Teachers in Monoreligious Education and Religious Tolerance as their Educational Goal

Exploring the tension between monoreligious Christian education and the plural, liberal democratic society. Religious tolerance is a basic requirement for living together in a plural, liberal democratic society and therefore it is an important goal of (citizenship) education. There seems to be a tension between the monoreligious ideas and the multireligious, plural, liberal democratic society. In a school context this tension can be articulated in terms of religious tolerance: (how) do teachers in monoreligious Christian schools consider religious tolerance as an educational goal?

Research questions

What are teachers’ concerns about religious tolerance as an educational goal in monoreligious Christian primary and secondary schools?
1) Which meanings do the teachers give to the plural, liberal democratic society?
2) Which meanings do the teachers give to their work in faith schools?
3) What do the teachers think about religious tolerance as an educational goal?
4) What are the teachers’ strategies in teaching religious tolerance in faith schools?

Core concepts

Monoreligious schools aim to initiate pupils in a specific religious tradition and to strengthen their belief, because there is the conviction that this religion contains the best worldview. The world view is explicitly expressed in the education, not only during RE-lessons. This means that the religious convictions of teachers are important criteria in staff recruitment. Sometimes there are also criteria concerning the religious background of pupils. There is little religious diversity in the schools.

Teachers’ confession and profession are especially intertwined because education is always normative. Convictions from the pedagogical domain and religious domain are parts of the ‘professional self-understanding’ and the ‘subjective educational theory’ of a teacher.

Religious tolerance is defined as the capacity to live alongside a different religious tradition from one’s own in a liberal democratic society and it entails allowing citizens to express their views freely, even when one does not agree with them.

Research design

We opt for a qualitative, descriptive research design that contains of a review study of international literature with pedagogical and educational perspectives as well as international literature with a theological perspective, concerning the central concepts of the research questions. And we use a case study approach that focuses on in-depth interviews with at least 42 teachers from six monoreligious Christian schools in the Netherlands. Every participant will be interviewed individually and will participate in group interviews.

Output

There is a substantial lack of empirical knowledge about the state of monoreligious (religious) education, because in pedagogical and educational sciences and practices overwhelming attention is given to multireligious and interreligious education. Foreseen articles deal with:

- Teachers’ concerns about diversity in education (review)
- Teachers’ motivation for working in monoreligious education
- Teachers’ coping with the concept of religious education
- Teachers’ pedagogy and educational theories of teaching religious tolerance.

The results of this research will help to take important decisions in the school context and in the political and public domain on macro-, meso- and micro-level.

References

Hanna Markus MA BSc
PhD student
jj.markus@driestar-educatief.nl

Supervisors:
prof. dr. M. Barnard (PThU)
dr. A. de Kock (PThU)
dr. A. de Muynck (Driestar Educatief)
dr. G.D. Bertram-Troost (VU)