РЕЛИГИОВЕДЕНИЕ

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EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN MODELS AND APPROACHES

The article offers an overview of the main models and approaches to religious education (RE) which exist in the European countries. Despite the fact that it is impossible to talk about only one European model of RE, there are some similar tendencies and characteristics of RE in Europe.

The article starts with the typology of major positions on religious diversity — exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism — in regard to RE. Next, the author describes the well-known classification of RE as having a confessional or non-confessional approach based on the responsibility for RE. Then RE is explained in terms of M. Grimmitt's typology of RE who distinguishes learning 'into' religion, 'about' religion and 'from' religion according to the aims RE pursues. Finally, the article draws attention to the classification of RE made by W. Alberts on the integrative and separative approach depending on the way RE classes are organized.

On the basis of the analysis of the existing models and approaches to RE, the author stresses their interconnection and interdependence. The given examples of RE show its uniqueness in each European country which is rooted in historical, political, cultural, and religious traditions of a particular country. However, despite the unique characteristics of RE in each European country, the step from confessional RE to a non-confessional is evident as well as the integration of RE with the goals of liberal education based on democratic values and human rights. Refs 26.

Keywords: religious education in Europe, religious education models and approaches.

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РЕЛИГИОЗНОЕ ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ В ЕВРОПЕ В МОДЕЛЯХ И ПОДХОДАХ

Статья представляет собой краткий обзор основных моделей и подходов к религиозному образованию, существующих на данный момент в европейских странах. Несмотря на то что не создано единой европейской модели религиозного образования, можно говорить об общеевропейских тенденциях в религиозном образовании и его характерных особенностях.

В статье рассматривается религиозное образование с позиций эксклюзивизма, инклюзивизма и плюрализма как основных моделей отношения к религиозному многообразию. Затем автор обращается к наиболее распространенной типологии подходов к религиозному образованию, разделяющей его на конфессиональное и неконфессиональное, в основе которой лежит вопрос ответственности за религиозное образование. Далее приводится классификация религиозного образования М. Гриммитта, выделяющая образование «в» религии, «о» религии и «из» религии с точки зрения цели, которую тот или иной подход к религиозному образованию преследует. Завершает обзор типология религиозного образования В. Альбертс, которая

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предлагает выделять сепаративное и интегративное религиозное образование в зависимости от способа организации уроков.

В результате анализа существующих моделей и подходов к религиозному образованию автор подчеркивает их взаимосвязь и взаимообусловленность, а также на конкретных примерах показывает, что в связи с историческими, политическими, культурными и религиозными особенностями в каждой европейской стране сложилась уникальная система религиозного образования. Однако, несмотря на различия религиозного образования в европейских государствах, очевидной общей тенденцией является переход от конфессионального религиозного образования к неконфессиональному, а также придание особого значения целям либерального образования, основывающегося на демократических ценностях и правах человека, в контексте религиозного образования. Библиогр. 26 назв.

Ключевые слова: религиозное образование в Европе, модели и подходы к религиозному образованию.

Introduction

Nowadays, religious education (RE) is a part of school education in most of the European countries. It takes place in a number of contexts and it is rooted in historical, cultural and political traditions of particular country, including educational system and church-state relations. As Schreiner says, 'each approach to RE has a biography' [1, 1]. Even though it is impossible to talk about only one European model of RE, there are some similar patterns in the way how the European countries address religious matters in educational sphere.

The aim of this paper is to give an overview of the models and approaches of RE which exist in Europe. To do this, I will start with the typology of positions on religious diversity as, I believe, the main criteria which differentiates various approaches to RE is the way RE treats diversity of religious traditions. Next, I will describe the well-known classification based on the responsibility for RE and the Grimmitt's typology of learning in regard to religion which focuses on the aims RE pursues. Finally, I offer to look at the distinction of RE made by Alberts based on the way RE is organized at school. It is important to remember, that all of the classifications represent the ideal types which are in reality all intertwined. However, each typology highlights a different aspect of RE which helps in creating the whole picture about current developments and problems of RE in the European countries.

Exclusivist, inclusivist and pluralist models of RE

In regard to existing religious diversity there are three positions — exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism — which deal with the problem of validity of other religious traditions in different ways. Originally these concepts were used in Christian theology to explain different views on the possibility of salvation in other religions. Exclusivism refers to the position with "an explicit belief in Christ" which forms the Christian monopoly for salvation and truth [2] and denies any salvific possibility for other religions. Despite the fact that exclusivism doesn't deny the existence of other religious traditions, it is not open to the dialogue with them. As Knitter [3] puts it, the aim of exclusivist who enters a dialogue with adherents of other religions is to convert the other rather than facilitate mutual understanding. At its extreme, exclusivism regards other religions as not worthy to be examining. However, the most open version of exclusivism, according to Hobson and Edwards [4, 48], while not being open to any change of its basic beliefs, is open for

the respect for other religious traditions. Exclusivist model of RE is clearly connected with confessional approach which, in the words of R. Jackson [5], denies any impact of plurality on student's identity and confines the understanding of morality within the only one religion. Even in the most open version of exclusivism, which gives a way for a multi-faith approach to RE other religious traditions are valuable to be learnt about just for the reason of better understanding the only true faith [4, 49]. As a result, in RE textbooks some significant information about other religious traditions and non-religious views which can question the true faith gets omitted on purpose. Thus, exclusivist model is characteristic for the monoreligious societies with no religious pluralism presented [6] or wherever religion is associated with national identity [7, 19].

Meanwhile, inclusivism is defined by Christian theologians as the position where non-Christians can be included within the sphere of Christian salvation [8]. However, Christianity still retains superior characteristics and sees other religions from Christian point of view considering adherents of other religious traditions as anonymous Christians [9]. Inclusivism recognizes existing plurality but beliefs that other religions don't have anything new that their own religion doesn't. So the elitism of their own religious tradition remains. Applied to RE inclusivism is still more suited for confessional approach of RE because the place of other religious traditions is wholly dependent on their links to the true faith [4, 51].

Pluralists in Christian typology are those who accept the existence of multiple, independently valid spheres of salvation [10, 473] or, as Hick [11] says, Christianity becomes "one among several" ways of salvation. However, it doesn't mean that pluralism is uncritically open to other religious traditions. The distinctive trait of pluralists which differs it from both exclusivism and inclusivism is a non-dogmatic stance towards other religions [10, 476]. Relativists, or using the terminology of Cush [7, 20], negative pluralists, with their stance that all world views are equally valid, tend to confine religion into the private sphere and reject the need of RE at all. Meanwhile, positive pluralism calls for an open study of diversity with the possibility of critical evaluation which, in Cush's words, is the most appropriate approach to RE at secular schools [7, 21]. It is positive pluralism that pursues the goal of RE set as "allowing pupils to become religiously literate, to be able to think, act and communicate intelligently about the ultimate questions that religions ask" [12] regardless of pupil's religious and cultural background.

Confessional and non-confessional RE

One of the most well-know typologies of RE is based on the church-state relations and the role of religious organization in educational sphere. We can differentiate two main approaches to RE which were already mentioned above: confessional and non-confessional.

In confessional systems the responsibility for RE is in the hands of religious organizations. Ferrari explains confessional RE as being "organized and controlled by religious communities which are charged with the training and selection of educators, the drafting of curricula, and the approval of materials" [13, 60]. Confessional RE can usually be found in predominantly Catholic or Protestant countries in Western Europe which still have or had a state church like in Italy, Belgium, Finland etc. Moreover, confessional RE is characteristic for the post-socialist Central and Eastern European countries where religion had no place in the education in the past due to the states' ideology. One of the

interesting examples of confessional approach in Western Europe is the Dutch RE. RE in the Netherlands exists just in faith schools organized for pupils with a particular religious background. RE is viewed not as a normal school subject but as a "legitimate expression of a school's own identity" [14]. That is why in the Dutch system there is no state control over RE, no national guidelines and no curricular. Even though RE at Dutch confessional schools is no longer confessional in content, except for a small number of very conservative faith schools, it is still a prerogative of religious organizations and not the state.

Non-confessional RE is organized and controlled by the state which is responsible for the national curricular, objectives and guidelines. Non-confessional model is very characteristic for the Nordic countries with no place for religious organizations in education. One of the most noteworthy examples is Sweden. The Church of Sweden, even though it was a state church until 2000, has no special privileges on school matters nor on RE. The state has the direct supervision over RE which is taught from a religious studies approach. Russian RE in terms of responsibility is also considered to be non-confessional. It is of the same status as other school subjects and taught from a religious studies approach which is officially called 'cultorological' as being opposite to an ideological approach which seeks to use religion as a tool for fostering loyalty to the state and the church [15]. An interesting characteristic of non-confessional RE is that there is no opting-out available like it exists in the systems with confessional RE. The reason is that in confessional approach RE is considered to be the realization of state neutrality towards religion and the expression of individual freedom of religion. Meanwhile non-confessional approach treats RE as a normal school subject and as a right of children to education including education about religion. Such an understanding of non-confessional RE explains as well the reason why in most of the countries with a non-confessional approach RE is a compulsory school subject.

In addition to confessional and non-confessional RE there are countries with no RE at all. The most-striking representative is France with its system of laicite and no RE at secular schools as a separate subject (with the exception of Alsace-Lorraine due to the historical reasons). However, even in France the need of pupil's religious literacy is acknowledged and religious issues are given attention within such school subjects as history and philosophy [1, 8].

There is as well the mixed approach which implies the cooperation between state and religious organizations. The great example is Britain with its multi-faith RE. Responsibility for RE in Britain is indirect as it is mainly in the hands of local authorities which consist of four groups: representatives of Christian and other religious denominations (reflecting the local religious composition); representatives of the Church of England; representatives of teachers associations and members of the authority itself. Obviously, the Church of England is given some privileges and the very existence of a state church, of course, has some influence on RE, which should '(…) reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian' (Education Reform Act 1988, section 8 (3)). However, the focus on local religious composition does not allow RE be confessional.

Learning 'into', 'about' and 'from' religion

According to the aims which RE pursues RE can be divided into: learning into religion, learning about religion and learning from religion [16]. The first type represents confessional RE aiming at transmission of faith and pupil's socialization in particular re-

ligious tradition. Edwards and Hobson [4, 18] call this type of RE as 'education for commitment' aiming at producing of personal commitment to particular religious tradition. Education 'into' religion focuses exclusively on just one religious tradition. As exclusivism does not necessarily disrespect other religions neither does 'learning into religion' approach but it sees other religions through the eyes of the dominant one. Learning 'about' religion focuses at pupil's religious literacy by educating them about religions not from a dogmatic perspective but from a historical and cultural point of view. It is also called religious studies approach. Learning 'from' religion is an approach based on transformation conception of education where the aim is not just to introduce pupils to different religious and non-religious worldviews but to facilitate the development of their personal philosophy of life and enable pupils to "acquire their own personal identity" [17].

A big proponent of combination of educating 'about' and 'from' religion is British scholar Jackson. For him, the aim of RE is not confined only to transmission of knowledge and understanding of religious and non-religious world views. It should be just a starting point of educational process. In the world of growing religious diversity, besides the need in religious literacy, it is more important to develop in pupils their own point of view on matters of religion [18].

From all the European countries the best representatives in combining education 'about' with education 'from' religion are Sweden and Britain. A noteworthy feature of Swedish RE is that besides teaching about different religious traditions and non-religious world views it primary focuses on 'life questions'. As such Swedish RE aims '(…) to create the conditions for pupils to develop a personal attitude to life and an understanding of how they and others are thinking and living' [19]. This way, the Swedish RE prioritizes personal development of students and centers not so much on religious practices rather on present functions of religions in society and the interconnections between religion and culture at the same time covering all major confessions "in an objective and comprehensive manner" [20]. In the British RE it is officially laid down that one of the major aims of RE is spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students 'so that they can participate positively in our society with its diverse religions and worldviews' and '(…) to learn to articulate clearly and coherently their personal beliefs, ideas, values and experiences while respecting the right of others to differ' [21].

It is quite often that one system of education may combine as well confessional RE with a non-confessional education 'about' religion. For instance, Danish RE at upper-secondary school is totally non-confessional and it is taught from religious studies approach. While RE of folkeskole (which comprises primary and secondary school) still retains some significant confessional traits such as the privilege of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Denmark (Folkekirken) of a confirmation year at 7th or 8th grade (age 13-14) when there is no regular RE and most pupils attend an out-of-school confirmation programme led by a local Lutheran minister [22].

Separative and integrative RE

The typology of RE proposed by Alberts [23] is based on the way RE is organized. In integrative RE children from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds sit together in one classroom and are not separated into different religious groups with specific programmes for RE. Thus, integrative RE is a non-confessional RE which takes into account

the existing religious plurality. Sweden and Britain are the European countries with the longest history of integrative RE. In separative RE students attend different classes based on their own (or their parents') religious or ideological beliefs. It makes separative RE characteristic for confessional approach to RE and can be found, for example, in Germany and Russia. Even though Russian RE is officially non-confessional, four of its six modules are devoted to particular religious tradition which do not cover any other religious or non-religious views. The alternative subjects existing alongside with confessional ones in both Germany and Russia are introduced for students whose parents do not want their children to be educated in particular religious tradition. The Dutch educational system is a unique example of European separative RE. In the Netherlands parents choose not a kind of confessional RE for their children but a school organized on confessional grounds.

In other words, while separative RE is rooted in religious perspective on education and in indispensable value of religion in a human life, integrative RE is seen as a 'cornerstone of education in secular democracies' [24] where children get to know how to live with and respect people with different religious and secular philosophies of life.

Conclusion

Every European country is unique in its way it accommodates religion in education. The diversity of approaches to RE in Europe goes from no RE at public schools at all to a non-confessional obligatory RE as a normal school subject for all under a direct state supervision. Even though many European countries still have confessional RE, the step towards non-confessional pluralistic education 'about' religion is apparent. Especially this tendency is recognizable in the countries familiar with the system of a state church such as Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and England [1, 3]. However, confessional RE also gets transformed in terms of its aims and content. Indeed, in a highly secularized Dutch society teaching into religion became irrelevant and the confessional nurture has been substituted at many faith schools by a worldview education mostly devoid of religious content [25]. Moreover, nowadays many confessional schools have a lot of children with another or no religious background at all which challenges the religious identity of the school and especially of the offered RE [26]. Due to the growing Muslim population in Europe, some of the countries with separative RE organize Islamic RE alongside with Christian RE or take a better account of Islamic traditions within Christian RE. Either way, there is no doubt in the European society that knowledge about religion is a necessary part of liberal education based on democratic values and human rights. The common integration of RE with the educational goals of the school in the European countries is highly visible. Even in the countries with a confessional approach, RE is required to contribute to the education of students towards responsible citizenship in pluralist societies [13, 62].

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