Part I
Disciplinary Perspectives

∴

Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Education

Ruth Vilà
Professor, Departament de Mètodes d'Investigació i Diagnòstic en Educació,
Facultat d'Educació, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
ruth_vila@ub.edu

Montse Freixa
Professor, Departament de Mètodes d'Investigació i Diagnòstic en Educació,
Facultat d'Educació, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
mfreixa@ub.edu

Assumpta Aneas
Professor, Departament de Mètodes d'Investigació i Diagnòstic en Educació,
Facultat d'Educació, Universitat de Barcelona, Barcelona, Spain
aaneas@ub.edu

Abstract

The article sketches the overall layout of the thematic issue of the 'Journal of Religion and Transformation in Contemporary Societies (JRAT)' on Interreligious Dialogue (IRD) in context. It argues that an analysis of interreligious dialogue activities in their socio-cultural contexts helps to counterbalance the long-standing individualistic bias of IRD-research. First, it presents a systematic description of the present state of the art that distinguishes two strands of IRD-research. Second, it argues for a European

comparison, based upon most recent findings from the 'SMRE – Swiss Metadatabase of Religious Affiliation in Europe'. The article is based on the research "Intercultural and interreligious dialogue to promote the culture of peace in unaccompanied foreign youth and minors (MENA) in Barcelona and Melilla" (RTI2018-095259-B-I00 / MCIU / AEI / FEDER, EU) and closes with references to the structure of the present volume of JRaT to facilitate such a comparison.

Keywords

interreligious dialogue – intercultural dialogue – Europe – education – comparison

1   Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue as a Subject of Controversy

Ideas and issues around religion tend to arouse argument and controversy, generating strong emotions and feelings.[1] The relationship between religion and culture has been widely discussed in Anthropology, Sociology and Philosophy. According to Morgan and Sandage,[2] different cultures give rise to different religious expressions of transcendent experience. The American Psychological Association (APA) explicitly includes religion in its definition of culture, seeing religions as a cultural phenomenon, shaped by the means of production within which they emerge. It advocates developing programmes to prepare students for cultural and religious diversity.[3]

In the political arena, the European Union White Paper on intercultural dialogue (Decision nº1983/2006/CE of the European Parliament and Council) defines dialogue as a process involving the respectful and open exchange of points of view among individuals and groups of different ethnic backgrounds and with different cultural, religious and linguistic heritage, based on mutual understanding and respect. The principles of interreligious and intercultural dialogue are oriented towards developing the ability to listen, to respect the diversity of beliefs, and to identify common religious experiences. They ask for openness to difference and the predominance of ethics over dogmatism (giving priority to human rights and democracy) and towards offering solutions

---

1   Brie, *Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue.*
2   Morgan/Sandage, *A Developmental Model of Interreligious Competence.*
3   Cited in Morgan/Sandage, *A Developmental Model of Interreligious Competence.*

to problems through a critical and participative citizenry.[4] IRD presupposes the willingness to rethink one's own ideas in the light of those of others, thereby opening the door to mutual enrichment and transformation.[5] The UN, UNESCO and Council of Europe directives for convergence argue that we should guarantee the provision of education that respects the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion,[6] and that all discrimination based on beliefs should be eradicated, in line with the UN Charter.

In order to further assess the significance of these controversies as well as to present an educational position, it is helpful to have a look at the pedagogical discussions in their respective socio-cultural contexts.

2   Interreligious Dialogue in European Education

According to Dietz,[7] one of the pedagogical means of eradicating such discrimination consists in addressing the problem of the perception of otherness, rooted in the collective mind. Beyond this very general assessment, interreligious dialogue in European education presents a varied picture. Paths for arriving at and living with interreligious dialogue are different: some more direct and others circuitous, depending on each country's history – in some cases the history of a very recent past.

The national analyses brought together in the present volume of JRAT[8] will show that countries that have been through dictatorship and/or war have frequently taken more circuitous routes (as examples in this issue: Spain,[9] Serbia,[10] Bosnia-Herzegovina,[11] Macedonia[12]) to IRD. In recent decades, these nations have had to build or rebuild a type of social coexistence in which one or two religions are established as hegemonic. The apparatuses that used to forge and reforge coexistence have been very similar in all these cases: They include initiatives promoting interreligious dialogue through grassroots groups, religious communities and churches grouping together to create organisations such as

---

4   Torradeflot, *Catalunya i el Diàleg Interreligiós.*

5   Santiago/Corpas, *Bases para el Desarrollo de Buenas Prácticas de Educación.*

6   López, *Políticas Europeas.*

7   Dietz, *La Educación Religiosa en España.*

8   Throughout this text, references are made to country-specific examples discussed in other articles from this issue of JRAT: Lehmann, *Interreligious Dialogue in Context.*

9   Griera, *The Many Shapes of Interreligious Relations.*

10   Ilić, *Looking Through a Veil.*

11   Alibašić, *History of Inter-Religious Dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*

12   Gjorgievski, *Nurturing the Culture of Dialogue – Macedonian Experience.*

the Bosnia-Herzegovina Interreligious Council, the Macedonian Council for Inter-Religious Cooperation and the Civil Society Interreligious Movement in Barcelona (Spain). And these initiatives have, in turn, for example given rise to the UNESCO Association for Interreligious Dialogue, AUDIR.

The various articles analysed here[13] present elements of such an educational approach to interreligious dialogue, for example:

– Critical reading of books: Course books used in schools should promote critical reflection on religions and on the most controversial historical events related to religion. At the same time, there is debate around who should be responsible for the contents of religious education course books (Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, etc.). In addition, there are proposals for the publication of books for a wide audience, which would explain and compare, for example, the customs, calendars, holy objects and texts of different religions.
– IRD as a subject of Religious Education or General Education in Religious Culture in compulsory schooling: There is already a lively debate on the topic in these countries. At the moment these debates are very open.
– IRD as a subject of teacher training, as recommend by the Council of Europe or other international institutions that have developed several frameworks of competencies.
– Personal development and development of competencies: The present day debates suggest to start by dismantling stereotypes and overcome ethnic and religious difference.
– Joint work among theological faculties of different faiths: Some projects trigger meetings among students of different faiths with secondary school students (especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia).

Due to their particular history, the northern and central European countries tend to have taken paths that are more direct. In most of these countries the state plays a more or less active role in interreligious dialogue. In some cases this is national policy and in others regional (in the Swiss cantons, for example[14]). And finally, there are countries such as Denmark[15] where the government leaves the issue in the hands of churches and religious institutions. It can be gleaned from our analysis of the different educational factors, or factors affecting education, in the texts by the other contributors to this journal that it is/was/has been important to concentrate on:

---

13   Griera, *Public Policies*; Griera, *Iniciatives Interreligieuses*; Gjorgjevski, *Nurturing the Culture of Dialogue*; Ilić, *Looking through a Veil*; Kostresevic, *Interreligious Dialogue*.
14   Schmid, *Interreligious Dialogues in Switzerland*.
15   Galal, *Between Representation and Subjectivity*.

– Community encounters for developing dialogue, social cohesion and the transmission of values.
– The incorporation of non-believers into different initiatives.
– Work on the spiritual dimension of the person.

Lastly, the upcoming analyses propose that most countries – either openly or more implicitly – single out the "issue" of Islam as a source of concern at times due to the phenomenon of radicalisation, as well as it being a focus of social and political debate in recent years. This new awareness has led different states to create protocols for giving due attention to this group, respecting their religion for example in burials or healthcare. Against this background, we should e.g. put particular emphasis on the Swiss Interreligious Think Tank, in which women participate in an independent network, which attempts to put forward counter-hegemonic models of governance and management of religious issues as an alternative to the traditional ones.

All these observations provide the background for some reflections on interreligious and intercultural education that are based upon the authors' experiences in this field – in terms of practice as well as academic analysis.

3   Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue in Education: Some Reflections

The involvement of the educational institutions is widely recognised to be essential in many education plans. These plans aim to prevent rejection of cultural and religious minorities by averting prejudices and xenophobic behaviours and minimising cultural and religious segregation in schools. The following subchapter thus offers suggestions and ideas for how to successfully implement strategies for interreligious dialogue in education and training programmes.

Knowledge of the diversity and depth of religious traditions and wisdom affords personal enrichment and mutual recognition, peaceful coexistence and respect, and the prevention of fundamentalist positions. Thus, it is necessary to provide basic education in religious diversity and non-religious beliefs including atheism, agnosticism and indifference. The development of cognitive competencies related to the knowledge of cultural and religious diversity can be a starting point for overcoming discrimination. Tools for peace and intercultural education are also needed, with a sound pedagogical grounding in the field of ethics education and in values ranging from hospitality and mutual recognition to a caring attitude and our inescapable duty of solidarity towards all others. The imbalance between men and women in the majority of religious

traditions should be addressed by promoting dignity, gender equality and justice in the various religious and spiritual traditions and interreligious initiatives. According to Santiago and Corpas,[16] the major challenge is to not allow oneself to be manipulated by patriarchal power dynamics, and to open the way to solidarity. Faced with the radicalised messages bombarding young people, especially in social media, we should develop critical competencies to make them aware of themselves[17] and to equip them with tools that help them question certain discourses[18] through the logic of counter-arguments.[19] Currently we need a new interreligious awareness and the unfolding of a dimension inherent to all human beings – the spiritual dimension – as the result of experiences of religious diversity offering opportunities for mutual enrichment and a renewed and deeper awareness.

The following bullet points summarise in five main strands the educational challenges that interreligious and intercultural dialogue wishes to work on:

– Education policy oriented towards religious diversity.
– Competencies in intercultural and interreligious dialogue.
– Education for intercultural and interreligious dialogue beyond the school.
– Training for teachers and social educators.
– Prevention of youth extremism.

In broad terms, these main areas have different implications depending on the historical background of the different European regions and contexts.

3.1   *Education Policy for Religious Diversity*

One of the major challenges facing education policy for religious diversity lies in reconciling the idea of the secular state with the responsibility of states themselves to ensure their citizens' rights to receive or be offered a quality education, which includes religious and spiritual issues, in line with the democratic and egalitarian values of our societies.

It furthermore becomes clear that education policy oriented towards the recognition of different religions is needed. Increasing students' knowledge of religious issues is the basis for wider acceptance and peaceful coexistence. However, this knowledge must not be restricted to the level of customary ritual and traditions underlying the calendar, or even setting ethical principles. We instead need knowledge that goes deeper into the profound reality of the religious phenomenon. Rather than staying on the level of the most obvious and superficial experiences, we instead need to promote dialogue and make

---

16   Santiago/Corpas, *Bases para el Desarrollo de Buenas Prácticas de Educación.*
17   European Commission, *Radicalisation Awareness Network Collection.*
18   Kessels, *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives.*
19   De la Corte, *Qué pueden Hacer.*

religious diversity known. In order for this to be successful, communicative competencies are important, especially among religious leaders and representatives of religious bodies.

Training in formal education should give free expression to the spiritual dimension inherent in every person. In addition, it should stress knowledge of religion from the standpoint of its cultural dimension in order to enable children and young adults to develop competencies for interreligious dialogue. This kind of training should be free from any shade of proselytism or evangelism, but shaped rather by the recognition of the plurality of practices and approaches in our current societies.

In addition, these educational trainings should be clearly separated from 'dictatorial' methods of teaching, retrograde views, lack of democratic freedoms, or identification with the great hegemonic churches, etc. but linked, in contrast, to the plurality of values germane to the present cultural world. New dimensions should be opened to the expression of spiritual experience, enabling us to address this in diverse ways. Lastly, freedom of expression, thought and belief are needed in order to offer equal opportunities to all religious forms and expressions.

Here we put forward three educational options for dealing with the dimensions of plurality and the key role religious expression plays in understanding cultural heritage:

1. The inclusion of spiritual issues as a transcendent awareness, which goes beyond contemporary postmodern egoism and affords a way of looking at nature and the human being from the standpoint of responsibility and freedom, has to be actively promoted. This is a form of inclusion which could have a positive effect on all major problems we are experiencing in our daily lives, such as addiction, violence (towards oneself and other living beings), mental illness and suicide, which are, to a great extent, expressions of the existential crises stemming from our society's egocentric, materialist, futile, complex and uncertain structure. Forms of spirituality that are meant in this context are not necessarily related to religion itself. There are religions in which spirituality is highly diffuse and includes spiritual practices, which have nothing to do with any specific religion. These kinds of educational processes and possibilities of teaching religion and spirituality would be carried out mainly in the field of guidance and counselling.[20]

---

20   Chandler/Holden/Kolander, *Counseling for Spiritual Wellness*; Richards/Allen, *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling*; Rose, Westefeld/Ansely, *Spiritual Issues in Counseling*; Exline, *Religious and Spiritual Struggles.*

2. All religions should be studied in the same way as any other subject in the syllabus. This approach enables to create the conditions for teaching the different faiths in schools, and becomes especially important against the background of a growing importance of religious diversity and interreligious relations. In this area, Weisse[21] also recommends the introduction of religion in state schools in order to improve relationships among people and to promote successful dialogue from an early age.

3. Apart from innovative models of teaching religion and spirituality, it is furthermore necessary to educate young people in a general religious culture, or for a secular religious education. It thus seems advisable to promote the revision of syllabuses from primary education to university level, especially in subjects such as history, geography, philosophy and other human and social sciences. This, however, should not be done from the standpoint of faith, but should come from a place that treats religion as a cultural fact which has played and still plays a transcendent role for humanity (in art, literature, philosophy, history, etc.), and that promotes and accepts diversity as a source full of chances. The kind of subject envisioned here would ideally be taken by all students, based on which religious issues would be approached from the perspective of dialogue and knowledge of diversity to create a religious culture for everyone.

What furthermore becomes clear from the suggestions provided above is that existing educational materials on religious diversity need to be revised. Moliner and Aguilar,[22] in a study of such materials, found biased and/or incorrect information, generalisations, stereotyping and lack of rigor in presentations and use of text and images, amongst other things. They conclude that there is an urgent need to provide both publishers and teachers with resources for access to accurate information on religious traditions. This would enable those involved in education and training to deal with these issues in class from the standpoint of proportional parity rather than from perspectives of discrimination and misinformation. This information should have contents clearly related to humanism and the competences for the citizenship, as Elósegui argues[23] i.e., in favour of intercultural education and with a sound pedagogical grounding in education in values – specifically, a set of values ranging from hospitality and mutual recognition to a caring attitude and our inescapable duty of solidarity towards all others. This requires ethical education to be capable of overcoming egocentricity and thereby making enriching intercultural coexistence possible.

---

21   Weisse, *Religión en Educación*.

22   Moliner/Aguilar, *Les Tradicions Religioses en els Llibres de Text*.

23   Elósegui, *Políticas Públicas y Educación Intercultural*.

The following list gives an overview over the principles of inclusive pedagogy we are referring to here:

– Knowledge of mutual recognition. Mutual recognition has to become the foundation on which to build (addressing and dismantling fear, ignorance, stereotyping and prejudice), taking advantage of spontaneous opportunities for closeness to create common spaces for meeting and contact, and working on the challenge of interfaith.

– Acceptance as a basic condition. Acceptance is easier when based on common values. Fostering the idea of religious diversity creates an opportunity for mutual enrichment and a renewed and deepened awareness. Accepting the presence of other religions in the public sphere and in public sites: i.e., building religious centres and holding religious festivals in the street, helps to implement it as a basic right in a secular society with religious freedom despite them being frequent causes of problems of coexistence.

– Giving value to other religions as a driving force. Recognition is necessary to perceive it as a stimulus rather than an obstacle. It is therefore pivotal to fight against all forms of prejudice and discrimination based on religion or belief,[24] and to destruct discourses of exclusion and those using religion to shed blame on recent causes for problems in peaceful coexistence. Giving a human face to the different religious traditions helps bring us closer to other people's ways of thinking, acting and feeling, which, although they may be different, are not necessarily in contradiction with ourselves. A challenge for education is to actively teach mediation to give all children and adolescents tools for acknowledging others. Social cohesion and personal development have to be considered as broad purposes that should actively be promoted.

– Intercultural citizenship (intercultural and interreligious dialogue) as a process. Education has to address interreligious dialogue through the different religious communities, social organisations and the political sphere. This form of dialogue should be fostered in schools, among families, teachers, parents' associations and other non-associated families who all urgently need the encounter and have to listen to each other.

3.2 Competencies for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue

Knowledge and recognition of others are cornerstones for establishing dialogue among religions. It is necessary to work on these in order to foster more open and favourable perspectives. In education, going into greater conceptual

---

24 Torradeflot, *Catalunya i el Diàleg Interreligiós.*

depth should widen students' perspectives and enables them to question their own prejudices and stereotypes.

Changes in attitudes are also made 'in the flesh', through contact with and listening to others. Personal experiences of real, living diversity bring the value of experiential learning, through which these experiences become more meaningful and hence easier to incorporate in each person's life.

Of the many possibilities of incorporating the suggestions made throughout the article, three types of educational projects shall be presented here:[25] projects oriented towards awareness and the expression of religious diversity in the public sphere; projects from a non-confessional perspective; and transversal projects.

Below we enumerate some initiatives currently under way in Catalonia as examples of projects oriented towards awareness and the expression of religious diversity in the public sphere:

– Talks explaining countries through their culture, aimed at making young people proud of their religion.
– Visits to places of worship in order to attenuate the feeling of rejection or fear towards others.
– Taking young people on trips to Morocco to get to know schools there.
– Visits to a place of worship close to the school with students from the first and second year of *bachillerato* (sixth form), accompanied by an informative talk and a meal.
– Centres of interest for different religions.

From the perspective of projects based on a non-confessional approach, the institutions are tolerant towards the beliefs of others and respectful in the personal and institutional spheres. The non-confessional approach does not involve the negation of the other, but is a position from which other views can be understood. Cultural centres and religious organisations tend to work from this perspective, i.e., they do not intervene directly in religious issues but treat them simply as part of their intercultural context. By way of an example, some educational projects of this type are:

– Talks on experiences with representatives of atheists, Jews, Muslims and Christians.
– The memory of the Holocaust: a memory constructed jointly with the Jewish community, disseminated in schools.
– Schools for peace: a project which young people from the community carry out in schools to foster peaceful coexistence.
– Joint work with children's play spaces in which the subject of spirituality is approached from the standpoint of diversity.

---

25   Venceslao/Freixa/Vilà/Burguet, *Entidades Sociales.*

In transversal projects, interreligious spaces are designed to create experiences based on everyone's inherent spirituality. These experiences frequently give rise to questions that each person can find answers for in contact with others who experience spirituality in different ways. Some examples of such initiatives in Catalonia are:

– Dialogue groups: Groups made up of grassroots members, rather than religious leaders, regularly meet for conversations or activities with people from the different religions and traditions.
– "Bridge-builders": This project aimed at working on religious diversity through action, which consists in listening to young people from different traditions or working from the perspective of dialogue in order to design and implement a community development project.

The activities listed above thus show that it is not only the education system but also civil society, the state and social organisations who should be able to offer opportunities for experiencing interreligious dialogue.

3.3   *Education for Intercultural and Interreligious Dialogue beyond the School*

Analysts such as Bîrzéa[26] show that peaceful coexistence involves education beyond school, calling on other actors such as social workers and educators. Thus, these actors need to be trained for networking in their local areas to create a fabric of grassroots organisations and associations (religious communities, residents, businesses, council facility users, etc.). Specific actions are needed for effective training in how to connect places of worship with school activities in order to inform and educate the educational community on religious diversity, particularly teaching staff and students.

Awareness-raising and information initiatives offering knowledge of religious diversity are therefore needed as a first step towards making this issue visible. This is where social organisations can play an important role in providing a range of initiatives to the educational community, for example, talks on religious diversity. Elósegui[27] suggests that NGOs, civil associations, religious communities, political parties, private individuals, and local, regional, national and international governments should commit themselves to the democratic management of cultural diversity. On this basis, training proposals can be designed for schools. Such proposals should be sufficiently across-the-board to draw in the majority of teaching staff and not only those teaching the subject of religion.

---

26   Bîrzéa, *Recommendations*.
27   Elósegui, *Políticas Públicas y Educación Intercultural*.

In this way, we opt for religious diversity as one further thread in the holistic education of the individual across different subjects. It has been identified that there is a need for training for both schools and social organisations. Moliner and Aguilar[28] also note the urgent requirement of equipping teachers with resources in order for them to have access to accurate information on religious traditions, enabling them to treat these subjects in the classroom from the standpoint of proportional parity and non-discrimination. To this end, the collaboration of experts from the various communities who can advise in the development of syllabuses and educational materials is seen as indispensable.[29] Moliner and Aguilar[30] also recommend that the community should participate in consultation on the development and further improvement of such syllabuses and teaching materials. Torradeflot[31] also recommends offering information and training on religious diversity to the educational community to support this endeavour. The community organisations, in addition, have expressed their willingness to take part in training and consultation in schools. Therefore, there exists a point of convergence, which would be advantageous to explore in greater depth to determine its potential and a more effective structure and organisation for obtaining teachers' fuller engagement. Further, some schools have highlighted the importance of meeting an educational need that goes beyond religious culture or studying different traditions, namely education in awakening spiritual awareness. This dimension, also called spiritual intelligence, can be described as the right that everyone should be educated in, and neglect of this may be detrimental to overall growth. Educating pupils and young adults in this subject is said to stimulate the perceived need and willingness for interreligious dialogue.

3.4   *Training Teachers and Social Educators*

The importance of pre- and in-service training for teachers and social educators is clear.[32] In our view, all universities and educators, whether in schools or in other spheres, should seek training, and should attempt to form strong, responsible individuals, capable of making free and appropriate choices. In contrast, training which ignores or overlooks the religious education of the person is incomplete because it does not consider current social realities. The lack of university education on these subjects for educators is evident in their

---

28   Moliner/Aguilar, *Les Tradicions Religioses en els Llibres de Text.*
29   Weisse, *Religión en Educación.*
30   Moliner/Aguilar, *Les Tradicions Religioses en els Llibres de Text.*
31   Torradeflot, *Religiones y Pluralismo.*
32   Vilà/Sánchez/Rubio, *Pre- and in-Service Education Professionals.*

daily experiences, and becomes clear in their professional practice when they undertake external teaching placements. As we have seen, religious issues are barely present in the training of teachers and educators, and it is interesting that students with experience of religious diversity have a more favourable attitude towards religious and cultural diversity, which they might then also be able to convey to their future students. It is also important to recall that 72% of participants thought the training they received was insufficient and believed that as future educators it is important to be trained in these issues, despite their relative absence from the school syllabus.

Consequently, in our view, education degrees should provide pre-service and in-service training which approaches students and the groundwork for their future careers through religious content, i.e., developing communication and dialogue skills to favour a deeper understanding of the religious dimension. In order for this to be successful, we believe that degree syllabuses and study programmes should contain an area of religious or belief-based education, which would be neither optional nor centred on any specific religion, but would focus on what we could call the spiritual dimension. This approach would also help to investigate how students can experience a pedagogical model at first hand in which the *what* and the *how* of teaching are determined through reflection on educational practice. We believe that widening students' experience in this way can encourage processes of research and action, at the same time as different processes of self-education are put into effect to address contemporary society's real needs.

We should promote pre-service and in-service training for teachers in religious education, education for citizenship and human rights and intercultural education. As part of this process, we should also revise existing courses on the management of religious issues and religious diversity in society.

Education in different religions exists, but in our setting this often still comes from a Christian point of view. Universities should offer religious studies which take the current context of crisis into account, with the objective that there should be people trained to broaden the number of interlocutors from each religious community. To this purpose, it is recommendable that in each human sciences faculty there should be a religious sciences division with the involvement of the religious communities, as for example at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Below we summarise the specific training actions proposed to implement the suggestions made above. In pre-service training:
– Introductory knowledge and awareness raising are required, since this is not yet provided in training (for example, for school teachers). At present, training institutions lack independence from religious influence.

– Offering a range of perspectives for understanding the contemporary world, for example through different disciplines and arts such as cinema and literature, is necessary. Preparing students to understand the contemporary world on the basis of widely differing perspectives is thereby essential. Furthermore, vocabulary related to these aspects, such as pluralism, and vocabulary for understanding the world we live in, for instance citizenship, politics and other concepts, has to be actively taught.

For in-service training the following options seem effective:

– Training courses or seminars for teachers, since diversity is the everyday reality of their schools. Teachers can treat these subjects in class through lived situations, syllabus contents and tutorials. These courses would not only be addressed to teachers and social educators but also to those working in other spheres, such as hospitals, law courts, etc.
– Wider training in various aspects of interreligious and intercultural areas of live, pedagogical aspects, etc. In addition, we should reframe the approach so that it is not only knowledge-based but also works on personal growth through managing emotions and enhancing awareness of the unknown.
– Fostering areas for dialogue where knowledge can be exchanged between educators in schools and society, along the lines as what Moliner and Aguilar[33] recommended, with community participation in consultation for developing syllabuses and educational materials. Boosting the knowledge of the various religions ensures that the objective of preserving religious freedoms is respected.

3.5   *Extremism and Religious Intolerance*

What has been called "violent radicalism" or "violent extremism"[34] is an omnipresent concern in contemporary society, especially that of "radicalised" young people who are born and raised in Europe but take part in acts perpetrated in the name of the so-called Islamic State and in high-profile political terrorism in European societies. At the same time, and parallel to this, we see the rise of racism and religious intolerance, particularly Islamophobia. In fact, these developments and phenomena have been identified as mutually reinforcing trends.

"Violent radicalisation" is a deeply complex social process that should be understood within the context of each specific social setting.[35] Since 2005,

---

33   Moliner/Aguilar, *Les Tradicions Religioses en els Llibres de Text.*
34   Kundnani, *A Decade lost.*
35   Atran, *Talking to the Enemy*; Feldman/Gidley, *Integration, Disadvantage and Extremism*; De la Corte, *Qué pueden Hacer.*

measures emphasising prevention of radicalisation have been put into effect through the European Strategy for Combating Radicalisation and Recruitment to Terrorism.[36] This interest in violent radicalisation has given rise to various European reports that have identified some defining features that programmes countering these phenomena should take into account.[37] Thus, the term "violent radicalisation" sums up a process of socialisation, which can gradually lead to violent acts, or even terrorism. The development of radicalisation depends on contextual factors and structural variables, such as social settings with feelings of injustice, exclusion, etc. However, the linear relationship between the difficulties of integration among some specific groups (second-generation Maghrebi youth for example) and violent radicalisation is not clear.[38] In fact, there exists a wide variety of factors which can trigger radicalisation, and there are notable variations in motivation in each case.

Finally, ideology is an important factor for legitimising violence aimed at social, political or religious change. Social networks play an extremely important role in the development, dissemination and consumption of ideology among young people. This has been theorised as "online radicalisation"[39] due to the increasing role of the internet, forums, platforms and social media as channels through which young people can encounter extremist ideologies and slogans and be recruited as terrorists. It would be erroneous to identify "violent radicalisation" only with Islam, since we should also be aware of numerous radical and/or violent political movements, which promote Islamophobia and antisemitism.

Among the many perspectives that can be subsumed under the term religious intolerance, Islamophobia has acquired pre-eminence. Studies such as those of López Bargados/Lundsteen/Solé,[40] and Mayoral/Molina/Samper[41] show that the educational sphere is one of the areas where Muslim students face the most discrimination. In addition, in various European countries, young people are subject of special attention through programmes for detecting radicalisation (PREVENT in the UK and PRODERAI in Catalonia). These, however, according to various studies and reports,[42] may have counterproductive effects, since they may stigmatise Muslim youth, thus alienating them from the

36 Council of Europe (2005) a joint initiative of the UK (2003), Holland (2007), Denmark (2009), Norway (2011), Spain (2015) and others (De la Corte, *Qué pueden Hacer*).

37 European Commission, *Radicalization Processes*.

38 De la Corte, *Qué pueden Hacer*.

39 De la Corte, *Qué pueden Hacer*.

40 López Bargados/Lundsteen/Solé, *La Pràctica Religiosa*.

41 Mayoral/Molina/Samper, *Islamofobia o Currículo Nulo*.

42 Bonet, *Educating Muslim American Youth*; Kundnani, *A Decade Lost*.

institutions which should in contrast be fostering their sense of belonging and social integration so that they may build an identity in which their religious affiliation is compatible with the democratic values of European societies.

Among the measures put forward by the European Commission to prevent radicalisation and religious intolerance, one of the educational approaches is interreligious and intercultural dialogue.[43]

Biographies

Ruth Vilà is full-time professor in the Department of Methods of Research and Diagnosis in Education at the University of Barcelona since 1999. She holds a PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Barcelona, specialized in intercultural communication competences. She is part of the Research Group in Intercultural Education, GREDI, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Research in Education (IRE). Her research interests concern topics such as intercultural education, intercultural competences, and intercultural and interreligious dialogue. She is the coordinator of the research "Intercultural and interreligious dialogue to promote the culture of peace in unaccompanied foreign youth and minors (MENA) in Barcelona and Melilla" (RTI2018–095259-B-I00 / MCIU / AEI / FEDER, EU), origin of part of the results presented here.

Montse Freixa holds a PhD in Pedagogy and is a full-time professor in the Department of Methods of Research and Diagnosis in Education at the University of Barcelona. She is a researcher in TRALS (Academic and Labor Transitions Research Group) and she is a member of the Board of Directors of the Institute of Research in Education (IRE). She also has extensive management experience on university level as Academic Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Education. Her work focuses mainly on the field of higher education, religious diversity and interreligious dialogue.

Assumpta Aneas is full-time professor at the Department of Methods of Research and Diagnosis in Education at the University of Barcelona since 1997. She holds a PhD in Philosophy and Science Education from the University of Barcelona. Her doctoral thesis was about Intercultural Competences at Companies. She is the coordinator of the Group of Research in Intercultural Education, GREDI. She is also responsible for the Area of Inclusion, Wellbeing and Equity at the Institute of Research in Education (IRE). Her research

---

43   European Comission, *Preventing Radicalization*.

interests concern topics such as inclusive education, intercultural and inter-religious competence and memory and Peace Culture.

Bibliography

Alibašić, Ahmet: *History of Inter-Religious Dialogue in Bosnia and Herzegovina*: From Force-Feeding to Sustainability?, in: *JRAT 6* (2/2020), pp.

Atran, Scott: *Talking to the Enemy:* Faith, Brotherhood, and the (Un)Making of Terrorists. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2010.

Bîrzéa, César: *Recommendations* CM/Rec (2008) 12 on the Dimension of Religious and Non-Religious Convictions within Intercultural Education: from Principles to Implementation. An Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue. Estrasburg: Consell d'Europa, 2009.

Bonet, Sally Wesley: *Educating Muslim American Youth* in a Post-9/11 Era: A Critical Review of Policy and Practice, in: *The High School Journal 95* (1/2011), pp. 46–55.

Brie, Mircea: *Ethnicity, Religion and Intercultural Dialogue* in the European Border Space (MPRA n°44087), 2011.

Council of Europe: *Estrategia de la Unión Europea* para combatir la Radicalización y el Reclutamiento Terrorista. Brussels, 14347/05 JAI, November 24, 2005.

Chandler, Cynthia K./Holden, Janice Miner/Kolander, Cheryl. A: *Counseling for Spiritual Wellness*: Theory and Practice, in: *Journal of Counseling & Development 71* (2/1992), pp. 168–175.

De la Corte, Luis: *¿Qué pueden Hacer* los Estados Europeos para Frenar la Radicalización Yihadista?, in *Cuadernos de estrategia*, no. 180 (2016), pp. 125–166.

Dietz, Gunther: *La Educación Religiosa en España*: ¿contribución al diálogo intercultural o factor de conflicto entre religiones? *Estudios sobre las Culturas Contemporáneas*, XIV, no. 28 (2008), pp. 11–46.

Elósegui, Maria: *Políticas Públicas y Educación Intercultural*, in: Jesús. Garay/Guillermo Díaz/Maria Elósegui/Marta Sabariego (eds.): *El Diálogo intercultural en España: un requisito de la educación y cultura de Paz.* Madrid: Ministerio de Educación, 2009, pp. 131–192.

European Commission: *Radicalization Processes* Leading to Acts of Terrorism. Brussels, May 15, 2008, http://www.rikcoolsaet.be/files/art_ip_wz/Expert%20 Group%20Report%20Violent%20Radicalisation%20FINAL.pdf (date of last access: 02.09.2020).

European Commission: *Preventing Radicalization* to Terrorism and violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU's Response. Brussels, January 15, 2014, https://ec.europa.eu/ home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/crisis-and-

terrorism/radicalisation/docs/communication_on_preventing_radicalisation_and_ violence_promoting_extremism_201301_en.pdf (date of last access: 02.09.2020).

Exline, Julie. J.: *Religious and Spiritual Struggles*, in: Kenneth I. Pargament/Julie J. Exline/ James W. Jones (eds.), APA Handbooks in Psychology. APA Handbook of Psychology, Religion, and Spirituality (Vol. 1): *Context, Theory, and Research*. Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association, 2013, pp. 459–475.

Feldman, David/Gidley, Ben: *Integration, Disadvantage and Extremism*. London: Pears Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. Birkbeck: University of London, 2014.

Galal, Lise Paulsen. *Between Representation and Subjectivity*: Interreligious Dialogue in Denmark, in: *JRAT 6* (2/2020), pp.

Gjorgjevski, Gjoko: *Nurturing the Culture of Dialogue – Macedonian Experience*, In: JRAT 6 (2/2020), pp. X–X.

Griera, Mar: *Public Policies*, Interfaith Associations and Religious Minorities: a new Policy Paradigm? Evidence from the Case of Barcelona, in: *Social Compass 59* (4/2012), pp. 570–587.

Griera, Mar: *Iniciatives Interreligieuses* et Gouvernance Locale: les Cas de Barcelona et de Turin, in : *Social Compass* 65 (3/2018), pp. 312–318.

Ilić, Angela: *Looking through a Veil*: Challenges and Perspectives of Interreligious Dialogue in Serbia, in: *JRAT 6* (2/2020), pp. X–X.

Kessels, Eelco. (ed.): *Countering Violent Extremist Narratives*. National Coordinator for Counterterrorism (NCTb) 2010, https://www.clingendael.nl/sites/default/files/ Countering-violent-extremist-narratives.pdf (date of last access: 02.09.2020).

Kostresevic, Milan: *Interreligious Dialogue* in Bosnia-Herzegovina, in: *Studies in Interreligious Dialogue* 26 (2/2016), 203–214.

Kundnani, Arun: *A Decade Lost:* Rethinking Radicalization and Extremism. London: Claystone, 2015.

Lehmann, Karsten (ed.): *Interreligious Dialogue in Context*: Towards a European Comparison, *JRAT 6* (2/2020).

Lehmann, Karsten/Körs, Anna: On the Emergence of present-day IRD Activities in the Eastern Parts of Germany – Low level of Activities within Official Organizations Structures. Unpublished, 2019.

López, Maria: *Políticas Europeas en Relación con la Formación en materia religiosa:* la promoción del diálogo interreligioso y la educación intercultural, in: Joseé Luis Álvarez/Miguel Angel. Essomba (eds.): *Dioses en las aulas. Educación y Diálogo Interreligioso*. Barcelona: Graó, 2012, pp. 61–84.

López Bargados, Alberto/Lundsteen, Martín/Solé, Ariadna: *La pràctica religiosa* de les comunitats musulmanes de Barcelona. Expressions i problemàtiques. Barcelona: SAFI, 2016.

Mayoral, Dolores/Molina, Fidel/Samper, Lluis: *¿Islamofobia o currículo nulo*? La representación del Islam, las culturas musulmanas y los inmigrantes musulmanes en los libros de texto de Cataluña, in: *Revista de Educación*, no. 357, 2012, pp. 257–279.

Moliner, Albert/Aguilar, Nuria: *Les Tradicions Religioses en els Llibres de Text*. Barcelona: Montflorit Edicions i Assessoraments S.L, 2010.

Morgan, Jonathan/Sandage, Steven. J: *A Developmental Model of Interreligious Competence*. A Conceptual Framework, in: *Archive for the Psychology of Religion 38* (2/2016), pp. 129–158.

Nordin, Magdalena: How to understand Interreligious Dialogue in Sweden in Relation to the Sociocultural Context, in: *JRAT 6* (2/2020), pp.

Prideaux, Mel: *Legitimising Religion in Public*: Inter-Religious Dialogue and the Established Church in England, in: *JRAT 6* (2/2020), pp.

Richards, P. Scott/Allen, E. Bergin: *A Spiritual Strategy for Counseling* and Psychotherapy. Washington DC: American Psychological Association, 1997.

Rose, Elizabeth. M/Westefeld, John. S/Ansely, Timothy. N: *Spiritual Issues in Counseling*: Clients' Beliefs and Preferences, in: *Journal of Counseling Psychology 48* (1/2001).

Santiago, Miguel/Corpas, Carmen: *Bases para el Desarrollo de Buenas Prácticas de Educación* para la Convivencia en la Diversidad Cultural y Religiosa, in: José Luis Álvarez Castillo/Miguel Angel Essomba Gelabert (eds.), *Dioses en las Aulas. Educación y Diálogo Interreligioso*. Barcelona: Graó, 2012, pp. 123–144.

Schmid, Hansjörg: Federalism, Social Change, and Integration Debate Interreligious Dialogues in Switzerland. Unpublished, 2019.

Schmid, Hansjörg: *Interreligious Dialogues in Switzerland*: A Multiple-Case Study Focusing on Socio-Political Contexts, in: *JRAT 6* (2/2020), pp.

Torradeflot, Francesc: *Religiones y Pluralismo*. Las Vías del Diálogo Interreligioso en España. Madrid: Observatorio del Pluralismo Religioso en España, 2011.

Torradeflot, Francesc: *Catalunya i el Diàleg Interreligiós*. Aportacions Innovadores al Diàleg Interreligiós des dels Valors de les Nacions Unides. Barcelona: Associació UNESCO per al diàleg interreligiós, 2012.

Venceslao, Marta/Freixa, Montse/Vilà, Ruth/Burguet, Marta: "*Entidades sociales* y proyectos para el diálogo interreligioso entre jóvenes", in *MODULEMA 2* (2018), pp. 71–85.

Vilà, Ruth/Sánchez, Angelina/Rubio, Maria José: *Pre- and In-Service Education Professionals* Facing Religious Diversity and Interreligious Dialogue in Catalonia, in: *Journal of Beliefs & Values 41*, (2/2019), pp. 179–194.

Weisse, Wolfram (ed.): *Religión en Educación*: Contribución al Diálogo. Sugerencias del Proyecto de Investigación REDCo para la Política. Comisión Europea 2009, https://www.awr.uni-hamburg.de/website-content/pdfs-forschung/redco-brussels.pdf (date of last access: 15.09.2020)