



STUDY VISITS

Intellectual output 2

CONCEPT – OBJECTIVES

OBSERVATION – ANALYSIS – EVALUATION

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CONTEXT

Growing ethnic, cultural and religious diversity in Europe poses both opportunities and challenges to European policy-makers, educationalists and societies. Schools are becoming more diverse, too. It is expected that the impact of religious/non-religious and cultural diversity will continue to increase. Simultaneously, intolerance and social exclusion are growing, with certain groups and individuals feeling alienated.

Although religious identity seems to be of great importance for both individuals and society, it is often perceived as problematic or threatening, with the current migration and refugee movements enforcing this. This has generated tensions in schools, too, particularly in respect to the role of (different manifestations of) religion and belief in public life.

Regarding this new *multicultural* and *multifaith* situation, European institutions, e.g. the Council of Europe or the European Commission, have emphasised that Europe should integrate this phenomenon in its education policy. Within the educational landscape, the school is a critical institution for transmitting values and attitudes that honour openness and learning from difference. Schools can provide a place where young people learn the skills and competences that will help them resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner and learn to cope with diversity in everyday life.

Therefore, politicians, church representatives and educationalists consider the question of various *models of moral and ethical education* as equally important. EU Member States have devised a wide variety of approaches to Religious Education in schools. However, the way educational systems frame children's moral and religious development raises different issues for majority and minority faith groups, as well as for those without religious affiliation.

Current research¹ demonstrates that studies of religious and non-religious ethical and moral diversity can help to develop a culture of 'living together'. This research

¹ E.g. REDCo (Religion in Education. A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries) and REMC (Religious education in a multicultural society: School and home in comparative context)

also shows that many young people want an opportunity to learn and talk about religion and belief in schools.

Dialogue between people of different faiths (including humanistic worldviews) within the scope of interreligious² learning and teaching has therefore become another central educational task concerning both pupils and teachers.

Interreligious learning in school and education needs teachers who possess interreligious competences. It is therefore necessary to assess existing *curricula and concepts* of RE in Europe to find out whether they meet the aforementioned challenges and equip teachers with appropriate competences and skills.

All this has led to several interreligious teaching projects. The three-year Erasmus plus project "Religious Education and Diversity – Sharing experiences of and approaches to teacher education in the context of 'Education and Training 2020' (READY)"³ researched the regional differences of Religious Education (RE) and interreligious learning in some European countries.

Teacher training institutions in Austria, England, Germany, Scotland and Sweden explored the topic 'Religion and Diversity' in two respects: the mutual exchange of concepts of RE and the variety of approaches to subject teaching and learning, in which the questions of religious and philosophical heterogeneity are considered and discussed.

Main target group of the project were teacher trainees for RE. In the second project year, groups of teacher educators and trainee teachers observed RE lessons in a partner country for a week and held discussions with educational experts, trainee teachers, pupils and stakeholders responsible for RE. These experiences were analysed, processed and documented based on this practical guide. The following guidelines shall help to structure and facilitate similar study visit processes.

² Despite existing distinctions between 'interfaith' and 'interreligious', the latter term will be used throughout this paper (see Literature)

³ For further information, see: www.readyproject.eu

The experiences made in the READY project can also be used by other institutions and persons interested in dialogue and exchange between European partners and may thus also contribute to a further development of exchange programs.



CONCEPTION

ASSOCIATIONS

Diversity affecting the classroom

Diversity is a term that can have many different meanings depending on context. Our understanding is explained in the glossary. Much discussion about diversity focuses on the following forms of marginalization: race, culture, religion, class, gender, and sexual orientation. In fact, kids come to school with different backgrounds, sets of experiences, cultural contexts, and world views.

Study visits will therefore highlight two key areas related to diversity:

- How diversity affects the classroom / school
- Practical insights and conclusions for promoting an inclusive classroom

Diversity particularly applies to the RE classroom. Children may perceive that they do not 'belong' due to their being different — a feeling that can lead to decreased participation, feelings of inadequacy, and other distractions. Teachers may themselves feel out of place based on their own ascriptive traits (i.e. their own religious/non-religious background, world view, aims and objectives of their RE concept and as an RE teacher, etc.).

Identifying and thinking through notions of difference and how they affect the classroom allow both pupils and teachers to see the classroom as an inclusive place.

Levels

Religious and cultural education as well as Ethics aim at equipping pupils of all ages and backgrounds with the skills, competences, democratic values and principles for effective participation in a culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse society. In the context of the READY project the issue of ‘diversity’ is located on at least three levels:

- The different forms of RE and Ethics in different European countries, together with a corresponding form of teacher training
- The respective school frameworks and classroom interactions
- The curricula and contents regarding what should be discussed / taught / learned in RE and Ethics

RE as a ‘Safe Space’?

Pupils may see the classroom (not family or peer group) as the only likely potential ‘safe space’ for a serious discussion of diversity as they perceive and live it. They appreciate skilful teachers who can both provide accurate information and manage discussions, which help them cope with the differences in viewpoint and lifestyle.

Therefore, it seems obvious to think about concepts such as ‘safe space’ or the so-called ‘othering’ phenomenon. For whom should RE or Ethics be a ‘safe space’? What conditions must be met? Who are ‘we’? Who are ‘the others’?



LEARNING OBJECTS

People from different cultures might not only communicate in different ways but also experience a situation differently. Therefore, the purpose of the lesson observations, which constitute an essential element of the study visits, is to explore and describe behaviour, communication patterns and interactions in the context of diversity. However, this task does not primarily aim to analyse the lessons from a didactic or methodological perspective but to identify and document certain previously defined *learning objects* in the context of the project theme. This approach draws on *ethnographic research* as learning about a context and the people living or working in it by understanding their values, needs, motivation or vocabulary to draw conclusions and create innovative solutions.

Each learning object has a lot of features. Observers need to filter out those which are important for them in the observed lesson. A learning object can be divided into an *indirect* and a *direct* one, where the indirect one refers to a certain skill or ability and the direct object of learning to the learning content (Marton & Tsui, 2004). Both aspects can be in the focus of the observers.

CRITICAL INCIDENTS & FEATURES

The *critical incident analysis* was founded by J.C. Flanagan in 1954. Working with 'critical incidents' means collecting situations which are either very positive and can serve as good practice or negative in the way that they could produce misunderstandings or even conflicts. Critical means that there could be negative consequences for at least one of the participants. These incidents may arise from cultural/religious differences between interacting parties or where there is a problem of cross-cultural adaptation. People tend to make judgements or attributions about others based on the behaviour they observe.

When their expectations are not met (*disconfirmed expectations*), this may lead to strong emotional reactions:

- People may feel extremely emotional and get upset
- People may make false attributions or assign inaccurate interpretations to the meaning and intentions of someone's behaviour
- People may begin to inquire about how others interpret or find meaning in their world

THEORY OF VARIATION

Marton and Booth's *Theory of Variation* (1997) developed the critical incident analyses further by drawing on the *Phenomenographical research* tradition. It encourages teachers and pupils to identify the critical features of a new object of learning through comparison with existing frameworks of knowledge and understanding. Learning is defined as a new way to experience — an ability to see something from another perspective. To obtain this *shift in perspectives*, aspects that need to be varied and discerned are called critical. Variation Theory offers a framework to analyse the lesson subject content and focuses teachers' attention on what is called the object of learning.

By exploring these dimensions, teacher trainees and student educators receive support to raise awareness of religious and cultural diversity and plurality and improve their competences (cf. Byram).

DEFINITION

WHAT IS A STUDY VISIT?

Study visits provide a unique opportunity to learn about current European developments in a certain school subject. In the context of READY they promoted the sharing of experiences between people with different religious, cultural and pedagogical background and facilitate the participants' practical acquaintance with cultural and religious traditions as well as the exchange of religious pedagogical concepts.

Teacher trainees and educators form a learning community and as such undertake bilateral (trilateral) visits to an educational institution in one or two of the partner countries to acquire hands on skills and conceptual reflections relevant to their training. These visits comprise five working and two travelling days and create learning environments through observing and videotaping lessons, job shadowing teachers, presentations, reports, discussions and use of OER.



STUDY VISITS AIM AT

I. Supporting initial and continuous training of teachers and teacher educators

Participants enjoy opportunities to discover institutions with specific religious educational concepts and to meet local RE teachers, experts and educators. They also explore innovative and collaborative approaches to teaching and learning in RE lessons in a variety of schools.

II. Promoting the acquisition of key competences and skills

Participants acquire and further develop interreligious and intercultural skills and competences. They consider concepts of teacher professionalization through critical reflection on and consolidation of knowledge in favour of recognizing and managing the diversities of pupils, thus providing a deeper insight into the professional life of future RE teachers and an indication of the standards required.

III. Encouraging cooperation and networking between the worlds of education, training and work

Through networking and disseminating findings, participants bring back new ideas to their institutions to help conceptualize appropriate approaches to education and training of RE teachers and develop innovative teaching and learning materials. Thus study visits also bring important added value that will continue beyond the life of a project.

PLANNING

TIMELINE

The development phases consist of the following steps

- I. Preparation of guidelines and coordination through electronic means of communication
- II. Finalising guidelines
- III. Planning study visits in year 2 + didactical, legal and technical details of video recordings of RE lessons (at home and, if possible, abroad)
- IV. Evaluation of the study visits
- V. Evaluation of RE lesson observations

ARRANGING THE VISIT

Prior to each study visit, it is important to set the expectations for the participants, e.g. (to be completed according to specific aims and objectives):

- Twinning institutions (unilateral or bilateral study visits)
- Establishing contact with the partner institution(s)
- Time frame of the visit
- Fixing leaves of absence from institutions
- Developing a written agreement that includes the following points:
 - contact information
 - dates of arrival and departure
 - accommodation (hostel, hotel, guesthouse, private)
 - number of participants (both pupils and educators)
 - academic programme
 - social activities
- Tasks to be completed at the visit
- Tips for video recordings, job shadowing
- Organisation
 - reception of the group
 - meals (university, college, elsewhere)
 - transport

BASIC CONSIDERATIONS

- People hear everything and notice everything in the light of their own experience and in the light of what they consider as normal in their culture
- Religion is taught in all partner countries in many different situations of religious and cultural plurality
- Interreligious learning in RE must relate to the occasions on which different religions come into contact today ► Interreligious Critical Incidents (c.f. Intercultural Psychology, respectively Intercultural Communication Research)
- Pupils must acquire analytical skills and judgement competence, interreligious interpretation and action competence (► communicative skills ► meta-communication), as well as attitudes and beliefs to promote tolerance, recognition and respect for others
- Intercultural skills and interreligious competence are developed over time through observation, reflection, learning and practice

EQUIPPING YOURSELF

Self-reflection on diversity

- What is my definition of 'diversity'?
- What national, cultural, linguistic or religious group(s) do I belong to? How do my teaching practices reflect this?
- What do I know about the cultural, linguistic, religious and educational backgrounds of my pupils and other staff?
- How could I learn more about the diversity of my pupils and staff colleagues?
- What are my perceptions/assumptions of pupils and staff colleagues from diverse cultural groups? Or with language or dialects different from mine? Or with special needs or requirements?
- What are the sources of these perceptions (e.g., friends, relatives, media, stereotypes, past experiences)?
- How do I respond to my pupils (emotionally, cognitively, and behaviourally), based on these perceptions?
- What experiences do I have because of living, studying or working in religiously and culturally diverse cultures? How can I capitalise on this experience?
- How can I adapt my teaching practices to be more responsive to the unique needs of diverse pupil groups?
- What other knowledge, skills and resources would help me to teach from a more religiously/culturally inclusive perspective?



RESULTING CONSIDERATIONS

- The role of the religion teachers, their religiosity, and the way and extent in which they introduce their own belief positions and truth claims
- Whether a religious and ideological neutrality of religious education is possible and desirable
- The relationship between intercultural and interreligious learning

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

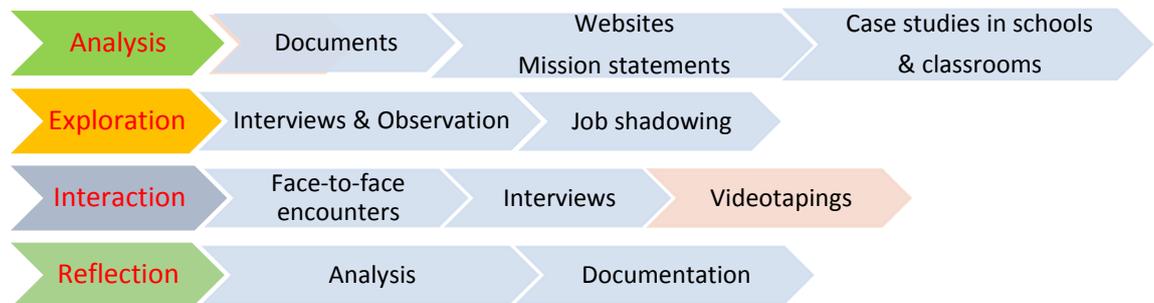
- What main opportunities and challenges do European religious educational systems face in terms of preparing young people for living in diverse environments and promoting tolerance, respect and active citizenship?
- For each of these, what insights can we draw from existing forms of RE and what recommendations can we formulate thus consequently?
- Which specific RE concepts and practices appear to appreciate religious, cultural and ethnic diversity and its richness best and under which specific circumstances?
- How far do they promote and facilitate interreligious learning and dialogue?

KEY QUESTIONS FOR THE ACTUAL VISIT

- What kind of diversity do you perceive?
- How does diversity affect the school visited in general and the RE classroom in particular?
- How does the existing religious / cultural diversity affect the pedagogical practice of teachers there?
- What do you observe in the RE lessons in the context of diversity and plurality?
- How might these experiences and insights influence my approach to the handling of diversity and plurality back home?

PERFORMANCE

STRUCTURE



FIELDWORK

Fieldwork in the context of READY offers visitors the opportunity to meet pupils and educational experts to deepen their theoretical knowledge, get new perspectives and ideas, and develop their observation skills. It comprises the fields of

- Exploring diversity and belonging
- Observing lessons
- Interviewing pupils
- Exchanging conceptions and objectives with experts and stakeholders

Fieldwork involves a range of methods: informal interviews, direct observation, collective discussions, analyses of documents, video recording and job shadowing.

In the context of interviewing pupils, fieldwork aims at *giving voices* to their experiences of diversity and plurality in RE classrooms. Questions may focus on 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 culture

or on their personal experiences and encounters in the context of diversity

- What do they know about the different background of their classmates, their country of origin (if different), their festivals and special days?

- What measures were put into place in their school to encourage religious/cultural diversity?
- Do they notice prejudices when they hang out with their mates?



The following list of examples is understood as a suggestion. The actual selection of items must match the expectations and needs on the part of the respective partners and is to be made prior to the study visits. In practice, the concentration on a few items has proved to match the project's purpose best.

A. BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH THE LOCAL CONCEPTS / FORMS OF RE

THE TOTAL SHOULD BE

- To examine the underlying concepts, principles and interpretations of RE in public and private schools
- To explore innovative ideas and practices adopted in the host country, ensuring an up-to-date flow of information about RE training systems

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

- What is the overall purpose of RE in that country?
- In what way does the concept of the local RE differ from that in your country?
- Would you consider the local concept as innovative and useful to achieve the objectives of your own concept of RE? Why? Why not?
- Is RE offered as a separate school subject? How effective is this?
- Is RE integrated into other school subjects? How effective is this?
- Is RE a responsibility of the school or given in co-operation with religious communities?
- How far can the school autonomously decide on its form of RE?

B. EXCHANGING EXPERIENCES WITH LOCAL EXPERTS

THE TOTAL SHOULD BE

- To discover similarities
- To understand and accept differences

QUESTIONS TO BE RAISED

- To what extent are teachers trained to deal with diversity?

C. BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH THE CORRESPONDING CURRICULUA / COURSE BOOKS

THE TOTAL SHOULD BE

- To become acquainted with the host country's approach to RE

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

- How is religious / cultural diversity being dealt with? In what areas?
- Which religions are presented in RE? Why?
- Are all religions presented side by side without preferences of any kind (multi-religious systematic approach)?
- Are the common features between religions emphasised?
- Is there a critical attitude to religions?

D. BECOMING ACQUAINTED WITH THE SCHOOL ETHOS

THE TOTAL SHOULD BE

- To analyse mission statements/information brochures, interview principals and department heads
- To observe how far the school's tradition is based on the dominant religion in the state

ANALYSIS QUESTIONS

- To what extent does it reflect the diversity of pupils/teachers in the school?
- How far are intercultural/interreligious education values part of the general vision/mission statement of the school?
- Does it reflect the interreligious dimension of education?
- How far does the school calendar reflect religious diversity?
- To what extent do holidays reflect the diversity of holy days of the religions represented by the teachers and the pupil body in the school?
- Are there common days of religious celebration?
- How are religious dress codes or symbols dealt with?



E. OBSERVING RE LESSONS

THE TOTAL SHOULD BE

- To explore the classroom setting and atmosphere, questions of classroom management and the materials provided
- To explore how religious diversity is dealt with
- To explore whether the knowledge of other faith traditions and the working with pupils from different religious backgrounds support the pupils' own understanding of faith and interpretation of life
- To identify critical features and incidents during the lessons
- To observe and document groups of pupils and individual pupils in their classroom interactions in the context of diversity
- To interview pupils and job shadow RE teachers to critically reflect upon their professional role/function and response to the diversity of backgrounds and needs of their pupils

OBSERVATION TASKS



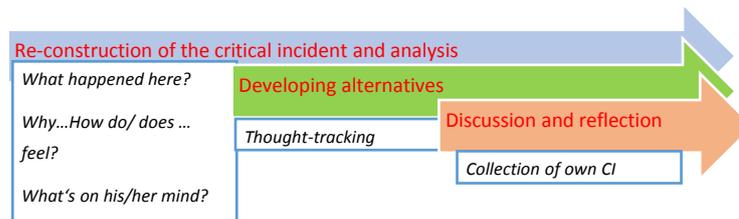
As the forms of RE observed lessons might vary significantly in each partner country, visitors must decide on the appropriateness of each of the following tasks.

- Are there members of different communities of faith and denominations present in this RE class? If so, which?
- Are the different religions/confessions present taught and discussed in separate classrooms?
- Do pupils learn *about* the religions of the other kids at school or/and *from* these other children?
- Is teaching structured to acknowledge different perspectives?
- If so, what do pupils learn in terms of the religion(s) of the others?
- Do the pupils perceive each other in their differences, respect each other and deal fairly with one another?
- What choice of words do the teachers use regarding religions / denominations existing in the class?
- Can the pupils explicate and reflect their own positions?
- Are pupils exposed to what others understand to be their religion?
- In religiously mixed groups, do and can pupils express and explain their own religious / denominational teachings and traditions?
- Denominational RE: Is the RE teacher perceived as a representative of the respective confession?
- Concluding your observations, do the observed RE lessons facilitate the dialogue between pupils of different faiths in this school?

Critical Incident Review

- What *critical incidents* or *critical features* in the context of diversity do pupils experience?
- How do RE teachers deal with these critical incidents? What information is provided for the interpretation and processing of such situations through the teacher?
- Discuss one incident. What explanations can be given to understand the underlying problem?
- What has happened to cause this situation?

Structured analysis of critical incidents



ADDITIONAL TASKS (TO BE SHARED BETWEEN THE VISITORS)

Observe the group as a whole

How do pupils respond to utterances, behaviour, clothing, or food that are based on religious or cultural grounds?

Choose one individual pupil

Observe the classroom interactions from their perspective

Job shadow one or two RE teacher/s

Record activities, interactions, events in the context of dealing with diversity.

How do the teachers see their role in terms of religious and cultural diversity in the classroom/school?

How do they respond to this diversity and to the needs of their pupils?



LEARNING OUTCOMES

GENERAL

All participants are encouraged

- To understand themselves as researchers within the processes of action research
- To broaden their knowledge and understanding of diversity and the specific aspects of RE relevant to each situation
- To develop a respectful and shared understanding between the visitors and the host pupils to value the interests and attitudes that arise from the local religious and cultural differences
- To establish professional contacts that will facilitate follow up activities and continued exchange of information

SPECIFIC

Participants

- Are able to consider how the commonalities and differences of the teacher cultures experienced manifest themselves
- Have knowledge about how to deal with critical incidents and features due to interreligious/intercultural issues
- Have knowledge about task based teaching techniques leading into interreligious/intercultural learning
- Are able to create in their own lessons a learning atmosphere that encourages learners to critically examine their own values and attitudes, thinking and feeling and enables them for interreligious/intercultural encounters

DELIVERABLES

Parties involved in a study visit (the home institution and the host institution) are to produce a tangible output (deliverables) of these visits. It constitutes a major component leading up to the objective of the project. Such deliverables are pre-defined work products produced as a result of tasks, activities and decisions of the READY project.

In preparing the study visits, participants must consider the following procedure and steps:

- Key deliverables are broken down into specific tasks that need to be completed
- The time needed to complete each task is determined
- Likely dependencies are structured

Participants must develop, carry out and document *activity* deliverables ('outputs'), such as (to be completed according to the specific aims and objectives):

- Portfolios
- Elaborated reflections
- Interviews
- Video-recordings
- Lesson observations
- Reports

The quality of deliverables will be monitored by peer review as well as by hearing the voice of colleagues who are not part of the consortium and will be regularly discussed at partner meetings.

CLOSURE

DISSEMINATION

The insights gained during the study visits are collected, structured and evaluated in Phase V. The project relevant data are made available to the respective stakeholders and published in electronic and print publications. Study visit reports summarise the key findings for all partner countries and are the basis for the development of recommendations to improve the national RE strategies and curricula.

EXCHANGING INNOVATIVE IDEAS AND GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

THE TOTAL SHOULD BE

- To explain to their peers (across domestic and international networks and OER) the knowledge, views and information acquired during the visit
- To develop and share further effective materials for teacher education and in-service-training
- To provide videotaped classroom practices for seminars to illustrate
 - how the underlying concepts enhance the awareness of and attention to differences and diversity
 - how religion teachers understand their role and act in mono-religious and multi-religious classes
- To monitor the interactions in the classroom when addressing religious diversity and dealing with stereotypes/critical incidents

ACTIVITIES

- To exchange the gained impressions, insights and observations with the partner pupils through eTwinning tools
- To publish the findings, describing similarities, differences and the conclusions drawn

EXPERIENCES & LESSONS LEARNED

Teacher trainees and teacher educators are invited to share their stories, experiences, insights and conclusions with others through eTwinning, Facebook or Skype.





A RECORD OF MY INTERRELIGIOUS/INTERCULTURAL EXPERIENCE

		
What I enjoyed most was... I felt best when... What I liked today was...	I found it most difficult to... I felt uncomfortable when... It was embarrassing for me...	I found surprising... I didn't expect... What worried me most was... I did not understand why/how...

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 learnt about dealing with religious/cultural variety at school

.....

The most important things I have learnt about the organisation of RE

.....

What I have learnt about religious/cultural topics which interest the pupils as well as topics to avoid in that context

.....

ACTIONS

Critical incidents or features that can be related to the different religions/cultures present in the classroom

.....

The way other religions/cultures or their adherents were referred to

.....

Examples of times when I had to ask questions and work out my own answers (to understand religious/cultural customs and beliefs)

.....

GLOSSARY

‘Diversity’ is a helpful search term but with considerable uncertainties. Therefore, the following glossary of key terms shall help to take a closer look at the semantic and factual environment of ‘diversity’:

Differences

This view on diversity is normally rather critically connoted and has been described in different theories. In these concepts, differences which, due to social power constellations, constitute inequalities between individual people or social groups, are reconstructed. The individual differences can be summarized in larger differential lines (cf. Walgenbach):

Body-oriented difference lines: sex, age, sexual orientation, etc.

(Social) spatially oriented difference lines: nation/state, ethnicity/origin, culture, etc.

Economically oriented differential lines: class, property etc.

Diversity

In contrast to heterogeneity, the concept of diversity is often positively connoted. It expresses that diversity does not primarily produce difficulties, but above all, opportunities. It refers to ethnic and cultural diversity as well as diversity in view of professions, age, gender and family. The perspective of diversity directs the viewer to the differences that pupils bring into a classroom and tries to deal constructively with these differences within teaching plans. The understanding of diversity should lead schoolchildren to deal appreciably and constructively with different cultures and religions and with individual characteristics, attitudes and attitudes (cf. Walgenbach).

Heterogeneity

The term simply describes the fact that human beings differ in many respects from one another. Often, this concept is negatively connoted: people connect it with confusion, difficulties and problems to deal with in everyday life. In sociology, ‘heterogeneous’ may refer to a society or group that includes individuals of differing ethnicities, cultural backgrounds, sexes, or ages (cf. Walgenbach).

Identity or identities

Identity is like culture, there are many aspects to it, some hidden some visible. Essential elements of one’s identity are religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage. We follow Stuart Hall’s view that identities are constantly changing and therefore for many people their identities are in a constant process of transformation, as they make new allegiances and are subject to pressures, challenges and changes in how they see themselves and their world. Identity is not simply given or fixed, “it is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of being”. Hall suggests that identity is something that is never complete, and that it is more helpful to think about ‘identification’ as a process rather than ‘identity’ as a fixed state. ‘Who we are’ is strongly determined by feeling an affinity with ‘people like us’ or people with whom we share ideas, values, beliefs or experiences.

Intercultural – interreligious learning

The religious dimension of human experience is a constituent part of the culture and identity of a large part of individuals. However, the term ‘religious dimension’ in intercultural education does not automatically refer to some type of ‘religious education’ but is aimed at fostering reciprocal awareness, respect and learning how to live together. Taking that religious dimension into account, intercultural education should ensure an understanding of the phenomena of belief and non-belief and nurture the ability to reflect on the different worldviews that can be found in a pluralistic society. Such education needs to develop personal autonomy, a critical spirit, tolerance, openness to diversity and a feeling of belonging to the community as a whole (cf. Council of Europe 2006).

Intersectionality

The theory suggests that various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age, nationality and other sectarian axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. As a rule, it infers that exclusion and discrimination are not attributable to a single difference, but rather to a whole bundle of different characteristics, which mutually influence each other, overlap and intensify their effect (cf. Walgenbach).

Multicultural - Intercultural / Multireligious - Interreligious

‘Multicultural/multireligious’ refers to different cultures, national, ethnic, religious groups all living within the same territory *but* not necessarily encountering each other. In such a kind of society difference is often viewed negatively and forms major justification for discrimination. Minorities may be tolerated passively, but not accepted or valued. Even in cases where there are legal rights designed to stop discrimination, the law may not be enforced uniformly.

‘Intercultural/interreligious’ refers to different cultures, national, religious groups, etc. living together within a territory, maintain open relations of interaction, exchange and mutual recognition of their own and respective values and ways of life. We are talking then about a process of active tolerance and the maintenance of equitable relations where everyone has the same importance, where there are no superiors or inferiors, better or worse people, etc. (cf. for both terms Council of Europe 2016).

Othering

Othering is the process of casting a group, an individual or an object into the role of ‘not one of us’ to establish one’s own identity, neglecting that every person is a complex bundle of emotions, ideas, motivations, reflexes, priorities, and many other subtle aspects. Whether the ‘Other’ is a racial or a religious group, a gender group, a sexual minority or a nation, this process denies the ‘Other’ the defining characteristics of the ‘Same’. According to Michel Foucault, othering is strongly connected with power and knowledge. When we ‘other’ another group, we point out their perceived weaknesses to make ourselves look stronger or better. It implies a hierarchy, and it serves to keep power where it already lies.

The practice of ‘Othering’ may lead to the exclusion of persons who do not fit the norm of the social group, which is a version of the Self. In an educational context, we must be aware

of the basic consideration: Who is 'We' and who is the 'Other' within a school, classroom or community? In other words: Who represents the 'norm', 'status quo'? (cf. Spivak, Thomas-Olalde).

Plurality - Pluralism

Plurality refers both to the observable religious and cultural plurality and to the plurality of modernity itself. The latter expression describes the range of lifestyles, cultural and political stances and so on which form the social context within which religious plurality is situated. Plurality therefore denotes a diversity of views and stands rather than a single approach or method of interpretation.

Pluralism is a normative idea based on interpretation and judgement, referring to the various values, attitudes, ethical implications and so on which arise in response to plurality. Religious pluralism is an attitude or policy regarding the diversity of religious belief systems co-existing in society. It does not mean the disinterested-benevolent acceptance of the other, but the active confrontation with the other based on respect for the otherness of the other (cf. Skeie).

Safe space

In educational institutions, 'safe space' originally indicated that a teacher, educational institution or pupil body does not tolerate violence, harassment or hate speech, thereby creating a safe place for all pupils in a group or classroom. The term has been extended to refer to a space for individuals to come together to explore differences and to communicate their experiences with being different in biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental ability (cf. Council of Europe 2006). Critics, however, rightly point out that safe spaces have their place only in the enhancement of free speech and the guarantee that people of all identities are entitled to a tolerant environment to express who they are, not in the exclusion of other opinions and positions.

In our context, we must discuss whether school subjects such as RE or Ethics can, should or even have to be, such places. And if so, what conditions must be met?

Tolerance – respect - acceptance

Tolerance is often described as sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own without sharing in them. In a weak sense, tolerance means putting up with the fact that others may live as they want to live, even as they do not share our values or belong to the same cultural or religious group. In a stronger sense, it implies that we may consider our convictions are true, good and valid for ourselves but that those of others are equally good and valid in their eyes and it is not for us to pass judgement on their conception of what constitutes a 'good life'.

However, our approach is based on **active** tolerance, in the sense of “more than peaceful co-existence, crucial as that is. It must be an active understanding fostered through dialogue and positive engagement with others” (UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon 2011).

Respect means thinking and acting in a way that shows others you care about and value their feelings and their well-being.

Acceptance contains the concept of approval. It has got to do with positive welcome and belonging, favour and endorsement. However, it does not automatically mean liking, wanting, choosing or supporting.



Which of the three attitudes could apply here?

Annex 1

ASSESSING LESSON OBSERVATION

(Kerstin v. Brömssen)

The whole	Is fully in line	Partly in line	Not at all in line	I don't know
The content of the lesson has been <i>initiated</i> by the teacher				
The topic has been <i>initiated</i> by the pupils' questions and problems				
The topic has been <i>initiated</i> by current events				
The content is <i>structured</i> based on the curriculum, textbook and / or the inner logic of the subject				
The topic is <i>structured</i> by the pupils' questions and interests				
The methodology applied is interdisciplinary				
The pupils				
The pupils work to develop their thinking based on questions that the teacher decided				
The teacher's contributions help the pupils build new knowledge or form their values, attitudes				

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Interreligious or interfaith: *“It is important first of all to note that this is mainly an issue for those whose primary language is English: a similar distinction is not normally made in many other languages. For example, the German word interreligiös is regularly used to express or translate both the terms interreligious and interfaith. It is also the case that different parts of the English-speaking world tend to prefer one term or the other. The expression interfaith seems to be used in a more expansive and inclusive way than interreligious and is considered to encompass ideologies and systems of belief which transcend specific religious identification, including, for example, humanists and secularists.” (p 10)*

<https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/called-to-dialogue> (accessed 1 December 2015)