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The importance of Religion in Education towards Autonomy : the meaning of Religion and Religious Education in Finland in the Perspective of Developing the European Union's Civic Society

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN EDUCATION TOWARDS AUTONOMY. THE MEANING OF RELIGION AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN FINLAND IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELO- PING THE EUROPEAN UNION'S CIVIC SOCIETY

Abstract: Presented article outlines a broad vision of the importance of religion in the life of modern Europe. At the beginning, the author outlined the legal and socio-political context in which the position of different religion and Christian denominations in Finland has to be considered. Then, the principles of organization of religion teaching in the Finnish education system were discussed. After that, a catalogue of democratic values, which both religious communities and school religion teaching are obliged to apply, was presented, the Evangelical Lutheran Church being a particular reference point. The next subject of the author's reflection was the impact of religion on the attitude towards entrepreneurialism. The last part is devoted to reflection on the relationship between the religious situation in the European Union and the crisis – not just economic – in which the EU finds itself at present. According to the author, the religious peace is a necessary condition for the development of the united Europe and reducing the disparities that exist in it.

Key words: Finland, values, religion, religious education, freedom of religion.

Introduction: religious situation in Finland

Of the European countries, religion is a school subject in comprehensive schools in Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Germany, Austria, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, England, Wales, Scotland, Italy and Greece. Also the term "religion education" is used for religion teaching. A remarkable theme in religion education in Europe is promoting peaceful intercultural interaction.

In Finland the National Board of Education has ordered that the goal of studying religion should be the acquisition of a versatile religious and ethical all-round education. Instruction begins at children's day-care and continues through the comprehensive school and upper secondary school. Alternatively, there is the possibility of stu-

dying life philosophy. The goals of the teaching include studying one's own religion and its social influences.

In the Finnish legislation concerning basic education and upper secondary schools, the concept of "denominational religion teaching" was replaced in 2003 with the concept of "teaching of one's own religion". According to the new law, pupils who do not belong to the religious community that the majority of the pupils represent will not participate the class unless they are specially enrolled. In Finland, basic education has been ordered to be nondenominational. Religion teaching is an exception, as it is connected to a pupil's religious tradition. For example, Lutheran pupils are taught Evangelical-Lutheran religion.¹

In Finland there is no state church establishment, but the church can be termed a national church. The church and the state **co-operate** in many ways. According to Finland's constitution, the church's organization and administration are legislated in **the Church Code**. The Church Code is legislated in the church assembly, which is the highest decision-making body of the church. The church has an independent position subject to public law. The church participates in managing some tasks that belong to society, such as maintaining the population register.

Religion teaching in schools is ruled by the state. The goal is to give pupils an all-round education about all religions. Finnish Evangelical-Lutheran and Orthodox churches have the **power to collect taxes**. On top of the church tax, parishes also get a percentage of the community tax. Tax income is used in managing burial duties, maintaining the population register, repairing church buildings, conducting the social work of the church, and carrying out other services of the church. The church's **position subject to public law** is connected with the principle of openness and transparency at all levels. This principle ensures that all matters, documents and employee actions are public matters. In the law of religious freedom, the Evangelical-Lutheran and Orthodox churches have special status.

Many religious minorities were hoping for a change in the law of religious freedom that would increase the parity of all churches and other religious communities in relation to the state. The new law of religious freedom did not, however, change the ruling religion political and church political situations in Finland. This means that the Evangelical-Lutheran and Orthodox church have their own status. Meanwhile, the other religious communities have to register themselves according to the law of religious freedom 2nd Chapter in order to get a status as a religious community.²

In comparing the member rates of religious communities in many European countries, Finland is an exceptionally united country in terms of religion. In addition to this, the number of members of religious communities is higher than the European

¹ J. Komulainen, *Uskonnon opetus ei ole tunnustuksetonta*, "Kotimaa", 10.12.2009, no. 49, p. 12.

² J. Seppo, *Uskonnonvapaus 2000-luvun Suomessa*, Edita, Helsinki 2003, p. 158.

average. According to church statistics, the member rate of the Lutheran church was 81.7% (4,514,359) of the country's population as of the end of 2007. Half a century ago the percentage was 10% higher.³

Table 1. The Finnish population according to religious community, 1920-2007.

Year	Lutheran %	Orthodox %	Others %	Those who do not belong to any registered religious communities %	Unknown %
1920	98.1	1.6	0.3	0.03	—
1930	96.3	1.9	0.3	1.5	—
1940	95.9	1.8	0.3	2	—
1950	95.1	1.7	0.4	2.7	0.1
1960	92.4	1.4	0.6	5.5	0.1
1970	92.4	1,3	0.6	5.2	0.5
1980	90.3	1.1	0.7	7.8	0.1
1990	87.9	1.1	0.8	10.2	0
2000	85.1	1.1	1.1	12.7	0
2003	84.1	1,1	1.1	13.5	0
2004	83.7	1.1	1.2	14	0
2005	83.1	1.1	1.2	14.6	0
2006	82.5	1.1	1.3	15.1	0
2007	81.8	1.1	1.3	15.9	0

The other Finnish national church, the Orthodox Church, contained 1.1% of Finns (approximately 58,000 members). Other registered religious communities post in total approximately 1% of all Finns. The largest number of members can be see in the Jehovah's Witnesses (approximately 18,000 members), The Finnish Free Church (approximately 14,000 members), and the Catholic Church in Finland (approximately 9,000 members). In total, 15.9% of Finns do not belong to any religious community. Their percentage has been growing incrementally.⁴

³ K. Ketola, K. Niemelä, H. Palmu, H. Salomäki, *Monikasvoinen kirkko Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 2004-2007*, Kirkon tutkimuskeskus, Tampere 2008, pp. 26-27.

⁴ K. Ketola, K. Niemelä, H. Palmu, H. Salomäki, *Uskonto suomalaisten elämässä. Uskonnollinen kasvatus, moraalit, onnellisuus ja suvaitsevaisuus kansainvälisessä vertailussa. Raportti ISSP 2008*, Kirkon tutkimuskeskus, Tampere 2011, p. 103.

In Finland the church has very little contact with young adults. A big challenge is how to continue the contact with the parish that the young have during confirmation classes and confirmation class tutor education. Young adults easily loose contact with parish activities. The main point is how the church will find a natural place in the lifestyles and cultures that young adults represent. It is especially important how those students who move to their places of higher education are received into their new parishes. The students have many skills that could enrich local parish life. The young should also be encouraged to act in the churches and parishes so they can decide on what activities there will be.⁵

The principles of organizing religion teaching in Finland

The basic values of Finnish education are human rights, equality, democracy, preserving both nature's diversity and the viability of the surroundings, and accepting multiculturalism. The education promotes a sense of community, responsibility and respecting individual rights and freedoms. The basis of teaching is Finnish culture, which has been developed in interaction with original, Nordic and European cultures. The diversification of the Finnish culture by immigrants from different cultures is taken into account in education. In addition, the education supports the formation of the pupil's own cultural identity and the student's participation both in the Finnish culture and in the globalizing world. Indulgence and understanding between cultures are promoted by teaching. Instruction in different subjects is politically uncommitted and secular in the religious sense across the basic education.⁶

The school will teach pupils values that belong to "a decent person" concept. Home and school should work together with common rules so that both adhere to common agreements. This requires a comprehensive and effective home-school connection. Through multiculturalism and a sense of community, pupils will learn to understand their own identity as an individual coming from Teuva, Finland and Europe.

In Finland the basic teaching is a solid unity that is coordinated by the curriculum. The goals and essential contents are defined in the curriculum basics by subject or subject groups. Finnish religious education includes all religious related groups. In religion education, religious and ethical extent is examined from the viewpoint of the pupil's own growth as well as a wider social phenomenon. The goal is to also learn about other religions, to help to understand the cultures of different religions, and to teach ethical values.

⁵ K. Ketola, K. Niemelä, H. Palmu, H. Salomäki, *Monikasvoinen*, op. cit., p. 385. K. Ketola, *Uskonnot Suomessa 2008: Käsikirja uskontoihin ja uskonnollistaustaisiin liikkeisiin*, Kirkon tutkimuskeskus, Tampere 2008, p. 102.

⁶ *Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2004*, available at: http://www.oph.fi/saadokset_ja_ohjeet/opetussuunnitelmien_ja_tutkintojen_perusteet/perusopetus (opened 14.02.2014).

In the current education curriculum, the goal of Evangelical-Lutheran religion teaching is that a pupil should be familiarized with multiple religious cultures. Pupils are guided to understand the meaning of religion for themselves as well as to notice the meaning of different religions to society and culture. The purpose of the teaching is a broad religious and denominational all-round education.⁷

The basic purpose of Evangelical-Lutheran religion **in grades 1-5 is to give pupils subjects to build their own ideologies**. In the teaching, the pupils get to know the surrounding religious world and they study the Bible. A further goal is to encourage the pupils to discover ethical assessment and assume responsibility. The essential teaching contents in grades 1-5 are trust and security; the concept of God being a Father and Creator as well as learning God's blessing and the teachings of Jesus are the essential targets. The teaching also stresses dignity and the unique nature of life. Within this content, pupils get to know their own roots, which include their own family values and traditions.⁸

In grades 1-5, the Evangelical-Lutheran religion teaching also includes getting to know the stories and morals contained in the Bible. The goal is to learn the methods of the Lutheran Church, which includes religious festivals and other holidays with Christian content and traditions. During the first five school years, the Lutheran concepts of God, grace, salvation and the Bible should become familiar to the pupils. Instruction includes essential parish functions such as the Sunday service, religious services, social work of the church, acting as member of the parish, and Christian symbols in the church and elsewhere in the pupil's environment.⁹

In grades 6-9 of the basic education, the purpose of teaching Evangelical-Lutheran religion is to deepen and widen a pupil's understanding of the nature and meaning of one's own religion as well as other religions. The goal is for the pupil to become conscious of the things that affect his concept of life, to learn about the Lutheran Church and its concept of faith, and to know the central world religions in general.

Essential content includes pupils' ideological reflections and world religions, the distribution of the world's religions, and the basic elements of the religious life. The essential content is the Church and the traditional Finnish worldview. It is also important to get a general picture of the religious situation in Finland, especially of the Lutheran Church and the Orthodox Church as well as of other Christian churches and communities, other religions, and irreligion. Freedom of religion is an important and essential content area.

In Orthodox religious education during grades 1-5, the student, among other things, strengthens his Orthodox identity and comes to understand the dimension of the sanctity of life. The student also gets acquainted with other Christian churches

⁷ Ibid., p. 204.

⁸ Ibid., pp. 204-205.

⁹ Ibid., p. 205.

and the surrounding religious and non-religious views. The main content includes the church year, the holy persons, and being a member of the church, in which particularly central is the Orthodox tradition in the family, school, hometown, in Finland and in the world.

The core mission of Orthodox religious education in grades 6-9 is to deepen and broaden the students' understanding of their own religious traditions as well as the nature and importance of other religions. The student will become familiar with the liturgical life and the Church arts, the Orthodox Church, its history and beliefs, understand the factors that affect the construction of one's own ideology, and will become acquainted with the central world religions in general.

In teaching other religions, the curricula follows the principles of the aforementioned religions, and in particular the goals of all religious groups. In terms of teaching other religions, the curricula are dictated by separate decisions.

Life skills education as a school subject is a fundamentally multidisciplinary entity that has philosophy as well as social and cultural sciences as starting points. Life philosophy education supports the pupil's growth into full democratic citizenship, which in a globalized and rapidly changing society requires developed ethical thinking, operational capacities, and a cultural and all-round education.

The main focuses are human relations and moral growth, in which important elements are justice, wealth and poverty in the world, as well as freedom of thought, tolerance and discrimination. Self-knowledge and cultural identity include different ways of life, multiculturalism and Finnish culture. Finnish cultural minorities as well as the world's cultural heritage are also the essential matters, as well as honesty, fairness and the golden rule.

Harmonisation and subject entities belong to the key elements of education curriculum in Finland. The subject entities are as follows: growth as a human being, cultural identity and internationalism, communication and media skills, participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship, responsibility to the environment, well-being and sustainable future, security and traffic, and human being and technology.

The number of lessons for religion / life philosophy is 8 hours per week in grades 1-6, divided by grade, so that 1st and 2nd classes, as well as 5th and 6th classes are taught 1 hour per week. In grades 3 and 4, religion is taught 2 hours per week. In grades 7-9, religion / life philosophy is given a total of 4 hours per week, so that 7th and 8th classes are taught 1 hour a week, and 9th class 2 hours per week. Thus, the amount of hours a week of primary education is 9 hours per week during the school year.

The coordinator of primary education will have to organize religious instruction that a majority of the pupils represent. Education will be organized according to which religious community the majority of pupils belong to. If a parent wants religion teaching of his own religious group, there must be a group of at least three stu-

dents. Those who do not belong to religious communities are taught life philosophy if the group has at least three students and the guardian has asked for the instruction.¹⁰

As an all-round education school, the upper secondary school continues the teaching and education task of the basic education. The main task of upper secondary school is to provide teaching that gives a good all-round education and good preparation to continuing studies. The value basis of upper secondary school is a part of the Nordic and European cultural heritage. The students are educated into tolerance and international co-operation. The starting point of upper secondary school education is respect for life and human rights. The essential documents about human rights are the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the Rights of a Child as well as the European Convention on Human Rights. The education ideal of upper secondary school is the aspiration to truth, humanity and equity.¹¹

In the upper secondary school, the task of the religion teaching is to give the student information about a student's own religion, its cultural heritage, and the ideology and ethical thinking that arises from the religion. Other religions are studied from their own starting points. **The goal** is that students respect people having different convictions and can live and act with people coming from different cultural backgrounds, people who think differently, and people who have different religions in the multicultural society and world.

In the religion teaching in the upper secondary school, there are three obligatory courses for all students during the three years. In addition to these, there are two national advanced courses to choose. The amount of hours of one course is 38 hours including a one-week exam week. During the exam week, the student will take also an exam that is included in the religion learning plan and the basic hours connected to that, when the exam content is reviewed. The evaluation of the courses is based on a student's ability to combine, analyse and evaluate religions as well as the interaction between religion and culture and between religion and society.

The goal of **the first compulsory course**, the Nature and Significance of Religion (UE1), is for students to understand the universal nature of religion, to question the construction of religions, to know the religious interconnection of culture and society, and to know the influence of the Bible on Western culture. Students will also learn how to respect people who have different beliefs. The subject matters that will be handled are *Active citizenship and entrepreneurship, Health and Safety, Cultural identity, and Cultural knowledge*.

The goal of the course Church, Culture and Society (UE2) is for students to understand how the Christian church spread and affected the environment at different times, and how Christianity acts in different kinds of parishes around the world. *The*

¹⁰ Ibid., § 13.

¹¹ *Lukion opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2003*, available at: http://www.oph.fi/saadokset_ja_ohjeet/opetussuunnitelmien_ja_tutkintojen_perusteet/lukiokoulutus (opened 2.03.2014).

main content is the birth of the Christian Church, the split of the first church into the East and West Church, the West Church during the Middle Ages, dialogue between churches and interfaith dialogue, Christian church history, and the cultural impact of European and Finnish culture. *Subject groups are the same as the course* (UE1).

The third mandatory course is Human Life and Ethics (UE3), where the goal is for students to learn ethical questioning, understand the importance of questions of life and ethical reflection, understand the connection between Christian faith and ethics, the essence of ethics in the Lutheran Church, and the theological positions underlying ethical statements of churches. *The main content is* composed of important human life issues: the meaning of life, suffering, death, good and evil, and the concepts of Christian ethics and the ethics theories. *Subject matters that will be handled are* active citizenship and entrepreneurship, which includes the meaning of work for the individual and for society. In addition, cultural identity and cultural knowledge are handled, which includes the important point of the challenges facing multicultural societies.

The goal of the advanced course, World Religions (UE4), is that students will become familiar with characteristics of the world's religions and learn to appreciate other cultures' religious and ethical traditions. The course deals with Hinduism, Buddhism, Chinese and Japanese religions, Judaism, and Islam from the perspective of the underlying themes. Subject matters dealt with are cultural identity and cultural knowledge, in which it is important to understand and appreciate cultural diversity and to obtain the capacity for intercultural activity.

The goal of the course *What do Finns Believe?* (UE5) is for students to understand the debate concerning Finnish religious and philosophical issues. The essential contents are the impact of Christianity on Finnish culture and society.

As with the basic teaching, **life philosophy as a subject in upper secondary school** is fundamentally interdisciplinary. In addition to philosophy, it benefits from the human, social and cultural sciences. Life philosophy increases students' cultural and ethical all-round education and tolerance. Developing the capacity for ethical evaluation is the key to a good life, both individually and collectively. Multiculturalism and social and global justice are also key issues. Nationwide subject areas are dealt with the fulfilment principle in different courses. Course amounts and weekly hours are the same as in religion teaching, i.e., there are three compulsory courses and two advanced studies courses offered nationwide.¹²

¹² Ibid.

The religiousness of Finns and Finnish researchers' comments on Evangelical-Lutheran religion teaching

Since the comprehensive school reform in the 1970s, the emphasis on religious education has changed: the objective of teaching students is no longer considered to be developing personal faith. Instead, instruction aims to promote students' general religious, ethical and social development. Religious teaching is still seen as task of society, but it has different functions and objectives than church-based education.¹³

Although the nature, place and role of religious education was again discussed in-depth in the early 2000s during the preparation of a new law on religious freedom, in the end many of the legal changes made to religious education were the same decisions made in the 1920s. The concept of confessional religious education was abandoned and was replaced by the concept of the student's own religion. Confessionality as a concept was seen problematic and unclear, and it generated conflicting interpretations. Many class teachers felt uncertain doing confessional teaching and pondered the suitability of their own worldview in relation to the denominational religious education. For decades, confessional religious education had not, despite of its name, meant education based on a religious community's perception, but for example, the task of the curricula of religious education had been described as transmitting knowledge and experience as well as teaching the understanding of religion's social and cultural importance.¹⁴

When focusing on the church services, students are able to understand their life-cycle horizontally, and to explore the key development tasks of human life. In addition, students should be familiar with church art, the most familiar hymns, and other spiritual songs. Students should explore the religious world surrounding them. Instruction is focused on the examination of religions that the students face, as well as elucidation of the common characteristics of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. One of the largest content areas of Evangelical-Lutheran curriculum is ethical growth: when human dignity is observed in particular from the creation point of view. In addition, ethical education includes teaching the golden rule, the double commandment of love as well as the Ten Commandments.¹⁵

The purpose of religious education is to help students understand the importance religions and life philosophies have in human history and today. In addition to the cognitive aspect of religion, it is important to move into a personal level in which students can be offered the opportunity to find their own views. This will prevent a situ-

¹³ A. Kallioniemi, *Uskonnonopetus uudella vuosituhannella*, Kirjapaja, Helsinki 2005, pp. 17, 19.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁵ *Perusopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2004*, op. cit., pp. 205-206.

ation wherein individuals have information, but cannot or do not want to consolidate it into their own values and behaviour.¹⁶

When teaching religious concepts and perceptions, it should be noted that they are based not only on the intellectual and cognitive processes, but also on the significant emotional factors, which play an important role. Every religious learning situation is a multi-level process that is affected by environmental factors and the role of the teacher.¹⁷

The key goal of religious education is the building of religious competence. The concept of religious competency is based on the idea that religious education is a part of human growth and development. Religious competence is the ability to examine one's own religiousness and join this examination into a part of the formation of one's life policy. In addition, it is the ability to appreciate the variety of religious beliefs and the readiness to engage in dialogue in religious matters. Religious education is socially significant because it provides skills for developing one's identity and helps to strengthen the person's ability to see another's position, which can be considered of utmost importance, especially in a multicultural society.¹⁸

The teaching of religion in school may be considered indoctrinative by some people, in which case it is seen as a tool of manipulation and its rational justification is not considered possible. Religion is also open to criticism because, rather than children deciding about their own teaching, it's the parents who make the decision concerning their children's religious teaching.¹⁹ Such criticism has a neo-liberal sense; it reflects the current situation in which the student should have an unlimited right to choose the contents of instruction.²⁰

On the other hand, accusations that religious education would be indoctrinative are rejected. There is no rational basis to consider teaching theism, atheism or agnosticism as indoctrination. Rather, what matters are the ways these concepts are taught. Education should give the students the capacity to independently form their own opinion on these fundamental questions. Thus, indoctrinative can instead be considered instruction that ignores the religious and ideological questions and students are denied the opportunity to develop the key dimensions of their personalities and to understand the cultural debate.²¹ A major objective of religious education is to create

¹⁶ H. Niemi, *Uskonnon didaktiikka*, Keuruu, Otava 1991, pp. 15-18.

¹⁷ N. Holm, *Kehityopsykologisia näkemyksiä uskontokasvatukseen*, [in:] *Uskontokasvatus monikulttuurisessa maailmassa*, P. Hilska, A. Kallioniemi, J. Luodeslampi (eds.), Kirjapaja, Helsinki 2005, pp. 57-78.

¹⁸ A. Kallioniemi, *Uskontokasvatus varhaiskasvatuksessa*, [in:] *Lapsenkaltainen, uskonnollis-katsomuksellinen orientaatio varhaiskasvatuksessa*, T. Kangasmaa, H. Petäjä, P. Vuorrelma (eds.), Lasten Keskus, Helsinki 2008, pp. 43-44.

¹⁹ M. Scheinin, *Koulujen uskonnonopetus ihmisoikeuksien näkökulmasta*, Teologinen aikakauskirja, Helsinki 2001, pp. 515-517.

²⁰ J. Seppo, *Uskonnonvapaus 2000-luvun Suomessa*, Edita, Helsinki 2003.

²¹ T. Puolimatka, *Opetusta vai indoktrinaatiota? Valta ja manipulaatio opetuksessa*, Tampere, Helsinki 1997.

possibilities for students to form their own life ideology by considering life issues by themselves. Religion is a subject that allows for the consideration of ethical issues and the nature of ethics.²²

The current Finnish religious education model, in which learning about one's own religion is guaranteed, can be regarded as a model for a democratic state for the reason that it guarantees the possibility for freedom of religion that is written in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). Acceptable forms of religious education are the organization of religious education completely at home, in religious groups, or that all religious groups have equal access to religious education with public financing.²³

Evangelical Lutheran religious education presents good possibilities for being a uniting teaching subject. The Evangelical-Lutheran religion has the most natural connection with the mother tongue, history, environment, science, music and visual art. Class teachers believe that the Evangelical-Lutheran religion is a unifying subject in particular because the religion behind the subject has a long historical connection with the development of our society and in the formation of our culture. Teachers consider it important that students know their own cultural heritage. In an increasingly multicultural society, the importance of this goal can be emphasized even further. During the period when the 2003 law on religious freedom was prepared, the Constitutional Law Committee stated that deep cultural interaction is subject to better knowledge and better understanding of one's own religious and cultural traditions. In the Education and Culture Committee's opinion (14/2002), a successful multicultural interaction is not possible without the knowledge and understanding of a national and Christian tradition.²⁴

The meaning of religion in Finland is greater than had been thought. The crucifix battle in Italy, the forbidden minarets in Switzerland and the forbidden the use of scarves in France are examples of subjects that have been feeding the discussion about the position of religion in different European countries. In Finland, the meaning of the parish co-operation with the public sector has been studied. The particular target has been the co-operation between municipalities and parishes. There is strong support for the parish co-operation with municipalities. Religion has an essential role in the realized co-operation. The phenomenon can be explained partially by Lutheran culture, where there are no big differences between religion and secular matters. The

²² B. Wahlström, *Koulu hyvättekijänä. Teoksessa Airaksinen*, [in:] T., Elo, P. Helkama, K. Wahlström, B. (eds.), *Hyvän opetus. Arvot, arvokeskustelu ja eettinen kasvatus koulussa*, Painatuskeskus, Helsinki 1993.

²³ M. Scheinin, *Koulujen uskonnonopetus ihmisoikeuksien näkökulmasta*, op. cit., pp. 515-517.

²⁴ N. Laaksomaa, *Näkemyksiä eheyttämisestä sekä erityisesti evankelis-luterilaisen uskonnonopetuksen mahdollisuuksista toimia opetusta eheyttävänä oppiaineena*, available at: http://www.edu.fi/download/115290_uskonto_eheyttaminen.pdf (opened 24.01.2014).

effect of religion in the public life is based on the local culture as well as the support of individuals.²⁵

This view, in which it is possible to clearly distinguish religious life from secular life, is challenging. Religion affects the functioning of public organizations through individuals and culture. The religious and secular interaction in Finnish culture also creates conditions for the prevention of conflicts that have been seen in other European countries. Religious and secular interaction is accepted as a natural part of local life.

In practice, this happens by taking the different religions as partners of the public sector, in particular, in supporting the well-being of a community's own members. The integration of life philosophies into Finnish culture is supported the same way. Highlighting the religious and secular divide risks the confrontation of different life philosophies and conflicts.

In Finland municipalities like to co-operate with parishes. In this co-operation, religion and accepting traditions have central roles. In Lutheran culture, there is no extreme confrontation between religious and secular culture. Religious and secular interaction must be accepted as a natural part of local life. The belief that religion can be clearly distinguished from secular life is wrong. Religion is an essential part of the Finnish local culture. Religion affects the actions of public organizations through individuals and culture. The religious and secular interaction associated with Finnish culture also creates the conditions to prevent conflicts that have been seen in other European countries. The importance of religion rising from the local level is reflected in the Church's position in society as a whole. The absence of confrontation is to be seen consciously as a resource in Finnish society. The goal of the religious and secular interaction is to prevent conflict and to support mutual understanding between different life philosophies.²⁶

In traditional Finnish school festivals, there are religious elements, such as the Summer Hymn sung in the Spring Festival. There has been public debate whether these traditions are a part of Finnish culture, or if instead they should be seen as a religious practice. Appeals have been made concerning religious tolerance, the rights of the nonbelievers, and the constitution. The latter refers to the fact that a person shall not be required to participate in the practice of religion in violation of their conscience. When young people were asked their opinion on these "issues referring to religion", less than one in five respondents wanted them removed from school festivals. Men more often than women (20% and 15%, respectively) wanted the removal of religious elements in school festivals. The level of a respondent's vocational edu-

²⁵ *Sivistysvaliokunnan lausunto 14/ 2002*, available at: [http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/thw.cgi/trip/?\\${APPL}=utpvm&\\${BASE}=faktautpvm&\\${THWIDS}=0.36/1403785656_269944&\\${TRIPPIFE}=PDF.pdf](http://www.eduskunta.fi/triphome/bin/thw.cgi/trip/?${APPL}=utpvm&${BASE}=faktautpvm&${THWIDS}=0.36/1403785656_269944&${TRIPPIFE}=PDF.pdf) (opened 3.02.2014).

²⁶ V. Kallunki, *Yhteisön ja yhteiskunnan ehdoilla – seurakuntien ja kuntien yhteistyö vuorovaikutuksen näkökulmasta*. Teologinen tiedekunta, Helsinki 2010.

cation and training did not demonstrate much of a connection with the question, nor did it matter where the respondent was studying. A total of 8% of those who consider themselves religious felt that religion did not belong in school festivals; non-religious (21%) and atheists (49%) felt the same.

The connection of Church membership is almost as clear. It is mostly the Evangelical-Lutheran Church members who want to retain religion in the school festivals. Clearly, more members of other churches, including the Orthodox, want to remove the religion from school festivals. Of those who have resigned from the Church, almost half are of this opinion.²⁷ Also Kallunki's research shows that religion has a central role in the public sector in Finland. The religious and secular interaction associated with the Finnish culture also creates conditions that prevent conflicts that have been seen in other European countries.²⁸

The religiousness of the childhood home has large impact on a person's life in Finland. The more religious the young evaluate their childhood home (on a scale of 1-5), the more religious they perceive themselves. In total, 16% of children from non-religious homes consider themselves religious; 88% of children from very religious homes consider themselves religious. Religiousness is transferred from generation to generation. Of those young people who do not belong to any religious communities, less than one of five consider themselves as religious. Of those who belong to Evangelical-Lutheran church, almost all of the respondents consider themselves as religious, which is natural, because the great majority of the respondents belong to this group. Even more remarkable, 56% of those who belong to the Orthodox Church are religious; as many as 93% of those who belong to another religious community are religious.²⁹

The role and responsibility of the parents in the transmission of spiritual values to children is important. Children read parents' values like an open book. Also, the importance of the godparent in transmitting Christian values to the child is emphasized. Also, the godparent's role is a commitment to the child's Christian education. Christian books and magazines are good godparent gifts through which guidance can be transmitted. The importance of evening prayer in Finland is one of the most active ways of showing faith, as studies show that one-third of parents still teach their children evening prayer. Teaching one's own religion and embedding the belief is the task of every religious community and home.³⁰

In Finland 90% of the so-called original population are members of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church. In addition to this, 1% belong to some other church or religious

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ T.-A. Wilska, *Uskon asia nuorisobarometri 2006*, available at: http://www.minedu.fi/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisoasiain_neuvottelukunta/julkaisut/barometrit/liitteet/Nuorisobarometri_2006.pdf (opened 13.02.2014).

³⁰ S. Kinnunen, *Hyvä välittyy hyvällä. Vanhempien esimerkki on tärkein työkalu arvojen välittämisessä lapsille*, "Pohjalainen" 19.6.2011.

community, most commonly the Orthodox Church. Therefore, 9% are left entirely outside of religious communities. Less than one-tenth of young people placed themselves on the religious-irreligious continuum's religious side; about one in five on the other side. On average, women define themselves as slightly more religious than men. It should be mentioned that this is question about the original Finnish; among immigrants, young people men seem to be more religious, although in this relatively small sample the differences are not statistically significant. Persons in the age group of 20-24 years feel that they are more religious than the younger or older age groups. The difference is clear, and is the same for both women and men.³¹

The age difference did not come across while solving the religiosity of the young in the 2006 religion-themed youth barometer. Also, the greater religiosity of young people of Eastern Finland was not visible in that survey. An explanation might be found in the slightly different ways used to ask it. The forms of questions differ from each other, at least in such a way that mentioning atheism in the question places more emphasis on the aspect of religious belief in God than on the more general religious-irreligious continuum. The survey does not show major differences in the religiosity of people from different religions. Also, young people with immigrant backgrounds did not significantly differ from the original population. Those who do not belong to any religious community seem to feel themselves less religious than the rest.

Has religion teaching in Finland been successful? The Finns are **among the least active** in religious activity in international comparisons. The *World Values 2005* research had a question "If weddings and funerals are not counted, how often do you go to church / religious events at the moment?" Of the Finns, 14% participated in religious events at least once a month. Of them, less than 6% were very active and they participated in religious events every week or several times a week. The most active are more often women (60%) and from all age groups except the ages of 18-25 years, of which only 3% were very religiously active. The number of passive citizens in the religious sense has grown since 1981. Of the researched countries, the most active are the Polish. The most active in the religious sense are mostly people from the Catholic countries, like Italy. The least active are the Swedes. Only 8% of Swedes participate in religious events at least once a month. Almost as passive are those from eastern Germany and the French.³²

Two-thirds (62%) of the very active participants were members of Evangelical-Lutheran Church, the others mainly of Pentecostal churches, Free Church, or Jehovah's Witnesses. According to the same survey, nearly half of the Finnish, 46%, attended religious services less than once a year. The majority, 73% of them, however, belonged to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church.

³¹ *Puolustuskanalla. Nuorisobarometri 2010*, Nuorisotutkimusverkosto, Helsinki 2010.

³² K. Ketola, K. Niemelä, H. Palmu, H. Salomäki, *Monikasvoinen kirkko*, op. cit., p. 385.

Passive participation in religious events has increased since 1981, when only one-third stated that they attend religious events less frequently than once a year or never. Meanwhile in other countries, for example, Poland and Guatemala, people more actively take part in religious occasions. In these countries, at least four out of five people attended religious events once a month or more. Active participants were found mainly in Catholic countries, in addition to Mexico, Colombia and Italy. Of the compared countries, the Swedes attended the fewest number of religious events: only 8% took part in a religious ceremony at least once a month. Almost as passive were people from Hong Kong, eastern Germany, Japan and France.³³

A whole new perspective on religion has been brought by recent, relevant research (BBC 2010), according to which religion is in danger of extinction in nine countries. US-based Northwestern University's study compared data up to 100 years old in Australia, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Switzerland. According to the results found in many secular democracies, more and more people stated that they do not feel the need of religion. Religiousness was assessed on the basis of a mathematical model. The model assumes that large social groups are more attractive than small groups. The model is also based on the assumption that belonging to a large group can bring prestige or benefits to its members. The research team applied the model to the population of nine "non-religious" countries. The researchers noted that in nine secular democracies individuals stated that they benefited more from the secular sphere than religious sphere.³⁴

Religion and entrepreneurship

According to researchers examining entrepreneurship, the spiritual hierarchy of entrepreneurship consists of the following areas: life philosophy, values, attitudes and motivation.³⁵ Of personality characteristics, the widest and slowest changing is life philosophy, which consists of a full understanding of the meaning of human life and value. Life philosophy can be seen as entirety that has parts such as the vision of the world, human understanding, attitude towards religion, and social perception.³⁶

It is considered to be controversial whether the third area of life philosophy, attitude towards religion, has importance for entrepreneurship. The Church and the development of capitalism have joined closely together. A number of studies suggest that Protestants

³³ *World Values Survey 2005, Suomen aineisto; Kansaneläkelaitos, Kirkon tutkimuskeskus*, available at: <http://www.fsd.uta.fi/fi/aineistot/luettelo/FSD2118/meF2118.html> (opened at 14.03.2014).

³⁴ "Uskonto kuolee sukupuuttoon" – Suomi mukana tutkimuksessa. Intereuropean Commission on Church and School (ICCS) järjestön 1992 toimittama julkaisu RE in Europe. BBC 2010.

³⁵ M. Peltone, P. Ruohotie, *Menetelmiä työhalun parantamiseksi*, Keuruu, Otava 1987.

³⁶ *Kasvatustieteen käsitteistö*, S. Hirsjärvi (ed.), Keuruu, Otava 1982.

more often become entrepreneurs than others. There are many confluences between entrepreneurship and traditional Protestant ideals, such as hard work and diligence.³⁷

The Protestant and Lutheran churches play an essential role in supporting diligence and entrepreneurship in Finland. On the other hand, it is denied that a stressed valuation of work would be included in Lutheran teachings. Nobody can be saved through good deeds, and not even the most diligent work can guarantee the favour of God.³⁸ Also, Weber is understood narrowly when Weber's Protestant ethics about hard work and disciplined life are said to be the basis of capitalism. The impact of religious matters on entrepreneurship cannot be taken for granted.³⁹

Human vision of life has an impact on the attitude towards entrepreneurship. It refers to the extent to which an individual respects and values the market economy, the business world, companies, entrepreneurs, entrepreneurship and work, and how high the factors are placed in a person's value hierarchy. Life ideology is developed by home-school interaction at a young age. When a person gets older and more experienced, his life ideology matures, but change is slow. For this reason, it should be possible for entrepreneurship education to begin as early as possible.

In examining how the practice of religion affects an individual's view of establishing a company through an individual and social contribution, it has been observed that religion and businesses have a complex reciprocal relationship to each other. The Western Protestant work ethic gives entrepreneurship a privileged position. When ethnic diversity increased in Western countries, the number of different religions and different value systems also increased. Increasing diversity continually reduces the degree of participation in traditional Christian churches.

The influence of the changing spectrum of religions and beliefs on entrepreneurial participation and perceptions of entrepreneurship has been studied. The results indicate that the increased ethnic diversity and the associated religious value systems do not indeed diminish the activity level required to set up a company; on the contrary, it seems to increase the activity level.⁴⁰

Euro crisis and the European religions

Researchers have also seen religious reasons in the Euro crisis that has been present for the past few years. The crisis has opened splits in Europe, such that Europe can clearly be separated into the successful and the less-successful countries in an

³⁷ M. Weber, *Protestanttinen etiikka ja kapitalismin henki*, WSOY, Juva 1990.

³⁸ H. Heino, *Luterilainen työmoraali. Teoksessa Työn ilo, tekemisen vapaus. Ilmarinen, Gummerus, Jyväskylä 1990.*

³⁹ A. Kovalainen, *The Concept of Entrepreneur in Business Politics*, "Liiketaloudellinen aikakauskirja" 1989, p. 2.

⁴⁰ P. Carswell, D. Rolland, *The role of religion in entrepreneurship participation and perception*, "International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business" (2004) no. 3/4, pp. 280-286.

economic sense. The border between “good” and “bad” countries divides Europe into the North and the South from the middle of France. All the crisis countries except Ireland are from the South. It also seems that the borders of the “bad” South and the “good” North are equal to the borders of Protestant Europe. More directly, the division into different churches is seen in the deepening of the European co-operation. Protestant and Catholic countries differ from each other. Above the Catholic countries are the Vatican and the Pope; this is why there are no conflicts between the state and the more powerful unions in the Catholic countries.

In the Protestant countries, the state is strong, the rules are obeyed and the citizens are obedient. The Catholic tradition is also seen in Poland. After its transition period, Poland has been seeking its own path and is at the same time actively seeking to become into the core of the Union. Great Britain previously followed its own rules in the times of the Reformation. The British state tradition is described as Calvinistic. Calvinistic states believe in the individual; that’s why central administration is always seen as dubious.

In the background of the economic division of Europe is seen Protestant European ancestry in the 1500s. The Reformation was created in late medieval times as a protest movement against the decadence of the Catholic Church. The Czech Jan Hus, who criticized the sale of indulgences, was declared into excommunication and was burned at the stake in 1415. His work was continued by the German Martin Luther (1483-1546). Protestant churches emphasize the Bible’s role as a guide of life; salvation cannot be purchased, according to the Protestants.

Those churches that diverged from the Catholic Church as a result of the Reformation are called Protestant churches. The major trends in Europe are Lutheranism, Calvinism, i.e., Reformed churches, as well as the Anglican Church in England and Northern Ireland. The Anglican Church has retained a large part of the Catholic tradition, but the religion is Protestant. Lutherans in Europe include the Nordic countries, the Baltic countries and northern Germany. There are reformed churches in Switzerland, the Netherlands and Scotland.⁴⁴

Conclusion

A total of 39% of Europeans consider discrimination based on religion or conviction to be common in society. According to EU legislation, people are entitled to part-time or full-time jobs despite their religion or convictions. Workplace discrimination based on age, disability, race or ethnic background is forbidden by law. According to the survey, this doesn’t seem to be so.⁴¹

⁴¹ *Discrimination in the EU in 2009*, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_317_en.pdf (opened 4.02.2014).

Income differences cause a lot of debate in Finland, as the incomes of the highest earning percentage have risen dramatically in the past few years. In 1997-2007, the income of the highest earning Finns increased five times as fast as the income of the average earning Finns. All Finns had a 41% increase of income, but within the best earning percentage they increased by 209%. A similar increase in income differences has been a phenomenon of the English-speaking world.⁴²

This phenomenon has been brought up in Finnish presidential election campaigns and in the president's new year's speech. According to the president, as the income gap gets larger, the differences in life expectancies between different earning groups get bigger and people's ability to obtain health services worsens. There is a 13-year difference in the life expectancies of men from the highest and the lowest income classes. The corresponding difference is seven years for women.⁴² This correlation has been criticized by leaders of the business sector. They think that the underprivileged people cause their own misery because they do not take good care of their health. Business experts believe that it is not about the change of income differences, but instead about disregard.⁴³

Child poverty and the displacement of the young have also increased alarmingly in our country. The growth of inequality cannot be accepted as a force of nature; thus, it can be prevented. In a welfare society, all persons can be guaranteed equal treatment and at the same be successful in international competition. Human responsibility and love for one's neighbour should be seen in our own behaviour as well as in the building of society.

Also, individual attitudes towards public institutions have changed. The trust of the Finnish youth towards the Defence forces, big companies, **church and European Union has decreased during 1996-2006**. Instead, the young trusted political institutions more (parliament, communal councils, political parties) in 1996, though only 3% of the young stated they place much trust in political parties.⁴⁴

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⁴² J-P. Raeste, *Suomalainen rikkaus*. "Helsingin Sanomat" 31.12.2011.

⁴³ I. Ahtiainen, A. Blåfield, *Kapitalistin muotokuva*, "Helsingin Sanomat", 2012, p. D1.

⁴⁴ T.-A. Wilska, *Uskon asia nuorisobarometri 2006*, op. cit.

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ZNACZENIE RELIGII W WYCHOWANIU DO AUTONOMII. RELIGIA I JEJ NAUCZANIE W FINLANDII Z PUNKTU WIDZENIA KSZTAŁTOWANIA EUROPEJSKIEGO SPOŁECZEŃSTWA OBY- WATELSKIEGO

Streszczenie: W prezentowanym artykule nakreślono szeroką wizję znaczenia religii w życiu współczesnej Europy. Na początku autor naszkicował sytuację prawną i społeczno-polityczną, w której należy rozpatrywać pozycję różnych religii i wyznań chrześcijańskich występujących w Finlandii. Następnie omówił zasady organizacji nauczania religii w fińskim systemie oświatowym. Po tym zaprezentował katalog wartości demokratycznych, do których przestrzegania zobligowane są zarówno wspólnoty religijne, jak i szkolne nauczanie religii. W tej części artykułu szczególnym punktem odniesienia jest Kościół luterński. Następnie przedmiotem rozważań autora jest wpływ religii na nastawienie do przedsiębiorczości. Ostatnia część poświęcona jest rozważaniom na temat zależności między sytuacją religijną w Unii Europejskiej a kryzysem (nie tylko gospodarczym), w jakim się znajduje. Według autora zachowanie pokoju religijnego jest koniecznym warunkiem rozwoju zjednoczonej Europy i wyrównywania dysproporcji, jakie w niej istnieją.

Słowa kluczowe: Finlandia, wartości, religia, nauczanie religii, wolność religijna.

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