective ways of handling citizenship.

'The terms tolerance and intellectual freedom are of current interest in Denmark. The television, the radio and the newspapers are overflowing with stories about prohibition of headscarves for judges, cartoon crises and polygamy.

Nor does the Folkeskolen get off scot-free when it comes to issues such as tolerance and intellectual freedom … The current revival of these concepts may be explained in part by the pluralist, global society which Denmark has developed into. Roughly speaking, we have become more diverse, which results in a greater number of different expressions and opinions that are all supposed to have a common way into a democratic society. This is where the needs for tolerance and intellectual freedom arise. Hence, where should we draw the line concerning tolerance and intellectual freedom? What does it mean to be tolerant and have intellectual freedom?'

And the quotation continues,

'All these questions are relevant to prospective teachers. Not only does the preamble of the Folkeskolen oblige them to inspire intellectual freedom in the pupils – they are also expected to act tolerantly and respectfully vis-à-vis each pupil in a motley class crowd. This makes it important to flesh out the concepts that may otherwise appear somewhat flimsy and diffuse. For this reason, this assignment will be my attempt to verbalise and define the concepts of tolerance and intellectual freedom as well as consider how The 'Folkeskolen' may help foster viable democratic, individuals by means of these values' (examination paper summer 2008).

In this quotation, the student demonstrates a qualified and reflecting understanding of professional problems. The student's starting point is consciousness of what the problems are – clearly stated in the student's asking about the limits of tolerance, and intellectual freedom. There is a critical questioning of the ideas of the Age of Enlightenment. The goal of the state is described as 'a common way into a

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[20] All quotations are our own translations.

democratic society' and the goal of The Folkeskolen is described as 'making democratic individuals' of the children. These goals are in accordance with the whole reason why citizenship has emerged in the educational system.

The next quotation illustrates that the student relates to different cultures and new identities – which is also an important part of citizenship.

'The world is open and we can, through different media, get information and knowledge of different countries, cultures and religions throughout the world. Especially the Internet is frequently used by children and young people who nowadays possess wide knowledge of the outside world. At the same time they are influenced by foreign trends and music, which they incorporate in their everyday life in Denmark. Combined with the large number of people with different cultures and religions, this creates a multicultural society in which the Danish identity can be difficult to find for the citizen. As a Dane throughout generations it can be difficult to find the line between wishing to preserve Danish values, on one hand, and being open and forthcoming towards other cultures and ways of life, on the other. It can be difficult to see how we can possibly make a common ground for being a citizen in Denmark. However, this is an issue that we have to relate to given that the multicultural society is the reality of both our present and our future' (examination paper summer 2008).

The last example is from an examination paper where the student describes how different participants in the public debate both query and defend the fact that Paul and his Letter to the Galatians is represented in the Government's Democracy Canon, because in the Canon Paul is presented as one that brings epochal news of the concept of equality. Here, the student demonstrates her ability to give an account of the discussion about the roots of democracy, a discussion which was of current interest in the public debate in the summer of 2008. The student quotes the Democracy Canon, 'Here he (Paul) lays the foundation stone for the division of faith and law that is an essential condition for the division of religion and politics'. And the student teacher quotes the former Rabbi Bent Melchior for the opposite position, 'in the New Testament we find a vital difference between the rights of the believers and the rights of the non-believers. In the actual Letter to the Galatians it says: If anyone is preaching to you a gospel different from the one you received, he shall be cursed'. And finally the student quotes Nicolai Winther-Nielsen, associate professor, 'For it is in The Law of Moses and the remaining books in The Old Testament that we meet a fully expanded model of society which is anchored in the Jewish-Christian principles.' (examination paper summer 2008).

The last example illustrates that citizenship competence and qualifications also cover the ability to demonstrate the different opinions on our inheritance. In this case the core citizenship-competence explains the complex democratic and religious heritages and the correlations between them.

'Feel-good Christianity'

In the following, the focus will be on the correlation between citizenship and Christianity. The aim is to examine both the impact of citizenship on Christianity, and the impact of Christianity on citizenship in the examination papers. One consequence of the correlation between citizenship and Christianity becomes visible in a special verbalisation of Christianity, which, as mentioned before, we name 'Feel-good Christianity.' This is due to the fact that it is a version of Christianity, in which Christianity is associated with solely good and rational principles. 'Feel-good Christianity' is very similar to the perception of Christianity as we meet it among the common Danes, namely cultural Christianity. Or one could say that 'Feel-good Christianity' is a version of cultural Christianity or maybe the core of cultural Christianity. It is a reduced kind of Christianity that mixes Christianity and humanism or rather: humanism is read into Christianity. 'Feel-good Christianity' is also a worldly version of Christianity – transcendence or the kingdom of God hardly plays any role.

The following quotation demonstrates 'Feel-good Christianity', 'When you act according to common sense and thereby are of use to your fellow human being, you act ethically according to Jesus. The Christian golden rule says, '*do unto others* as you would have them do unto you' (examination paper summer 2008).

The concept of loving your neighbour

According to many of the student teachers Christianity is about loving one's neighbour. The concept of loving one's neighbour plays an important role in their images of Christianity and it appears in two ways: Firstly, in the students' examination papers the twofold commandment of love of God and love of neighbour is reduced to one commandment only, namely love of neighbour. In the students' eyes loving God is not crucial in Christianity, whereas loving your neighbour is pivotal.

Secondly, the concept of loving one's neighbour from the New Testament is viewed in a very modern way. It is associated with respect, equality, tolerance, responsibility and recognition. The students claim that 'loving one's neighbour' is visible in modern values, as the following quotations will display. 'According to me tolerance and intellectual freedom are connected with the concept of loving one's neighbour, which is essential in Christianity' (examination paper summer 2008). And another quotation, 'Taking care of one's neighbour, for instance, consists of forgiveness, of listening and being open towards other people, which are essential factors in both the concept of tolerance as in the concept of intellectual freedom' (examination paper summer 2008). And yet another quotation, 'In the Bible 'loving one's neighbour' is the most important aspect. With present eyes it can be interpreted as though there has to be room for everybody and that we treat each other with recognition and respect'.

Our analysis of the students' examination papers leads us to the following definition of 'Feel-good Christianity'.

- It often lacks the notion of God.
- It contains references to a narrow part of The New Testament – especially 'The good Samaritan' and 'The sermon on the Mountain' understood as a matter of inner conviction and

belief, and the concept of loving one's neighbour and the golden rule are seen as exclusively Christian concepts.

- It often contains the notion of Jesus as the good humanistic leader
- It contains the conviction that democracy originates in Christian values and therefore often contains the idea that there is a clear and logical connection among Christianity, democracy and the welfare state.

Jesus the democrat

Also, the correlation between citizenship and Christianity in the CLC-subject sometimes becomes visible in a verbalisation of Jesus as a democrat, who fights for equality, intellectual freedom and tolerance. Often the students state that the democratic values originate in Christianity. The Sermon on the Mountain is not about the Kingdom of God but about equality, tolerance and human rights as seen in the following quotation, 'The golden rule of the Sermon on the Mountain can be recognized in the French Declaration about the rights of the citizens and of human beings' (examination paper summer 2008).

Luther and secularisation

Luther is portrayed almost like Jesus. Real Christianity begins with Luther and the reformation and especially Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is portrayed as the essential factor in relation to secularisation, individualism and modernity. When the Danes love freedom, respect one another, live in a welfare state, are secularised, identify themselves with equality, tolerance and democracy, are emancipated, are conscientious, always follow their hearts, forgive one another, have trust in one another, this is due to Jesus/Luther according to the students.

In many examination papers Luther and the reformation are underlined uncritically as the roots of secularisation, democracy and the welfare state, although the role of the reformation is much debated. As a consequence of this, there is a tendency to forget the role of humanism and the age of Enlightenment or a tendency to state that humanism originates in Christianity or the reformation. In the following quotation we meet the idea of a clear connection between Luther and humanism. The idea of equality also plays a prominent part. Luther not only prepared the way for equality among human beings, but according to the student he also stated a kind of equality between man and God as well.

'Here Luther regards man as if he is on the same level as God, even though in fact God has the power. Luther was not a democrat, but nevertheless he prepared the way for the humanistic fundamental view which is about respect of freedom and development of the individual' (examination papers, summer 2008).

An earlier examination of student teachers from 1996 displays a tendency among the students to construct their own version of Christianity, which they identify with evangelical Lutheran Christianity, a version, in which the focus is on human life rather than on God, the kingdom of God and transcendence. The presence of citizenship in the new CLC-subject may have strengthened this tendency, as the following quotation will show.

> 'The values and norms of Danish democracy are deeply indebted to Christianity. The entire Christian notion of loving one's neighbour is also incorporated into Danish democracy, whose pivotal concepts are tolerance, equality, and a sense of shared responsibility. Particularly, new concepts such as 'fellow citizen' allow us to see the connections' (examination papers, summer 2008).

In the quotation the student states a clear connection among Christianity, democracy and citizenship. The student does not question this connection and does not at all mention the role of the Age of Enlightenment. The student states that with respect to norm and values democracy is dependent on Christianity.

The verbalisation/vulgarisation of Islam

The shown verbalisation of Christianity ought to be seen in connexion to the verbalisation of Islam; a religion that is often portrayed as the strict opposite to Christianity. It is also a religion whose message is sometimes described as 'anti-citizenship', as seen in the following quotation. 'It is possible to combine democracy and Islam the way the religion is today, but it would not be a particularly functional democracy' (examination paper summer 2008). In the following quotations we meet a stereotyped view on Islam. 'Finally, it must be mentioned that Muslims actually believe everything that the Quran says'. 'Consequently, it seems natural that all Muslims adhere to the Quran, and that they believe everything it says to be true.' (examination papers, summer 2008).

> 'However, I have come to the conclusion that it must be very hard to be caught up in two worlds as a Muslim woman. One world is Danish society in which we are very modern and free, and the other is the Muslim world in which everything is bound by tradition and governed by rules. Furthermore, Muslims in Denmark belong to a minority in that they are not in the majority.[21] Thus, they have a really tough time sometimes, and they may feel lonely and abandoned. As seen through Danish eyes, freedom in Danish society is entirely different from that in the Muslim one. We refuse to do anything if we do not feel like it, and we do not get into trouble over it because everyone has this freedom' (examination paper summer 2008).

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[21] This sentence is equally pleonastic in Danish.

The quotations show a rather crude understanding of Islam as well as of Danish society. Both are seen as monoliths, and a distinct dichotomy is stated between Islamic culture and Danish culture, as well as between a free society and a society governed by religious rules, and also between modernity and tradition. The understanding of both the Muslim world and Danish society is based on generalisations, which the phrases 'all Muslims' and 'in the Muslim world in which everything is bound by tradition' show, and also the term 'We' meaning 'all Danes'. There is a lack of critical and professional reflection; consequently, the statements reflect a vulgarised understanding.

Vulgarisation of Islam:

In the worst cases, Islam is described as

- Not in correlation with democracy, modernity and secularisation.
- Not characterised by variation and innovation.
- A religion dominated by law.
- A religion, in which belief is not seen in connection with inner conviction, but in connection to exterior rituals and norms.
- A religion, in which belief is qualified solely by the Quran.

One of the central aims of the CLC-subject is to strengthen the student teachers' ability 'to develop the pupils' critical sense ... and to make them live together with respect for each other's values and norms'. There is a clear danger in the shown verbalisation of Christianity and Islam, namely that the converbalisation will be a hindrance to inclusion.

CLC - a multidimensional subject

As demonstrated there are both strengths and challenges for citizenship education in the CLC subject. The demonstrated verbalisation of Christianity and Islam displays an urgent need to strengthen the students' knowledge of religion. In our opinion, the three elements of CLC Christianity Studies, Life Enlightenment and Citizenship still have to be kept together in one subject. Citizenship education together with education in religion helps the students understand and take part in current discussions about for instance religion in the public sphere. And history of ideas provides the students with knowledge of the importance of the Age of Enlightenment, knowledge of the birth of human rights and a reflecting and critical attitude towards democracy.

Hence, when we ask ourselves what citizenship is like in CLC?, the answer is that in CLC one of the most relevant competences the students need to attain is the ability to reflect on democracy and all its dilemmas, in a critical way. For example the student teachers must be able to describe disagreements in the current public debate regarding the understanding of Danish democracy and the Danish religious inheritance. To preserve the complexity as well as the importance of the subject we need to keep it multidimensional.

Our analysis of the examination papers, which can be characterized as a pilot study, demonstrates that the the students´conception of the correlation between Christianity, Islam and citizenship needs further examination..

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4. Religious literacy through writing?

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Abstract

Writing serves several functions and purposes in elementary schools, and writing takes place in all subjects throughout school. Being able to read and write is a prerequisite for functioning as a literate member of a modern society. This article will focus on writing assignments and texts produced by pupils in the subject of RLE (Religion, worldviews and ethics) in a primary school in Norway, and discuss in what way and to what extent they promote literacy, with a special focus on religious literacy.

Keywords: RE, RLE, Literacy, Writing

Dimensions of literacy

The term "literacy" is most often used to characterise knowledge of and competence in being able to read and write (Goody, 1986, p. 51). The concept of literacy can include everything from the basic knowledge of how to use a language per se, to being able to make sense of texts in all the different areas of activities we engage in, for example at school. Professor Kjell Lars Berge characterises the latest school reform in Norway "The Knowledge Promotion" (Kunnskapsløftet) as being a *literacy-reform* (Berge, 2005) The prominence of the five basic skills that are introduced into the curriculum in all subjects is evidence of this. The skills are: Being able to read, being able to express oneself orally, being able to express oneself in writing, being able to develop numeracy and being able to use digital tools. The basic skills are also integrated in the competence aims where they contribute to development of the competence in the subject, while also themselves being part of this competence.

Literacy has, however, to be viewed as something more than the skill of being able to handle operational tools. Literacy has several dimensions, according to Bill Green, Professor at the School of Education at Murdoch University in Australia. He talks about the three dimensions of literacy*; the operational, the cultural and the critical dimensions* (Green, 1988, p. 160). The operational dimension has to do with a person's ability to make use of the language system in performing literacy tasks; that is, being able to read and write in an adequate manner in different contexts. The cultural dimension of literacy deals with meaning and content. A literate person is able to use language as a source for meaning connected to a certain content. This cultural dimension of literacy is what the different subjects in school are seeking to promote on the basis of the pupils' basic operational literacy. Each subject contains meanings that represent cultural areas and choices from the wider culture. Learning a

subject is also cultural learning. The pupils try to make sense of a subject as part of adopting a culture. There is some sort of interdependence between a subject and the wider culture and its meaning system. Learning a subject means to attain cultural literacy in both a narrow and a wider sense. It means learning a subject-specific culture and in the process getting insights into the culture in a broader perspective.

The third dimension of literacy is the critical dimension. The meaning systems offered for example in school and in specific subjects are not neutral or objective, they represent certain choices as far as interpretations and classifications are concerned. It is therefore of vital importance that pupils are provided with the means and the tools for reflecting critically on what is taught in the respective subjects. This means for example that pupils should be provided with alternative sources of knowledge and alternative viewpoints from what the teacher and the textbooks offer, and that they get spaces, means and opportunities to reflect critically. A fully literate person is one who makes use of all the available sources when working to attain an informed personal meaning, for example through writing. According to Green, writing is especially suited as a tool to achieve critical literacy. "Writing enables a learner to put his or her thinking at a distance and then to work on it; this is an enormous advantage in terms of being able to elaborate one's thinking" (Green, 1988, p. 165)

Approaches to RE.

RLE is in no small part in debt to the English RE. Although there are substantial differences between the two societies and the way religious education is organized in schools, it is fair to say that the English RE subject and the English debate about what should be the aim and the focus of religious education, has inspired and influenced the Norwegian subject and the debate about how to teach religious education in Norway. There is by no means any consensus in the English debate about what should be the main purpose of religious education or how that purpose should be achieved. Several approaches to religious education have been put forward and argued for. The "interpretive approach" to RE, championed by Professor of Education and Director of the Warwick Project Robert Jackson, is probably the dominant approach in English schools today. The interpretive approach has its focus on the individual, on the influences that shape each person's sense of identity and beliefs. In interpreting religious material this approach makes use of the pupils' own concepts and experiences. Religions and worldviews should not be presented as "Bounded systems of beliefs" (Jackson, 2004, p. 88), but the focus should be on how the individual believers, or the group they adhere to, describe their faith. Jackson stresses that the goal of RE is to provide the pupils with a kind of literacy that will help them find their own position in a multicultural and multireligious society, and to be able to understand the views of others.

Critical literacy as religious literacy.

Andrew Wright is Professor of Religious and Theological Education at Kings College in London, England. He is critical of the way in which Religious Education in England is practiced in primary and secondary schools today. He agrees with Jackson that the goal of RE is to provide pupils with a kind of

literacy that will help them find their own position in a multicultural and multireligious society. However, Wright argues that the pupils will achieve religious literacy only if they are challenged by the religions and worldviews themselves, with all their ambiguity and truth claims. Wright thinks that the main aim of RE as practiced today first and foremost seems to be to promote tolerance in a multicultural society, and that questions concerned with ultimate truth are bypassed. "As a result, it no longer mattered what pupils learnt about religion, provided their understanding was likely to promote a tolerant society, and it no longer mattered what pupils learnt from religion , provided the process enhanced their personal freedom" (Wright, 2007, p. 103). He sees much of RE as "pre-packaged", in order to avoid the controversies always surrounding religions, so it can promote "liberal values of freedom and tolerance in a multicultural society" (Wright 1998a: 65). Religious education at present is "redefined as something that can be acceptable to a modern society. Religion is pre-packaged, its rough edges shorn off and smoothed over, its contradictions and obscurities hidden away" (Wright, 1993, p. 11).

In order to promote religious literacy RE has to put a new emphasis on teaching religion as it presents itself. This means RE should put forward the question of religious truths. Now this is largely ignored, according to Wright, "yet there is not a religious belief system that does not have the issue of ultimate truth at the very core of its being" (Wright, 1993, p. 51). This does not mean that RE should take sides or offer answers to the question. The point is to ask the questions; the process is important, not the answers. This means that RE should not avoid a focus on the ambiguity of religion, and the questions children will put to the teacher and to the religions about the validity of their truth claims. Religious literacy can be promoted only in a process where "the pupils take part in an ongoing dialogue between the ambiguity of the truth claims of religion and their own developing self-understanding, beliefs and worldviews" (Wright, 1993, p. 69). This will promote a society "populated with literate atheists, agnostics and believers" (Wright, 1993, p. 64).

Writing in RLE.

The three dimensions of literacy are more or less visible in the description of the basic skills in the subjects of the Norwegian curriculum. The way writing in RLE is described is an example of this (My translation):

> Being able to express oneself in writing in RLE means being able to express knowledge of and viewpoints on religion and worldviews, ethics and philosophy. Writing clarifies thoughts, experiences and opinions and is an aid in interpreting, discussing and communicating. Writing in RLE means also being able to encounter different aesthetic forms connected to writing and make use of them. ("Læreplan i religion, livssyn og etikk," 2008)

Literacy is here not only being able to express bits and pieces of knowledge in writing. Writing should be used for making sense and creating meaning from all the subject-specific knowledge and

information the pupils encounter about religion, worldviews, ethics and philosophy. The pupils' own thoughts, experiences and opinions come into play in this literacy process. The Norwegian word often used to describe this process is "dannelse". Literacy and "dannelse" have overlapping meanings and contents. "Dannelse" focuses on how the knowledge and values the pupils acquire at school should lead to a positive and sound personal development for the pupil.. RLE is one of the few subjects where the term "dannelse" is used in the curriculum. In the description of the objectives of RLE it is stated: The teaching should stimulate a broad based "dannelse" and provide space for thoughts and reflection. All three dimensions of literacy are dependent of one another. Without operational literacy in function, cultural literacy and critical literacy cannot be obtained.

The RLE tasks and texts.

In order to take a closer look at writing in a Norwegian school setting, a group of specialists was established in 2004. Their main tasks was to work on defining writing as a basic skill in what would become "Knowledge promotion" (*Læreplanverket for Kunnskapsløftet*, 2006) and to work on improving the national tests of writing proficiency in Norway. In the process of their work they developed a tool, a model illustrating the relations between acts and purposes of writing and writing competences at school (Fasting & Thygesen, 2007). This model is a useful tool also when used to categorize the functions that different writing practices and their purpose have in different subjects. The model is constructed as a wheel with several concentric circles. The outer circle of the model indicates the basic acts and purposes writing can have: 1) Interact and communicate 2) Reflect on one's own experience, thoughts and emotions. 3a) Storing of knowledge and preserving of information, 3b) Explore, investigate, explain and reflect, 4) Create, imagine, narrate and theorize and 5) Express opinions, argue, pass judgment. The next circle in the model suggests what kind of competencies these purposes are serving: 1) Interaction and information, 2) Formation of identity and self-reflection 3a) Structuring of knowledge, 3b) Knowledge development 4) Construction of text worlds, 5) Meaning formation and persuasion.

The data examined in this presentation was collected over a period of nearly two years, and includes texts and tasks, as well as interviews with teachers and pupils. The texts are from 11 pupils in their fourth and fifth year at a multicultural primary school on the outskirts of Trondheim, Norway. The analyses of my data show that several writing purposes are represented in the material. Three writing purposes dominate in my RLE-material. One such purpose is storing of knowledge and preserving of information. The main purpose seems to be to use writing for cognitive purposes, to organize knowledge in order to remember it (the model's categories 3a and b). This is the case for over half of the almost one hundred tasks and texts surveyed. The writing expresses mostly information about religions and worldviews, ethics and philosophy. The second most common purpose of the writing was to express opinions, argue, judge and evaluate (the model's category 5). 40 of the tasks given were aiming at this. Many of the texts in this category were about the pupils' own opinion related to the themes presented in the lesson. In such texts the pupils combine writing as support for cognitive, knowledge-based purposes with the purpose of expressing views on their own. A typical

example here is a writing task given after an RLE lesson about the New Testament account of the wedding in Cana (John 2, 1-12): "How do you think Mary, the mother of Jesus felt about what happened?" This example also shows the fine, sometimes non-existent line between tasks asking for the pupils' own opinions and argumentation and tasks that ask for their own experiences, thoughts and feelings (the model's category 2). The third main category in my material covers precisely these kinds of writing purposes: the texts where the pupils write about their own reflections concerning existential questions. One example: "Write about what you think happens when we are dead", a task given in connection with the New Testament story about the rising of Lazarus from the dead. When the pupils were asked to write about their own experiences, thoughts and feelings, the texts were about being lonely, scared, about trusting someone and being happy. In interviews we made with some of the pupils, some said it is difficult to answer these types of writing assignments in RLE, "Because we have to think for ourselves". This should be an indication that these writing tasks are positive challenges for the pupils.

The dimensions of literacy found in the RLE tasks and texts

From this classification it is only possible to draw rather general conclusions about the literacy effects of these tasks and texts. All of them of course require a minimum of operational literacy in order to understand the tasks and be able to write in the medium of language in the given context. Writing for cognitive purposes, writing in order to express opinions, argue, judge as well as writing to express experiences, thoughts and feelings all suggest that both content and culture learning were in play in the writing, and that the potential for critical literacy were present to some degree. However, only a closer look at the content and subject matter of the writings will reveal in what way literacy was achieved or at least aimed for. The tasks and texts cover all three subject areas listed in the KRL curriculum: Christianity, other religions and worldviews and ethics and philosophy. In the fourth form the focus was on "Other religions and worldviews "and "Ethics and philosophy." In the fifth form the pupils' writing was focused on "Christianity" and "Ethics and philosophy".

The writing tasks dealing with Judaism, Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and secular humanism were asking for facts about the various cognitive aspects of these worldviews. The tasks included these: Note the three fruits eaten during Rosh Hashanah, mention three things a Hindu would do coming to Ganges, write everything you know about Muhammad, all you know about Buddhism and write two sentences about secular humanism (the sentences were copied from the teacher's writing on the flipover). There were no follow-ups to these tasks, no writing assignments asking for the pupils' opinions or experiences related to the subject matter they wrote about. The pupils' writing in these cases represents both an operational and a cultural dimension of writing literacy. The culture, as far as "other religions" were concerned, seems to say that facts are important. You need to know what "they" teach and believe, but your work (and writing) stops at that. A general aim for the RLE subject is "to acquaint pupils with other world religions" and "also to promote understanding, respect and the capacity for dialogue between people with different views on questions of faith". The tasks given on "other religions" are better equipped to fulfil the first rather than the second of these two aims. This

might say something about the broader culture the pupils are socialized into, a culture that struggles to include "other religions and worldviews" in dialogue and acceptance.

The writings in the subject area "Ethics and philosophy" were, by contrast, asking for the pupils' own thoughts and opinions, asking them to formulate philosophical questions and to judge between right and wrong. The last one is a favourite and often repeated task and an important means to socialize the pupils into the ethical code of schools and in society as a whole. These texts demonstrate writing as enculturation. It is interesting to note that none of the question about right and wrong is related to any religion. This is the case in spite of the fact that over 1/3 of the pupils are Muslims and probably get their ethical code at home from the Muslim tradition. This again signals an element in the cultural literacy promoted in RLE: When it comes to ethics it should be based on non-religious value judgements.

Finally some texts that exemplify that cultural literacy in the subject of RLE, as a subject about religions and worldviews, is sometimes more developed among minority pupils than majority pupils. Cultural literacy also includes the ability to interpret a task within the right context. One of the tasks given in connection with the New Testament story about the rising of Lazarus from the dead was the following: "Write about what you think happens when we are dead". In the RLE context the task was to write about their thoughts about life after death. The teacher confirmed that this was the task. However, about one third of the texts surveyed seems to have understood the task more as a "biology" task. They understood the language of the question and they automatically contextualized it, but they may not have taken in consideration the subject the task was given in. They interpreted the task as a question about how the body decays in the days and years after death. Several of the pupils had a rather graphic description of what happens to the body of dead people. *I think that when people die and get buried small animals eat their skin and their eyes are closed and it's only black when they look.* Another pupil writes: *I think I rot when I am dead.*

An interesting observation, and a little surprising one, was to see that it was the ethnic Norwegian pupils that had misunderstood the task. The pupils with minority backgrounds all wrote about life after death. Not everybody believed in such a life, but they answered the question in an RLE context. Amina wrote that our soul goes to heaven. Some pupils kept different options open. Anna wrote that dead people either live happily in the sky or feel good, or they are just dead. Amina also talked about the soul's heavenly happiness, but added a note of caution, if we have any soul, that is. The minority pupils in this class were Muslims, orthodox Christians or Roman Catholics. The minority pupils achieved in this case a more multidimensional literacy than the ethnic Norwegians. Is it because of what they have encountered in RLE at school? Probably not. It is their home environment that has given them this kind of cultural literacy.

Is religious literacy aimed at in RLE ?

How then do the tasks and texts in my material fare when tested by "religious literacy" criteria? How do they give the pupils "the ability to reflect, communicate and act in an informed, intelligent and sensitive manner with regard to the phenomenon of religion" (Wright, 1993, p. 47). The attainment of

religious literacy, in Andrew Wright's sense, is dependent on the texts and tasks aiming for critical literacy in Bill Green's sense.

First a trivial, but sad fact. Let's be realistic. The time used for RLE is very limited, maximum two lessons a week, each lasting 45 minutes. Many of these hours set aside for RLE are used for other purposes, for example discussing an incident happening in the schoolyard during the break or for information purposes.

In fourth grade the main theme was world religions and worldviews. Elements from four religious traditions and one secular worldview were touched upon. These bits and pieces of knowledge were all they were taught about four major religions and one worldview during the whole school year. In the next school year, in the fifth form, these religions were not touched upon again. If the aim of teaching these religions and worldviews was religious literacy in Wright's sense, the chances of success were not likely, because of the superficial presentation of the different religions and worldviews. The topics and tasks connected to them were also only remotely related to their truth claims. The religions and worldviews were too many to achieve any degree of depth of understanding. The diversity within a tradition and between the traditions was not touched upon. The writings in the subject area of "Ethics and philosophy", however, involved the pupils in a more existential level, asking for their thoughts and experiences of subjects like friendship, relationships, conscience and how to react to rumours, talking behind one's back and so on. In these tasks "truth claims" related to the school values were apparent, but they were not related to religious traditions or specific worldviews, and thus did not play a part in developing "religious literacy" in Wright's sense of the concept.

In fifth grade the teacher decided to concentrate on Christianity, which in this particular case meant stories from the Bible. From the Old Testament two texts from the history of the people of Israel: Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 12-24) and about James and his sons (Genesis 36-52). From the New Testament: Jesus quiets the storm (Mark 4, 35-41), Jesus at a wedding in Cana (John 2, 1-12), Jesus heals Bartimaeus (Mark 10, 46-52) and Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (John 11, 3-44). Some tasks look for "facts" in the stories, for the purpose of cognitive learning and repetition. Examples of this: Write eight things you know about Abraham, write some keywords from the story about Jesus calming the storm, write about how weddings were performed in the time of Jesus, write keywords from the story about the wedding at Cana, write about why people hushed up Bartimaeus and write what Jesus asked Bartimaeus. The pupils could find the answers to all these questions in the textbook.

Several of the tasks and texts, however, were more in accord with religious literacy aims. They were concerned with the truth claims and the ultimate reality of things behind the Bible narratives talking about the signs and wonders done by Jesus. They started a little defensively by asking the pupils whether they could write about what they felt was out of the ordinary in certain events. And as a written task at the end of the period dealing with the miracles of Jesus narrated in the gospels, the task was: We have now learned about several miracles Jesus performed. Many people believe these stories are true. Write about what you think about these stories.

These kinds of writing assignments take the pupils on what Wright calls "the pilgrimage of religious education". The pupils take part in an ongoing dialogue between the ambiguity of the truth

claims of religion and their own developing self-understanding, beliefs and worldviews". The pupils meet the question of religious truths. And the pupils seem to cherish this opportunity to reflect on the connection between their own thoughts and the religious answers, in this case in a Christian version. One pupil wrote: "I know that Jesus does not exist and that if he existed he has the power to raise a person from the dead." This pupil, and others with him, wrestled with the questions about the ultimate order of things. They were in a never-ending process of interpreting for themselves this ultimate order. Themes and tasks facilitating these kinds of processes contribute to the pupils' critical religious literacy. And that is what RE should aim for, according to Andrew Wright. Wright claims that RE is not about that in England today, and as we have seen, this is also only to a very limited degree the case in RLE in a multicultural elementary school on the outskirts of Trondheim, Norway.

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5. Virtual Churches: Transforming Religious Values and Practices

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Abstract

This paper discusses the relation between information technology and religious values and practices, with a specific focus on Christian communities/Churches[22] in the three-dimensional virtual world of Second Life (SL).[23] In SL people meet for social reasons, go to concerts and museums, educate themselves, experiment with roles and identities and much more. People also seek Christian fellowship, participate in Church services, pray together, hang out with fellow Christians and so on. Their digital representations of the self, their avatars, conduct "on-line religion", to use Christopher Helland's well-used characteristic, i.e. are involved and interact with religious activities purely online (2005). People participate in religious activities to a large extent in similar ways as in the physical world, but with some media-related characteristics, which will be discussed here.

Key words: Christianity, Internet, Second Life, virtual world, secularization

During my two years in Second Life I have made studies mainly through participating in a variety of (among other things) Christian activities and speaking to people I have met. The findings I refer to here have come out of that experience. The results presented here give an introductory framework to more structured and thoroughly conducted future studies.

It seems to be a common conception that religion and technology do not mix, as there is a contradictory relation between the two entities. The underlying idea behind this assumption is for example that Churches are traditional institutions and technology is modern, and that information technology undermines traditions, old organizational structures and authority, aspect important to the Church. This is true to some degree but the reality is more complex, and, as for example Quentin J. Schultze notes, there is a desire among Christian groups to "use new technologies to advance the kingdom of God" (2008).

This paper will first give a brief summary and discussion of the historical use of information technology in relation to Christianity, in order to put contemporary development in context. Secondly the paper will discuss the process of secularization related to transformation of religious expressions.

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[22] The notion "the Church" is used here for the collective community of Christian believers. This paper focuses mainly on the Church in Western Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world.

[23] This study does not cover the whole concept of Churches in SL as a whole; it is rather a pilot study outlining future studies.

Finally, and in focus of the paper, the process of religious transformation will be discussed in relation to what is happening today in Second Life through four chosen case studies.

Information technology, Christianity and religious transformation – a brief history

Information technology influences and shapes human culture, as for example Walter Ong has pointed out, from language, via text and printing to electronic media (1982). This of course applies to the religious sphere as well, discussed by for example Charles Ess (2001). There are many historical examples of how the Church and its different representatives actively and deliberately have used various forms of information technology (often the most modern form of its day) to promote the Gospel. History shows that engaging with new technologies changes religious faith, practices and values, intentionally or intentionally. Some short examples are given below, just to make it clear that this discussion is not new.

There is a correlation between the use of the codex (the book as we know it) and the establishment of Christianity as a state religion in the Roman Empire. Then there was a need to formulate a coherent and normative theology for the Church. The Church abandoned the traditional scroll for the more reader friendly codex (a novel technology at its time), and could thereby easier also check various parts of the Bible in relation to each other (Tengström 1984).

One obvious and often occurring example when discussing the relation between information technology and religious transformation is Johann Gutenberg's printing press and the Lutheran Reformation. The reformers used the printing technique strategically to spread the message and combined text in native tongue with illustrative pictures of a depraved Catholic Church. (Eisenstein 1993; Briggs & Burke 2005).

The European society changed rapidly during the 18th century due to the process of industrialization. Modes of living and organizing society underwent substantial changes. For example the English Methodist revival benefited from a destabilized traditional structure (Ditchfield 1998; Gilbert 1976). Modern information technology, such as itinerant preachers and printing and distribution of tracts, were key means for Methodists and later on for e.g. the 19th century Swedish revivalist movement (Brown 2001; Gelfgren 2003). This would not have been possible if there had not been a better communication infrastructure and cheaper printing techniques.

If the first example shows how information technology strengthens the institutionalized Church, examples from the 16th century and onwards, in general, show how the institutionalized Church is challenged and loses its monopoly (valid mainly for Europe). The religious sphere has simultaneously also become more pluralistic. This is a complex process with many intertwined causes and effects. Nevertheless technological progress has contributed to the changing role of religion. This transformation has been described as a process of secularization and is interrelated to the process of modernization, and the assumed process of disenchantment of the world, to use Max Weber's terminology (1917). According to the so-called secularization thesis this will lead to the disappearance of religion (Bruce & Wallis 1992). This notion has been widely debated for at least two decades and many scholars now agree that the relation between modernity and religion is far more complex (see for

example *Religion and Modernization* 1992; *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics* 1999; *The Secularization Debate* 2000).

Traditional Christian faith and institutions are today indeed being challenged in the modern pluralistic situation but, as for example Roger Finke and Rodney Stark have shown, the Church can adapt to a more market-like context in which the message can be "marketed". The market metaphor is more relevant for the US, and one reason why Christianity still has a relatively strong foothold there (for example Finke & Stark). Simultaneously, and as a consequence thereof, religious conviction has become increasingly optional and individual. Paul Heelas and Linda Woodhead suggest subjectivisation rather then secularization to understand the role of religion today and to stress how religious faith is becoming increasingly subjective, picking and mixing different views to support an individual faith (2005).

Second Life – a market place for the religious individual

In this paper the concepts of a religious market and an individualized faith are important to understand how religious values and practices are transformed in the virtual world of Second Life. SL is a new ground for all actors, although with strong resemblance to the physical world. One gains access to the world through a so-called avatar (a digital body representing oneself) with the possibility to be fully anonymous with no connections to one's everyday life. All environments are created by the users with their imagination as the only limit. People have the opportunity to experiment with building both physical (virtual) artefacts and self identities, which they also do to various extents (Boellstorff 2008). After saying this, it must be added that even if the possibilities are vast, many people bring their own preferences and expectations to the world, living a life in SL similar to "normal" lives, but adding some features (such as better looks, houses, friends etcetera).

This applies to religious settings and activities as well. The use of Internet in relation to experiments with religious identities has been the subject of previous studies (for example Lövheim 2005 & Helland 2004), but not an issue in this characterization of Second Life Churches and media-related transformations. The question of religious authority online is related to what is described here but not at the core of this paper (for example Campbell 2007 & Barker2005). The questions of experimenting with both self identities and authority are highly relevant for a deeper analysis, and will be taken into consideration at a later stage of research.

However, there is a wide variety among Churches/congregations between Churches that basically make a digital representation of a "real" Church and its activities, and innovative places for multi-modal religious (here Christian) experiences. There is a difference between different Churches and denominations, where one can suppose that young and decentralized Churches and denominations are more positive to media-adapted experiments (Campbell 2007). However, Second Life is a place where nobody (most likely) goes to a location regularly – Churches included – only because of tradition or social conventions, such as in the physical world. It has to be meaningful for the individual in some way or another. Therefore it is possible to characterize SL as an open market to which all actors have to adapt – Churches as well as other communities. At the same time the Internet as a whole is an anti-

hierarchical medium for many-to-many communication, making it difficult for traditional and hierarchical institutions, founded on a one-to-many communication model, such as many Churches[24].

Some overall reflections based upon my almost two years in Second Life. Most Churches and congregations are, according to my experience, founded on private initiative. They have none or just a loose connection to a Church in the physical world (even if some SL-churches are affiliated with a "real life" Church through committing to theology and agenda). I have also been struck by the curiosity and eagerness to experiment with the media and with forms of activities, even if not every Christian congregation does that. Many Churches provide and emphasize the need for time and spaces for fellowship and discussions, but also regular services. Below are some short examples of different characteristics.

In one large Church (here called the One Church) affiliated with a worldwide Church (but founded upon a private initiative originating from a SL group)[25], there are fairly traditional services. The services always finish with time outside the Church for talking and socializing in general. This particular Church also has regularly scheduled times for discussions and Bible studies in a comfortable setting. Each week four services are held, and in addition Bible study and discussion groups gather approximately three times a week. Around the Church there is a chapel, a garden, a smaller church, and some other buildings. The whole environment resembles a "real" Church to a great extent, regarding buildings and symbolic rhetoric, but also in organization and activities. The organization is clearly hierarchical and structured, with appointed leaders for different sectors of the Church. Still it is quite experimental, and one purpose is to explore new ways of communicating the Christian faith in a digital era. Apart from the SL Church there is a blog, a Facebook group, and related Twitter accounts. However, if one is used to churches, one clearly recognizes oneself when coming and participating. The Church does not experiment with form and content to a large degree, but rather with different digital media as tools.

In the church that I call the Trinity Church form and content are much more experimental. It all started when a theology student discovered an unused church on an island. After talking with the owner the student was allowed to start using the Church. There is a service once a week, followed by time for fellowship with discussions and sometimes a party in a more relaxed setting. Around the Church there is also a village where it is possible to rent a house for a small sum of money. The service is usually based upon a traditional agenda with different modifications – with time for e.g. personal testimonies, live streamed singing and streamed video. There is also a memorial garden, a monastery where it is possible to rent a cell for contemplation, a sky box with entertainment (such as a pub, motorbikes, games, fishing), a jukebox in the Church in the shape of an organ, and so on. There are also examples of new adaptations of "analogous" means. For example in the monastery's garden there is a scripted kind of rosary with clickable beads whispering prayers. The entrepreneurial spirit is strong and the Church is obviously an experimental ground for trying out activities and features along the way.

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[24] This is a rough assumption which must be nuanced for a deeper analysis.
[25] In this paper I have chosen not to use the real names of the sites, due to ethical considerations.

There are also examples of whole Christian islands (sims). The particular island studied here I call the Island of God. It is a place where Christians can socialize in a godly and friendly place. The Island of God provides the visitors with places to hang out such as open areas with benches, hidden caves, a Church and much more. People are invited to come and just spend time together, and participate in spontaneous gatherings. There are houses for rent if one wants to stay for a longer time. The area is free to use and build upon if one complies with the policy of the Island. Buildings are erected, for example a large one with open walls, indicating openness, which provides spaces for contemplation and discussions, a library with e-books, reviving slideshows and YouTube videos with uplifting songs, and a list of links and landmarks to other churches. There is also a path to walk with inspiration from John Bunyan's classic *The Pilgrim's Progress* (1678), with questions and Bible verses along the way. These constructions are excellent examples of how to use the anti-hierarchical structure and the multi-modal potential of a virtual world such as SL.

As a final example, a Christian nightclub, here called Down with Jesus, is worth mentioning. It is based upon a private initiative, and the club wants to provide a safe and fun place for entertainment without for example sexual undertones common in some places in SL. It looks like an ordinary club with a DJ booth, blinking lights and loud music (even if one can adjust the volume oneself). If one does not know that it is a Christian place, one will hardly notice it just from a short glance, but there are some logos with crosses. There are DJs and dancing several times a week. Avatars just go there to dance to mainly Christian club music, talk to people and socialize.

Transforming practices and values

The virtual world itself seems to transform religious practices and values, as also Stephen Jacobs noted in his study of two sacred virtual two-dimensional places, one Christian and one Hindu (2007). But when he considers the studied places as an extension of the physical Church, I think Churches in a virtual world may be viewed as places in their own right, with specific characteristics and with only a loose connection to the physical world.

This is not a complete study, and further studies will follow, but the tendencies are clear. Nobody probably comes to these places because of tradition or obligation. Places can only stay alive as long as people populate them. People probably attend different gatherings regularly only as long as it is meaningful to them. There is a clear tendency to experiment, for example with different forms of activities – traditional services coexist with individual contemplation, spontaneous meetings and amusements, with emphasis on fellowship and socializing.

Christian places can look very different – there are traditional churches alongside with rooms for meetings with open architecture, cafés, camp fires and whole villages. There are places with a connection to a mother church in the physical world, but many churches are built without a relation to an "original" church. It is quite clear that religious practices are changing in relation to the affordances of the virtual worlds. Experimentation, entrepreneurship, openness, interaction and anti-hierarchical structures are key issues in Churches and congregations of Second Life, to a larger degree than in the physical world.

It is a far more complex task to trace actual changes in values. Such a study must involve for example qualitative data based upon interviews. At this stage of research it is too early to tell for certain, one can only make assumptions. It is however related to both social and technical processes.

Parts of Christianity (for example within the so-called Emerging Church) are debating how to be a Church and build a Christian community in contemporary society, in which it is difficult to claim universal truth, as the Church often does. Thus the Church can be seen as the last bastion of modernity, with a hierarchical and sectionalized organization, known from for example larger companies, in which the clergy pass the Gospel on to their audience, where religion is restricted to a limited and defined area of society (Drane 2001). Representatives of for example the Emerging Church claim that the Church has something to learn from the development within digital media and what is called web 2.0. Web 2.0, with web services such as blogs, Wikipedia, YouTube, Facebook and Twitter, is characterized by for example participation, user-created content, sharing, creativity, networking and media convergence (Rheingold 2002; Jenkins 2006). This is something that resembles the days of the early and uninstitutionalized Christian community, and can be something to learn from for the contemporary Church (Gibbs & Bolger 2005). The empirical study described in this paper suggests that the churches in Second Life reflect such a cultural climate where participation, networking and creativity are important.

Looking at churches in Second Life, it seems as if the way they progress resembles the general development of digital media. Churches and congregations are founded on private initiative rather then on the initiative of institutions. Anyone can take on a church leading role, which further undermines traditional institutions. Christian congregations in SL are created by the users for the users, and their activities and facilities are probably adapted to suit potential visitors in a market-driven situation. The different churches provide their guests with facilities for participating in discussions, sharing experiences and various forms of fellowship and socializing. Interestingly enough, people in SL are obviously searching for collective forms for living and expressing faith, this in a time when individualization is said to be one key issue in the process of contemporary religious transformation.

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6. The issues and controversies arising from a review of a church's engagement with the national education system -an example from Wales

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Introduction

In October 2006 the Church in Wales Education Review Group met for the first time. This group had been created to undertake a formal review of the Church in Wales' engagement with the Education system in the principality. This paper presents the issues facing that review as it began its work. The final report of the review was published in September 2009 (Lankshear, 2009). The Church in Wales has a significant stake in the education system in Wales. There are 168 Church in Wales' primary schools and 4 Church in Wales' secondary schools within the state maintained system of education. 8.9% of all children of primary school age attend a Church in Wales school. From the commencement of the work of the review the decision was made that the report should be informed by data as far as data was already available or could be identified through research commissioned by the review.

The major issues

Four distinct challenges faced the review at the commencement of its task. Each will be considered in the following paragraphs.

1. *The church's role, inherited from the nineteenth century, as a provider of schools within the state system of education*

The Church's early commitment to the provision of education could be traced back to pre-reformation times, but it was in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century that the Anglican Church became heavily involved in the movement to provide elementary education for all. In 1811 the National Society was created by the Anglican Church to focus this work. The Society, working in parallel with the free churches equivalent body (The British and Foreign Schools Society), received support, by way of grants, from the national government to create elementary schools throughout England and Wales. It was not until 1870 that the national government passed legislation which enabled it to become directly involved in the provision of such schools and subsequently to make attendance at such schools a legal requirement for all children between the ages of five and twelve years. The assumption lying behind the Elementary Schools Act, 1870 was that the state needed to ensure that schools were provided in places where the churches had failed to provide sufficient places. Thus the pattern of schools in Wales to this day tends to reflect the provision of schools that existed in 1870. Church in Wales schools are

most likely to be found in the centre of the larger conurbations and in rural areas. In the suburbs that have grown up in the larger cities since 1870 the Church in Wales' contribution to the provision of schools may be limited to the places where village schools already existed before 1870. The education Act 1944 introduced the concept of primary and secondary stages of education into the state system. The complexity of creating secondary schools out of previously existing all age elementary schools proved to be beyond the church in most places. Consequently most Church in Wales schools became primary schools, creating an imbalance in the provision which still exists.

A further factor affecting the balance of provision has been the developments in the teaching of the Welsh Language in schools in Wales. Welsh government policy contains a clear commitment to bilingualism and the provision of schools using Welsh as the medium of instruction, where Welsh is the first language of most of the local population or where it is possible to offer parents the option of schools using Welsh as the medium of instruction alongside those using English.

As a result of this history the review group had to address issues how the balance of provision might be restored. This issue has significant resource implications and has to be addressed in a situation where the number of children of school age is falling in many communities and therefore the future of some schools may be under threat.

2. *The financial and staff commitment necessary to sustain and develop this role*

The Church in Wales does not have major sources of funding to sustain its engagement with education. It has to meet the costs of all new building work and some maintenance in its schools, with support from government by way of grants. Most of the people engaged in the support of its schools are either parish priests or volunteers. There are almost no lay full time members of staff with specialist experience in the leadership of schools.

Although the Church has high expectation of its schools in terms both of the quality of general education that they provide and also the clarity with which they express their identity as Church in Wales schools, it lacks the resources to ensure that those who support the schools have the time to do so effectively. The Church is also committed to providing support for Religious Education and school worship in all schools and also to supporting Christian teachers in their vocation to teach. Inevitably this work can only be focussed through activities undertaken by the parishes.

Therefore the review group had to address the resource issue directly and to frame any recommendations in ways that enabled those implementing them to make better use of existing resources, rather than assuming the existence of new sources of finance.

3. *The challenge of dealing with the misunderstandings, stereotypes and lack of knowledge that complicate rational debate on these issues*

The existence of any school that has a religious character, as defined in the School Standards and Framework Act 1998, is, for some parts of society, a subject of controversy. The schools are assumed by some vocal commentators to be elitist and to present a religiously biased view of the world. The

evidence to justify these claims is often anecdotal or focuses on individual examples that are claimed to represent the whole. There is little research undertaken that would inform a rational debate on the issues, and much of the discussion focuses on admissions to secondary schools in areas where the demand for places in schools with a religious character far exceeds the number of places available.

Therefore the Review Group had to find ways of presenting its findings that helped to inform the debate about the future of schools with a religious character and that supported existing schools that may feel themselves to be under pressure as a result of a debate which does not relate to their particular circumstances.

4. *Identifying a future role and setting the parameters for future development*

The Church of England published *The Way Ahead* (Dearing 2001) at the turn of the century and this was perceived to provide clear guidance and strategy for the development of Church of England schools within the English education system. Those who created the Church in Wales review were anxious to have a report which provided a similar drive and dynamic for the development of Church in Wales schools. The state system of education, although it shares a common root with that in England, has been on a divergent path since 1999, when much of the responsibility was developed from the United Kingdom parliament to the Welsh Assembly Government. Therefore it was seen to be important that a report for the Church in Wales reflected this developing Welsh understanding of the needs of pupils growing up within Wales.

To a significant extent the only area where the Church in Wales is in partnership with the state in the provision of services is education. Therefore the Church needs to ensure that its own structures and governance enable that partnership to be taken forward most effective. Before 1999 the Church was able to rely on the good offices of the National Society and the Church of England Board of Education to reflect the needs of Church in Wales schools as well as Church of England schools in their negotiation on legislation with the United Kingdom Parliament and administration. Since 1999 the legislative work and the administration and interpretation of the law for the education service in Wales has been increasingly undertaken by the Welsh Assembly Government based in Cardiff. This has meant that the Church in Wales has had to find its own way of engaging in these matters in Wales and of using the support that is still available to it from the National Society in the most effective way.

Therefore the Review Group needed to identify, not only the ways in which the Church in Wales' contribution to the education service in Wales should develop, but also how this development should best be lead and overseen. This implied defining a new relationship with the National Society and also ensuring that the Church in Wales had in place the structures to determine and pursue its own policy objectives in negotiation with the Welsh Assembly Government

The approach adopted by the Review

At the commencement of its work the Review Group commissioned a number of empirical studies designed to inform its own work and to provide evidence that could inform and guide subsequent work. In the event not all these studies could be completed. In part this was because of the limited

resources available to the group but the difficulties in obtaining data held by third parties also contributed to these problems. Despite this eight separate studies were completed in time to inform the final report of the review.

The review also set up working groups to explore the Church's engagement with different stages of education and their work contributed significantly to the relevant sections of the report.

Seven themes emerged from this work and underpinned the final report. These are

1. The creation of a formal structure at provincial level to enable the Church in Wales to participate fully and effectively as a partner in the provision of education in Wales.
2. The strengthening of Diocesan Education teams and their oversight in leading education in the diocese and the management of the Church in Wales' contribution to that process in partnership with Local Authorities.
3. The creation of Deanery working groups on education to develop the church's work with secondary schools, Further Education and University chaplaincy.
4. Clarifying the support that the Church in Wales offers to all schools and its areas of specific curriculum interest.
5. The development of Church in Wales schools in terms of the quality of the education that they provide, their identity as Christian communities of service and their contribution to the educational provision in Wales.
6. The development of Chaplaincy in Further Education Colleges and universities.
7. The support of the Christian vocation to teach and to serve within schools and colleges.

Underpinning these themes lies the need for improved training opportunities for teachers, clergy and school governors on whom much will depend for the implementation of the recommendations of the review at local level.

Conclusion

An essential part of the work of the group was discussion with the significant parties to the partnership in the provision of education and with those responsible for the development of Church in Wales' policies. These discussions focussed on a set of draft proposals developed by the working party. In the event a considerable level of consensus emerged ahead of the formal publication of the report. As a result of this it the review report was adopted as church policy by the Governing Body of the Church in Wales in September 2009 without a single vote being cast against the motion.

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7. Envisioned Change and Negativity – Moral Education between Utopia and Realism

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Abstract

Moral education is envisioned change. As such it contains normative claims of the educating person or institution towards the person 'to be educated'. The paper addresses the question of the legitimacy of moral education by examining the claims articulated in the pedagogical situation. In relation to autonomy as a goal of moral education, dialectic asymmetry and risky direction are suggested as adequate claims. They reflect the inter-subjective relationship between the educating person and the one 'to be educated' and they take into account a notion of negativity characterizing learning situations. The argument is developed by using the case of absenteeism SMS. As a pedagogic tool, absenteeism SMS should, according to my argumentation, be regarded as problematic, because of the tight control it creates.

Key words: Moral education, autonomy, negativity, ethics, absenteeism SMS

The case of absenteeism SMS

Two tendencies may be identified today with regard to the way adults relate to children: Adults spend relatively little time together with children[26], while technologically supported supervision or control of children seems to be an increasingly accepted phenomenon. Issues that have been discussed recently in Sweden and other European countries are for example the installation of cameras in schools, or GPS transmitters for the safety of children. Methods such as these seem to find broad acceptance among adults and parents. In debates, these issues are often justified by reference to 'increasing problems' among young people and in society. Another example of supervision or control of children by modern technology is the use of SMS services by schools for the purpose of reducing absenteeism. The SMS technology is used in more or less automatic ways, but it is based on the idea that the teacher's electronic registration of absent pupils is followed up by automatic SMS notifications to the parents. In 2008, some schools in Gothenburg were the first to introduce an absenteeism SMS service in Sweden, offering parents to register for the SMS system. In 2009, schools in Stockholm and other places followed. According to the statistics referred to by these schools, absenteeism has been a rapidly

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[26] In Sweden a survey of different methods for support of parents has been presented by Statens folkhälsoinstitut. Several of the methods which are surveyed and advocated seem to focus on the problem of a generally declining amount of time spent together and communication problems between the parents and their children. (*På rätt kurs! Metoder för föräldrastöd från förskolan till tonåren.* http://www.ab.lst.se. 28 April 2009)

increasing problem in the last few years. Quick and unfailing communication between the school and the parents is advocated by the representatives of these schools as an effective solution to an increasing problem.[27] But is the way adults relate to children by allying with each other 'against' the pupils justifiable? What happens when exercised control implies a withdrawal of trust and trustworthiness? Does the kind of situation emerging from methods such as absenteeism SMS express a legitimate normativity? Is the kind of relationships that is created through the use of absenteeism SMS desirable and does it harmonize with educational ideals? Is the use of absenteeism SMS an acceptable way of attempting to bring about envisioned change?

This article deals with the question of legitimacy in moral education as envisioned change. My approach departs from a basic assumption that, in late modern, pluralistic and democratic societies, moral education, its goals, and its methods, must be subjected to an open and ongoing discussion, through which its legitimacy has to be constructed and reconstructed in relation to particular circumstances and normative positions.[28] Examining the normativity of moral education, I focus on the claims made in the pedagogical situation, as it arises in connection with pedagogical action. The case of absenteeism SMS is used as an example which illustrates questions of normativity related to moral education in general. Thus, by addressing the case of absenteeism SMS, I discuss the question of how we ought to think about the question of legitimacy in relation to moral education. When we envision change for following generations and pedagogically try to initiate this change, what kind of change is legitimate? What transformation should we strive for and how do we motivate it? What kind of claims may be associated with envisioned change and legitimately articulated in relation to a following generation? How should we think about the legitimacy of moral education? What kinds of claims are legitimate? What kinds of criteria should we embrace in order to discern legitimate goals and claims in relation to moral education as envisioned change? Addressing these questions, I focus on ethical aspects. Thus, I am not discussing the question of whether absenteeism SMS is an effective educational method or not. Rather, I focus on the normativity contained in the pedagogical situation it creates.

Moral education as envisioned change with claims

To educate means to envision change or transformation as the imagination of the 'better'. While moral education is neither a linear process with a clear starting point and a definite end point, nor a causally controllable way of influencing in accordance with intended goals, moral education presents itself as rather unsteady, as a number of loosely connected situations, events, reactions and relationships.[29] But normatively, moral education means to strive beyond a status quo, experienced as a shortcoming to be

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[27] http://www.dn.se. (22. September 2008); http://www.svt.se. (23. September 2008)

[28] Addressing the legitimacy of moral education in late modern societies as an issue of an ongoing normative discourse, I am relating not only to the *pedagogical paradox*, but also to *the modern legitimacy paradigm* of moral education. While the legitimacy of moral education in pre-modern societies depended on authorities and an ideal of obedience, the modern legitimacy paradigm of moral education elevated the ideal of autonomy or self-determination to an absolutely central position, as it ascribed autonomy a basic legitimating function. As the modern conceptualizations of autonomy have been exposed to severe criticism from various directions, its legitimating function must today be questioned. For a longer ethical study of the definition and legitimacy of autonomy as a goal of moral education, see Nordström, 2009.

[29] Oelkers, 2001, Winkler, 2006

improved. What makes moral education as envisioned change from an ethical point of view special is the fact that the envisioned change is meant for another person. The transformation strived for is directed towards somebody else, thereby implying restrictions on that person's freedom. Thus, articulating educational goals implies making certain claims in a pedagogical relationship.[30] A focus on relational aspects renders two claims of moral education central and constitutive: asymmetry and direction.

Asymmetry is based on an experienced difference and is articulated in the sense of the following claim: 'I know something which you do not know and which you ought to know!' In the case of absenteeism this asymmetry would embrace a claim of knowing 'better' with regard to the importance and significance of attending school. In spite of the pupils' own experience and apparent feeling of school as lacking sufficient meaning to motivate school attendance, the claim is that school attendance has to be secured. This represents quite a strong claim, the adequacy of which may be questioned. But in what sense would asymmetry be an adequate claim? The pedagogical situation presents itself as marked by inter-subjective premises.[31] Generations not only meet, but they interact in mutual interdependencies, forming the identities of each other in a mode of 'generationing'.[32] Asymmetry as an adequate claim in relation to the experienced circumstances of the pedagogical situation is therefore suggested to be understood as dialectical. The term dialectical asymmetry designates a claim trying to integrate both an actual, experienced difference, associated with envisioned change, and mutual dependencies in the pedagogical situation.

The second constitutive claim of moral education, direction, is associated with the more dynamic aspects of moral education. Moral education is intended transformation over time, is movement away from something and towards something else, thereby attempting to transcend the status quo. From a pedagogical perspective, moral education is intended influence on somebody's development. It is associated with 'expectations'.[33] Intended influence is marked by unsteadiness, since the intended effect is often altered or fails altogether. In an ethical perspective there is a claim of improvement associated with intended influence.[34] This is articulated in the sense of the following claim: 'Acting the way I tell you to is better. My intention to exert influence on you is an attempt to improve your morally relevant capacity, your competence.' While the intended influence is marked by unsteadiness, due to the lacking causality and controllability of moral pedagogical situations, the claim of improvement, as a claim, has to be steady, if moral education is to be credible. Moral education from the perspective of the educating person 'must' be – in one way or another – an attempt to represent and reach for the 'better'. Therefore, there is a tension between the pedagogical and the ethical perspective with regard to direction. While intended influence is unsteady, the claim of improvement is steady. In consequence, as an adequate claim with regard to the claim of direction, risky direction is suggested. Risky direction expresses a claim of intended influence towards the 'better', which takes into account

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[30] von Oettingen, 2003
[31] Meyer-Drawe, 1990, 1987
[32] Alanen, 2001
[33] Oelkers, 2001, 9, 261
[34] Oelkers, 2001, 216

the fact that the outcome of moral education may be (and in fact should be) imagined in terms of ideals or goals, but without being controlled.

Entangled values and normativity as coherence orientation

Hence, asymmetry and direction are understood as claims that are constitutive for the normativity of moral education as envisioned change. If these claims are made in relation to experienced reality of moral education as loosely connected, unsteady situations, as adequate claims, so I argue, they should be expressed as dialectic asymmetry and risky direction. This argument needs a short explanation with regard to my view of ethics and pedagogy. I address moral education from an ethical perspective, thereby focusing on its normativity. This perspective presupposes an understanding of normativity not as something separate from an empiric world of 'facts', but as expressed as 'facts' with entangled values. Moral education is then regarded as an arena where values are present as entangled in actions, situations, and emerging relationships. Departing from a criticism against a dichotomous understanding of fact and value, Putnam speaks of 'the entanglement of facts and values'.[35] He regards thereby both facts and values as related to 'criteria for rational acceptability'. Putnam writes: '[...] it is necessary to have standards of rational acceptability in order to have a world at all; either a world of 'empirical facts' or a world of 'value facts' (a world in which there is beauty and tragedy).'[36] According to his view, criteria for rational acceptability are to be understood as links between fact and value. As such they give access to fact and value and – more importantly – to an understanding of the mutual interdependency that characterises facts and value. Since the entanglement consists of criteria of rational acceptability, Putnam's view implies a kind of 'intelligible complexity'. Not only is our sense of truth, and therefore knowledge and technology, comprehensible by and dependent on these criteria of rational acceptability, but these criteria are also informed by our values. Putnam concludes: 'The 'real world' depends upon our values (and, again, vice versa).'[37] The value of ethics is accordingly related to its willingness to contribute to solutions of practical problems.[38]

What is needed in face of such an entanglement of values is a suspension of the search for the foundations of ethics, expressed as fundamental values. Instead, an approach that focuses on the criteria of rational acceptability, as linking fact and value, is suggested. With regard to the question of legitimacy of moral education, or the adequacy of its claims made in certain situations and in relation to certain goals, I propose an argument that is patterned by a coherence orientation. The argumentation above in relation to adequate claims represents thus what I call a coherence-oriented pattern of argumentation, where coherence is strived for within references to normative and practical aspects. Coherence is nothing to be achieved in a strict logic sense. Instead, the orientation, or the attempt at coherence, is essential as an attempt to harmonize claims made in pedagogic situations and pedagogic goals or ideals. This involves both the particularity of the issue at stake and the ideals or 'expectations' involved.

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[35] Putnam, 2002, 34
[36] Putnam, 1997, 360
[37] Putnam, 1997, 346
[38] Putnam, 2004, 4

Negativity as a key to legitimacy

A coherence-oriented pattern of argumentation requires an attempt to understand normativity of moral education as informed both by the experience of realistic conditions and ideals articulated as goals of moral education. The latter may be more or less realistic, but as envisioned change and the 'expectation' of the 'better' they also refer to the utopian as the imagination of the ideal 'yet to come'. The improbable and ideal are a vital part of education,[39] but it should be related to the experience of reality. The tension between the ideal as utopia and experienced reality constitutes a permanent challenge to the legitimacy of moral education.

The experience of negativity is according to Benner a core feature of learning. Negativity as experience of frustration designates learning situations and may for my purposes here be highlighted as a link between utopia and experienced reality in moral education. Benner describes learning as a complex situation, where meeting the unknown or unfamiliar is vital. He emphasizes that learning is not just the process of moving from the 'known' to the 'unknown'. Rather, learning is a complex transformation, consisting of the parallel experiences of 'the known in the unknown' and 'the unknown in the known'. Both these experiences are accompanied by feelings of frustration. Negativity, therefore, is vital to learning as transformation. He describes learning as taking place in a 'space' limited 'in all directions' by both the known and the unknown.[40]

The resulting, complex situation of the known mixed up with the unknown in an unpredictable and uncontrollable way causes frequent experiences of irritation or frustration. This experience of negativity may be applied to the tension between utopia and realism, not only as a mode of explaining the coexistence of ideal and reality, but also as an argument for basing legitimate normativity of moral education on the tension between utopia and realism and making it a matter of coherence orientation. On one hand, utopia is defined in contrast to experienced negativity of reality. On the other hand, experienced reality feeds or provides for the imagination of what is 'not yet' or 'nowhere at all' – utopia. In a normative perspective, according to a coherence-oriented pattern of argumentation, the two should be balanced against each other: utopia may challenge reality, while reality should confine claims made in relation to utopia.

Affirming negativity as a vital aspect of learning processes and ascribing it an essential function for the conceptualization of adequate normativity render a balanced relationship between utopia and realism a decisive criterion for legitimate moral education. Thus, both utopia and realism are ascribed a decisive function for the legitimacy of moral education. Utopia and pedagogical realism, so I argue, have to be balanced against each other in order to function both as sources and limits with regard to the legitimacy of moral education. Combining the two in pedagogical situations and relationships, the notion of negativity is ascribed a key function. To envision change means to assess status quo and to imagine something else, which is claimed to be 'better'. With regard to absenteeism SMS, utopia would imagine and strive for a school situation appreciated by all pupils for its potential to supply them with meaningful and stimulating learning situations. Realism, in contrast, would have to acknowledge that

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[39] Papastephanou, 2008
[40] Benner, 2005, 7-9 (my translations)

it always remains difficult to make all pupils experience all of education as supplying them with meaningful situations. Some amount of compulsion will always remain necessary and may also be justified to some extent by the asymmetry based on the fact that adults may be in a better position of being able to see the long-term value of attending school. If these two perspectives are related to each other in an attempt to balance the ideal with the realistic, the goal of trying to motivate pupils would certainly remain.

Envisioned change in inter-subjectivity

But is the kind of control exercised through the use of absenteeism SMS legitimate? Is the strong claim expressed by the use of SMS services adequate? Regardless of the doubtful efficiency of a method such as absenteeism SMS, its legitimacy has to be questioned, because there seems to be little possibility of harmonizing the ideal (of motivated pupils) and reality (of controlled, unmotivated pupils). Rather a pedagogic situation with strong claims is emerging, where envisioned change turns into imposed change. As such it has transcended the scope of the kind of negativity which, by reference to Benner, was focused upon above as characteristic of learning situations. In a controlled situation as it emerges from the use of absenteeism SMS, the irritating – but dynamic and constructive – mixture of the known and the unknown in the learning situation is replaced by a controlled predictability, leaving little space for dynamic pedagogic situations, where inter-subjective interaction takes place. The latter is dependent on a certain degree of mutual trust and should normatively be reflected in a less strong claim on the part of the educating person or institution. In the light of moral education as marked by uncertainty and understood as inter-subjective interaction, the strong claim articulated by the use of absenteeism SMS seems to be problematic. The imposed change that is sought or attempted through the use of absenteeism SMS is instead associated with a radical withdrawal of trust or trustworthiness. This not only undermines the dynamic situation of mutual learning, expressed by the claims of dialectic asymmetry and risky direction, but it is also counterproductive in relation to a pedagogical ideal of autonomy.[41] A pedagogic ideal of autonomy, which is based on trust and trustworthiness, is in its turn crucial for the distinction between moral education as legitimately envisioned change and imposed change.

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8. Police students' talk about the relevance of religion in policing – Teaching and learning about diversity at the Swedish National Police Academy

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Abstract

Societal changes lead to changes within the police. Due to the increasing diversity the police are facing issues concerning multi-culturalization, both within the police organization and in the police education system. As the police are obliged to work actively against xenophobia and racism in order to promote an understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity, it is relevant to study how this is integrated into the education of future police officers. *What* is being taught and learnt about diversity, with a focus on religion, ethnicity and culture, and *how* is this done? In the article some preliminary findings from the first visits to the Police Academy are presented, for the purpose of illustrating how students view religion and its relevance for their future profession.

Keywords: education, diversity, police, police education, religion

Background

Due to increasing diversity in society the police are facing several issues concerning the effects of globalization and multi-culturalization, both within the police force itself and within society as a whole.[42] The police come in contact with people from different cultures and ethnic groups in their work. Large resources are invested to broaden the recruitment so that the police will mirror Swedish society, and prognoses suggest that future police work will be cross-national (Justitiedepartementet, 2007; Rikspolisstyrelsen, 2005, 2008; SOU 2008:39). The police are obliged to work actively against attitudes of intolerance, xenophobia and racism in order to promote an understanding of ethnic and cultural diversity.

The aim of the project is to study the processes of teaching and learning about diversity, with a focus on religion, ethnicity and culture as found within the education of Swedish police officers. The

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[42] This study is carried out in a time and context when the work and values of the Swedish police are being questioned in media and society, due to the disclosure of several racist statements and actions by police officers (Aftonbladet, 5/2 2009, DN, 20/2, 24/2 2009, SvD 6/2, 7/2, 8/2, 10/2 2009, Sydsvenskan 10/2, 14/2, 17/2 2009). Focus on the fundamental values and work with diversity within the police and their education program has been stressed, both from stakeholders outside the police and within the police organization.

main research questions can be formulated as *what* is being taught and learnt and *how*? These questions will be applied to the levels of policy, the educational setting and work practice, and highlight possible tensions among these levels.

The purpose of studying content and processes in educational settings is to gain knowledge about learning and socialization in the Police Academy. A didactic perspective is used to explore and understand different educational practices and their consequences concerning knowledge, norms and values taking shape in the academy. Process-focused studies are often carried out through observations and analysis of teaching in progress (Almqvist *et al.*, 2008 p. 19). Such studies are rare in research on religious education (Osbeck, 2006 pp. 99-101).

Theoretical perspectives

The study is based on a sociocultural perspective on learning and development. Education occurs in historical and cultural contexts and teaching and learning are seen as communicative processes (Mercer, 2004; Osbeck, 2006; Säljö, 2005; Vygotsgy, 1978). Cultural aspects and interaction with others are studied in order to understand situations where both individuals and groups transform themselves and their surrounding world (Säljö, 2005). Learning develops through everyday language in long-term interactions and participation. The idea is that people share knowledge and jointly construct an understanding of their shared experiences (Mercer, 2004). Social events arise in response to other people, institutional traditions, cultural possibilities and limitations and are, therefore, dialogical. The focus is on 'educational dialogue' (Bergqvist & Säljö, 2004; Mercer, 2004; Osbeck 2006).

Educational practices affect how terms and phenomena are interpreted and understood (Nesbitt, 2004). Studies show that non-Christian religions and ethnic groups risk being presented as exotic, less developed and undemocratic, producing an "us and them" thinking (e.g. von Brömssen, 2003; Jackson, 1997). Taylor (1994/2003) traces two perspectives in the current debate about adequate education in a multicultural society – the liberalistic and the multicultural. The liberalistic perspective is described as a universal model with neutral ambitions and no preferential treatment of groups. Religion is regarded as an individual and a private matter that is made invisible to the general public. In contrast, the multicultural perspective focuses on the group rather than the individual and accentuates distinct features of religions rather than keeping them back.

Method

The production of data is carried out with different methods according to an approach inspired by ethnography (Beach, 1997; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007; Jackson, 1997; van Maanen 1988).[43] The empirical data from the pilotstudy consists of field notes and recorded formal and informal conversations with teachers and students, a student-group interview, as well as participant class-room

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[43] The term *production* is used to stress the reflexive character in ethnographic research, where the researcher is seen as co-producing the data.

observations. [44] The data collection was made according to the ethical regulations of the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

Ethnographic methods may be used in studies where meaning is seen as socially constructed (Beach 1997 p. 33; Berger & Luckmann, 1966/1979) and interviews are considered social events (Beach, 1997 p. 33). Oral statements may reveal perspectives used within a specific setting and provide knowledge of how people organize the world and socially construct reality (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007 p. 145). The procedure makes it possible to identify socio-cultural representations and how they interact with each other (Beach, 1997 p. 23). Participant observation is used to study *how* processes and interaction occur (Fangen, 2005).

The benefit of using ethnography is that it facilitates understanding by making variations in cultural patterns visible. Learning is not studied as a general phenomenon. Rather a generalization through recognition of patterns is suggested (Larsson, 2009).

I use an explorative research design, which may be regarded as a continuous process in dialogue with the empirical material (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007 pp. 3, 24-26). The purpose is to develop possible understanding and theories rather than to test established hypotheses. The process of analysis generates the categories that are used to interpret the data. The process follows an abductive approach, with a dialectic relation between empirical data and theory (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2008 p. 55; Beach, 1997 p. 46; Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007 p. 159).

Examples of police students' talk about religion

The extracts presented below are from the student group interview and illustrate how the students view religious education as relevant for police work. [45] Both students and teachers describe religion as non-existent in the current educational setting. There seems, however, to be an apparent inconsistency as to what counts as religion. Students show ambivalence in expressing their views about it. These tendencies are clearly revealed in the extensive empirical data, but can also be extracted in the examples below. The variations in conversation exemplify the ambivalence among the students, and highlight their ability to address the issues in a group setting.

Extract 1.

Malin: Is there a need for it [religious education]?

Johannes: Of course it matters.

Lisa: Some things are brought up and then it concerns crimes. For example we had honour-related crimes in our last module. And that adjoins religion too. But.

Someone: More culture.

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[44] The Police Program consists of four semesters with theoretical and practical education and a fifth semester with work practice at a police station. The observations were made in a fourth semester course about racism, discrimination and hate crimes.

[45] The transcription is written to facilitate the understanding of the conversation. When someone is interrupted the sentence is left without a *punctuation mark*. Accentuation of a word is marked with underline (word).

Robert: I must say, I don't think religion matters in policing, because if you allow yourself to be coloured by this and show consideration for those things you make preferential treatments. And that is not relevant in the discussion. It's supposed to be as objective as possible. It doesn't matter at all really.

Johannes: Not strictly that you are bound by the law, but at the same time you build up your own strategy how to solve problems and whom to talk to

Lisa: Exactly

Johannes: And then you solve it in different ways.

Robert: How do you mean?

Johannes: Yeah but you have to think about it

Magnus: How you treat people for example. The law is the same for everybody but we might want to treat somebody according to certain conditions, cultural or religious

[...]

Johannes: (Inaudible) ...Respectful to one religion and not to another, then you try to follow that line, without renouncing our work.

Robert: No, yes, but I agree on that, to show consideration and treat others with respect, but I don't think that has so much to do with religion. I think you should strive for that regardless of what kind of people you meet.

Johannes: Yes of course, but if you have an understanding of religions it's easier. Because those who are very religious, it's easy for us to say because we are not so very religious in general, but for some it's a big part of life.

[...]

Magnus: But it is like any other factor really. It doesn't mean that much.

Johannes: I mean, it's impossible for us to imagine all sorts of situations that can affect people and the treatment of them, so that has to come with time. And religion is one big part but I mean there might be subcultural matters also. There are innumerable things that affect how people want to be treated.

Robert: I think it's difficult to do your best to oblige everyone. You have to have some kind of fundamental respect and consideration. You can't put too much effort into this because then you might lose yourself and become unnatural and that can have consequences on the result. You have to be safe in how you act.

The students express various ways of constructing religion and religious people. I asked for their opinions of police officers applying for wearing a headscarf. After Robert's quick statement that he finds it hilarious, the group became silent and hesitated to answer. Then they asked me questions about the matter, revealing that the question and the subject were new to them.

Extract 2.

Robert: I think if those police officers might work in areas where there are people sharing the same beliefs, it is easier for them to get in and reach these people. And maybe get respect and, yes.

Lisa: I can feel it might become the opposite as well. It depends on how men view that, they know that we <u>here</u> might not share the same culture as they do concerning the view of women and stuff, some cultures. But a woman from the same environment as them comes and they already depreciate, then it might get even harder. I believe there can be both advantages and disadvantages.

Sara: Yet it can be a beginning of change, that you begin. You have to start somewhere.

Magnus: It can also be a token for Swedish society that we accept their religious traditions and respect it, so it might influence other Swedes who wouldn't normally find it okay and repudiate their view of it a little as well.

Johannes: It might change their view of the police too, that we acknowledge their culture. It should counteract some prejudices <u>against</u> the police as well.

Someone: Mm

Sara: And <u>within</u> the police too.

When asked why the police should mirror society one student says:

Extract 3.

Magnus: I believe that the more different kinds of people you get in, the more diversifiedly you will be able to work and you will have different points of references. It may also be valuable for those you meet, that they can see that it's not only young, shaved, Swedish men who are police officers, that they can identify with them. I think that's valuable for the police, and will increase the confidence in the police if people actually can relate to them. That they are human beings like many others.

Concluding remarks

What the students learn and how they learn influence their view of society and humanity. Their thinking and actions are formed through participation in communicative practices with others. Students interpret and shape norms in different situations based on their perspectives and experiences. In the talks about religion, students seem to express varying and uncertain opinions, both on the main topic and on its relevance in their education. I interpret this as discussions concerning religion being rare. The students' abilities to discuss religion in various ways were also revealed, but what could also be interpreted as an uncertainty about consensus on this matter.

    A polarization between liberalistic and multicultural views of religion can be traced in the statements. Robert finds religion unimportant due to the fact that everybody should be treated in the

same way, independent of whether they are religious or not. To be "coloured" by religion is to be non-objective. He expresses a liberalistic and universalistic idea based on individual civil rights as a norm. Another student, Magnus, delivers contradictory answers. Others find religion important, for several reasons. Johannes has the strongest opinion and articulates several arguments for a multicultural understanding, for example that respect is difficult without understanding. An essentially monocultural view is also expressed, where "we" are the non-religious and the "others" are people who are religious.

Robert's liberalistic view of religion and his later statement about veiled officers as "hilarious" are interesting, suggesting ambivalence not only within the group, but also in personal views.

The extracts also imply an exotic view of religion and "the others", which reveals an "us and them" thinking. It is easier to work and both show respect and be respected, if one shares the same background or belief as the people one meets: 'birds of a feather flock together'. Other people might be religious, and they need extra respect because of their traditions. In contrast, the police and the public are not generally considered religious. Lisa expresses an essentialist view, describing men in "other" cultures as oppressing women. Some students also showed an awareness of prejudice against and within the police, by which they demonstrated an ability to address prejudice in a larger context, but also a meta-awareness of their own role as police officers.

The first conversation (extract 1) can also exemplify how meaning was negotiated through interaction with others. Arguments for and against the relevance of religion in education were articulated and the student asked questions when they did not understand someone's argument. There were few interruptions. At the end, Johannes' multicultural view of religion met Robert's liberalistic view when mentioning a limit as to how much accommodation is possible. Their conversation ended with vague statements of their view of the importance of religion, which preserved the atmosphere in the group.

When police students learn about religion, the focus is on crime-related events, due to the features of policing. Preliminary findings from the pilot study show that the students find the diversified police recruitment important. How this is important and how the students negotiate these understandings need to be explored more deeply in order to understand how they construct religion as a phenomenon and its relevance for their future profession. Religion in the Police Academy seems to be a highly complex matter.

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