READY
Religious Education and Diversity

STUDY VISITS

Heinz Ivkovits
Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule Wien/Krems
Church University College of Teacher Education Vienna/Krems
Purpose

• Getting acquainted with different *cultural and religious traditions*

• *Sharing experiences and ideas* concerning diversity and plurality in school and society

• Exchanging and further developing of *religious pedagogical concepts*
Overall research question

In how far does the respective organisational / didactic concept of RE support the pupils’ perspective of plurality and diversity

- From the perspective of student teachers and educators (study visits)
- From the perspective of the pupils in the RE classes (interviews, videography)
Key questions to be considered during the visits

• What models of RE do we find in the countries visited?
• How far do they promote and facilitate interreligious learning and dialogue?
• What quality criteria are applied?
• How do they appreciate religious, cultural and ethnic diversity and its richness?
• What recommendations can we formulate as a consequence?
Structure of exploration

Analysis
- Documents
- Websites
- Mission statements
- Case studies in schools & classrooms

Exploration
- Interviews & Observation
- Job shadowing

Interaction
- Face-to-face encounters
- Interviews
- Videotapings

Reflection
- Analysis
- Documentation
Timeline

Year 1

A) Structured online communication between student teachers from always two educational institutions in two European countries
B) Development of a joint educational module on ‘Religion and Diversity’

Year 2

Groups of teacher educators and student teachers

A) observe RE lessons in a partner country for a week
B) hold discussions with educational experts, trainee teachers, pupils and stakeholders responsible for RE
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phenomenographical research</th>
<th>Ethnographic research</th>
<th>Critical incident analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Scientific concepts
**Phenomenographical research** *(Theory of Variation)*

- Learning takes places when there is difference against a background of sameness

  ⇒ **Help students to discern differences and therefore learn**

- Identify the aspects of the lesson content that are critical for students’ understanding (e.g. attitudes towards other religions) ⇒ **learning objects**

  *indirect learning object* refers to a certain skill or ability
  
  *direct* one to the learning content (concepts)

  ⇒ **To see something from another perspective**
Ethnographic research

- Learning about a context and the people living or working in it
- Understanding their values, needs, motivation or vocabulary
- Drawing conclusions and creating innovative solutions
- **Method:** Observation, interviews, video recording and job shadowing
Critical incident analysis

Tool for students or trainees to use with their teacher to identify learning needs, or to reflect more deeply about an issue or situation

• Incidents arising from *cultural / religious differences* or where there is a problem of *cross-cultural adaptation*
• They expose a *gap in understanding* or cause learners to think differently about something
• Situations may be *positive* and can serve as *good practice* or *negative* by producing *misunderstandings* or even *conflicts*
Analysing a critical incident

It is useful to ask yourself questions such as

• Why do I view the situation like that?
• What assumptions have I made about the people involved or problem or situation?
• How else could I interpret the situation?
• What other action(s) could have been taken that might have been more helpful?
• What will I do if I am faced with a similar situation in the future?
Fieldwork

- Monitoring
- Lesson observation
- Interviews

READY
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND DIVERSITY
Erasmus+


Monitoring tasks

Diversity & Belonging

• What kind of diversity do you perceive?
• How is diversity addressed?
• RE-lessons: How are pupils involved in their religious / cultural diversity?
• RE & Collective Worship: Is the existing religious diversity in this school reflected in the forms of worship offered?
• Information will be collected through observation, interviews, video recording and job shadowing
Lesson observations

Purpose

- To identify and document certain previously defined *learning objects* in the context of the project theme
- To explore and describe pupil/teacher behaviour, communication patterns and interactions in the *context of diversity*
- To identify *critical incidents* or *critical features* in the context of diversity and how teachers / pupils deal with them

*Note: Analysis of lessons from a didactic or methodological perspective is not the main aim of the observation phase*
Interviewing pupils

Their voices and their experiences of diversity and plurality in RE classrooms

Whether

- they feel cared for and respected in their religious / cultural backgrounds
- they feel part of the school / classroom community in that respect (belonging)
- the RE classroom conditions are conducive to effective dealing with diversity
- the RE classroom conditions promote collaborative interreligious learning
- their RE promotes the development of openness towards and living and working with people from other religions and cultures
After the visits

Exchanging innovative ideas and good practice

- Dissemination of knowledge acquired, perspectives and information through conferences, local and international networks and OER
- Development and dissemination of appropriate materials for education and in-service-training
Evaluation

- **FEELINGS**
  Ways in which my curiosity and interest were aroused (examples from ordinary daily school life, especially when they made me re-consider my own religion/culture)

- **KNOWLEDGE**
  The most important things I have learnt about dealing with religious/cultural variety at school
  The most important things I have learnt about the organisation of RE

- **ACTIONS**
  Critical incidents or features that can be related to the different religions/cultures present in the classroom
  Examples of times when I had to ask questions and work out my own answers (to understand religious/cultural customs and beliefs)