EDUCATING A SOCIALLY ACTIVE AND TOLERANT CITIZEN: COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN RELIGIOUS AND CIVIC EDUCATION

Annotation: The article analyses how religious education might contribute to citizenship education, to reduction of undemocratic citizenship and to the objective to educate an active, tolerant citizen who is able to develop an intercultural dialogue. Analysing the possibilities and methods of contribution of religious education to citizenship education, the relationship between religiosity and citizenship, between religious and citizenship education are discussed. Service learning is presented as a method serving the development of the preferable multicultural and socially active citizenship, strengthening interreligious understanding and solving interreligious conflicts. The article presents action research applying the service-learning method which was applied in one Lithuanian university in 2006. The results of the research are discussed as well.

Key words: citizenship, religiosity, religious education, citizenship education, service-learning.

Introduction

Today, when we live in the diversity and confront with interreligious conflicts and citizenship passivity, it is discussed that one of the most important goals of the citizenship education is to educate a tolerant and socially active personality. These discussions consider whether religious education could contribute to the citizenship education and how it can decrease undemocratic citizenship. These issues are discussed by researchers such as Jackson (2004, 2007), Ipgrave (2004) and S. Edwards (1999). In Lithuania this issue is less analysed; however, the researches on this topic have been started (Balčiūnienė and Mažeikienė, 2006, 2007; Balčiūnienė, 2007). It is claimed that religious education can significantly contribute to education of a tolerant and socially active citizen who is able to think critically and, in particular, through dialogical religious education (Ipgrave, 2004; Jackson, 2004) or, in other words, multi-faith or emancipatory religious education (Edwards, 1999), which is based on the analysis and debates on various religions and matching of insights with critical theories, liberal theology and the principals of humanism and justice.

This topic is discussed at European educational policy level as well: the citizenship education and the development of intercultural, interreligious dialogues is one of the
strategic priorities of the European Council. For this purpose, various campaigns, programs are initiated and projects are prepared and implemented. Since 2001, as a reaction to the tragic events of 11th September, the European Council has been taking more active actions for the development of tolerance and intercultural dialogue among the representatives of different faiths. The most important stages of this campaign are being related to various political documents – declarations.¹

While discussing the possibility of the religious education to contribute to the citizenship education, the following question is raised: how such a link of the citizenship education and religious education can be realized and what methods have to be applied? It is worth doubting whether it is possible to realize such a combination and complementarity in a traditional educational environment (in a classroom) which is distant from the contradictions, problems and conflicts of real life and where students and teachers belonging to one culture and confession of the majority are interacting. Very significant knowledge is acquired in the traditional educational environment; however, this knowledge is acquired at theoretical level and attitudes are developed focusing on artificially constructed situations, what frequently results in an incomplete realisation of goals of citizenship education. As the researches show (Balčiūnienė, 2007), attitudes often differ in an imaginable and real situation: for example, there might be a strong tolerance for otherness at theoretical level; however, when one appears in a real situation, intolerance and hostility against “the others“ may show up strongly. Therefore, in order to enable a sincere dialogue among the representatives of different religions or irreligious students and teachers and to educate a desirable type of citizenship based on tolerance and respect for otherness on the basis of religiosity, it is necessary to look for educational possibilities and methods allowing a real and experience-based acquaintance with otherness.

The goal of this article is to theoretically analyse and empirically investigate the need of citizenship and religious education and educational possibilities.

The objectives of this article are: (1) to analyse complementarity of religious and citizenship education; (2) to analyse possibilities for interconnection and complementarity of religious and citizenship education and possibilities for citizenship education in a religious (community) environment by performing action research and by applying the service-learning.

¹ Opatija Declaration Declaration on Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention (2003), Warsaw declaration (2005), San Marino declaration The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue (2007) (For more see http://www.coe.int)
The methods of research are: analysis of theoretical literature; action research applying service-learning in order to educate citizenship in religious communities; qualitative content analysis of reflective activities’ documents (students’ diaries, records of seminar conversations, essays, interviews) in order to evaluate the dynamics of students’ attitudes and abilities.

The link between religiosity and citizenship

Recently discussing religious education researchers have emphasised its links to citizenship education (e.g. Jackson, 2004, 2007). A close link between these fields of education exists because both of them are related to the formation of social, religious and cultural identity and the implantation of moral values. This article analyses the following questions: how religiosity can be civic? How religious education can contribute to education of democratic, active and responsible citizens?

To discuss the above-mentioned questions it has to be noted that the concept of citizenship constantly changes. It depends on the thinking of a particular historic period and political situation. For example, the concept of national citizenship that was formed in Europe in the period of the 18-19th centuries had the following preferable citizen’s characteristics: love, respect and loyalty to state, nation, nationalism, responsibility and disposition to participate in state affairs (Seligman, 2004). However, in the second half of the 20th century new social identities, social and intercultural diversity evoked a transformation of the established concept of national citizenship. Once new social and political reality (migration, expansion of the European Union, secularisation, plurality, globalisation and postcolonialism) appeared, new forms of citizenship, such as local, global and cultural citizenship, emerged (Childester, 2004). Despite the diversity of the distinguished forms, a new tendency when multicultural citizenship replaces national citizenship (Triandafyllidou et al., 2006) or, as Byram (1997) points out, intercultural citizenship that emphasizes intercultural competence, is observed. The intercultural competence provides knowledge of own social group and that of other cultures, a wish to communicate and an ability to interact with members of other social or cultural groups, an ability to relate and interpret another culture (its values, attitudes and models of behaviour) comparing with own culture, an ability to live in a multicultural society, tolerance for religious differences, avoidance of ethnocentrism, curiosity and openness and intercultural awareness (Byram, 1997).

The scientists Ipgrave, 2004, Jackson, 2007, who analyse the complementarity of citizenship and religious education, claim that religious education has to and can
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contribute to the education of a tolerant and interculturally sophisticated citizen who is able to live in diversity and respect it. In addition, religious education can develop religiosity which would assume the manifestation of an active, participatory and democratic citizenship.

Religiosity and citizenship are understood as social phenomena, they indicate the qualitative particularity of a performer’s thinking and are realized by a corresponding behaviour. Religiosity does not mean only participation in religious practices and a belief in supreme reality of a certain faith. It also comprises respective attitudes of a person and a certain particularity of public behaviour. Religiosity has the dimensions of civic, moral and social attitudes and actions. Similarly citizenship is a public, expert and active participation in all spheres of the public life (not only in politics), possession and development of respective attitudes and abilities (Mažeikis, Balčiūnienė, 2003).

The fact that religiosity has a strong social aspect also defines its link to citizenship. Social religiosity has the following typical characteristics: love for neighbour, volunteering, participation in charity activities and provision of effective help, responsibility and sense of justice. In this case not only related civic viewpoints and attitudes but also civic activity are observed as well.

Religion is often defined as performing the function of social integration, unifying the members of a certain group into a community and stimulating solidarity among the members of a community (Durkheim, 1999). Religiosity unites members of a group into a community by general traditions, norms of behaviour that formed in a state in different periods of history and at the same time strengthens them. For the last two centuries nation has been understood as one of the supreme types of community and religion has been signed the function of development of national citizenship type. According to Grigas (1998) and Maceina (2002), religion is a historic phenomenon which, while forming and developing, in the life of society formed certain traditions, norms of behaviour that endured in the consciousness and life of the society, gathered a shade of nationality of a certain nation which was strengthened through church organization, pastoral, various religious practices and customs. According to Maceina (2002), patriotism is strengthened and cherished by moral values that religion introduces: to respect nation and motherland and serve it. Therefore religiosity is being related to the formation and strengthening of nationality, patriotism and national identity.

As it was already mentioned, religiosity comprises the elements of citizenship. When the forms of citizenship change, i.e. national citizenship switches to multicultu-
tural/intercultural citizenship, the nature of religiosity also changes. It provides the ability to interact with the representatives of other belief, interpret other faiths and compare them with one’s belief, respect and tolerate them. The new emancipatory religious education would provide such an expression of religiosity that would include a believer’s knowledge not only about the doctrine of his/her faith, religious practices, but also the sophistication of the doctrines of other religions and religious practices, the ability to evaluate the systems of his/her and other religions critically, the ability to notice and discuss about religious differences at the same time maintaining one’s religious identity (Jackson, 2004, 2007; Ipgrave, 2004; Edwards, 1999). By using the general principle of love religiosity provides tolerance, respect and forgiveness for all people despite religious, social, cultural, ethnic, racial or other differences. Along with the feeling of love emphasized in Christian faith, the intercultural competence of religiosity would also provide a number of attitudes and values: curiosity, openness, tolerance, dialogism, the ability to overcome cultural (religious) ethnocentrism, to exceed the limits of one’s world-view, the ability to avoid conflicts with the representatives of other religions and the ability to live in diverse society.

However, religiosity can determine such a type of citizenship which is undesirable in a democratic multicultural society, which is clear in the ideology of religious fundamentalism, which having taken a radical position is being related to intolerance, fanaticism and admits all means to achieve one’s objectives. Religious fanaticism is especially related to intolerance to others and absence of positive attitude to dialogism. Conservative religiosity can result in insularity, alienation from society, denial of society norms, can stop person’s individuation, socialization and critical thinking (Dvorkin, 2005) and even determine excessive loyalty for the clergy (religious leader) and obedient passiveness.

Therefore religiosity, which has a civic dimension, can be understood in two ways at level of values, attitudes, activeness and abilities: (1) as providing strong moral beliefs, responsibility for the surrounding world, own country, environment and respective social activeness while realizing the motives of help for neighbour and those of a responsible citizen, the attitudes of dialogism and tolerance, in multicultural society it appears in the forms of desirable citizenship; (2) however, it can determine an undesirable type of citizenship which is evidenced by insularity, aggressiveness, intolerance to those who think differently, it can even be destructive. Thus the education of positive and democratic citizenship leading to an inter-religious dialogue, respect and tolerance towards religious differences is one of the most important goals of education and religious education in particular. In other
countries, while solving the possibilities of the contribution of religious education to citizenship education and while searching for new, modern methods that would help developing the preferable, multicultural and socially active citizenship, strengthening interreligious dialog and solving the issues of interreligious conflicts, a lot of attention is paid to the service-learning (Falbo, 1998). In recent years this method has received a more considerable attention in Lithuania (Mažeikis, 2007; Balčiūnienė, 2007, Mažeikienė, 2008).

The link of citizenship and religious education applying the service-learning method

In the spring semester of the year 2006 (February - June) an action research applying the service-learning was performed in order to analyse the possibilities for citizenship education in religious environment and for establishing the link between complementarity of religious and citizenship education. The sample included 26 students of Applied Ethics from one Lithuanian university. The goals of the Applied Ethics were combined with the goals of citizenship education, i.e. the strengthening of civic competences. The studies in classrooms were coordinated with the visits to religious communities - traditional and non-traditional2 (propagating non-traditional lifestyle, according to attitude of the majority of country’s believers (Catholics)). The non-traditional religious communities have a distinctive cultural and social identity, treats the relation of a human and God and attitude towards the people’s relationships in a way that differs from the religious and cultural majority. While participating in the activities of religious communities the students were expected to strengthen multicultural citizenship and religiosity and at the same time to enhance the dimension of social activeness and participation. While planning the students’ participation in religious communities the assumption that a certain religious, cultural and social practice of communities would stimulate development of cultural sensitivity and compliance of own cultural and national identity and that of “others”, to see the global and local expression of religious practices was followed. On the one hand, the above-mentioned religious communities are global and international, but on the other hand, they have a strong cultural definiteness which differs from students’ national and cultural identity: for example, in the case of Society for Krishna Consciousness it is the relation with the Vedic philosophy

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2 Society for Krishna Consciousness, Jehovah’s Witnesses, various organizations of Protestant Christians
and the world-view of the life of Indians, in the case of Jehovah’s witnesses it is the following of some values of the Old Testament.

Having presented the main ideas of the course in the beginning of the course, each student was proposed to visit and choose one of religious communities, which s/he had to visit once a week for the whole semester (a total of 15 visits). The students’ practice in the communities was encouraged by the three-stage model of reflectivity process of presented by Stephens (1995).

In the first stage students were given a diary where they we asked about emotions relating to the religion and lifestyle professed by a community, possessed knowledge of the communities and opinion about the future communication with the members of a community.

While participating (in the second stage) additional diaries were added (after every visit to a community) and reflective seminars were held (once a week the students met their teacher in small groups (of 4-5 people) in a classroom) in order to share their experience and what they learned during a weekly participation in a community’s activity, to analyse problems that emerged, to search for solutions to them and to predict future activity. The diaries contained questions about: (1) the knowledge acquired/being acquired; (2) feelings towards the community; (3) the activities and interpersonal communication and attitude towards that.

In the third stage of reflection the generalization of experience, feelings and knowledge, consideration of the dynamics of feelings and knowledge were conducted and analysis (an essay) of ethic issues was written where students were asked to analyse the moral values of communities by relating the religious and social practices to the theories that were known and studied in the course. In addition, a semi-structured oral interview was performed.

The received data (information in the diaries, reflective seminars, reflective essays and interviews) were processed by a qualitative content analysis as well as analysed and interpreted.

Discussion of the research results

A qualitative research by applying service-learning in religious environments, realistically contacting the representatives of other religions and cultures revealed a totally different expression of attitudes from ones usually demonstrated by students when discussing in classrooms, analysing situations modelled in textbooks or by a teacher.
Having analysed the content of the first diary quite a clear negative attitude and view against participation in religious communities and the religious communities themselves emerged (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Subcategories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
<td>Fear of involvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fear of getting into a totally strange, environment of “the others”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reticence for new experience</td>
<td>Unwillingness to know “the others”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reticence for new knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of initiative</td>
<td>Lack of attitude to provide volunteer help</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attitude of taking a passive role in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of tolerance</td>
<td>Negative attitude towards “a different one”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Distrust in the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of dialogism</td>
<td>Taking the defensive position</td>
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</table>

The following categories are especially distinguished: fear and worry, reticence for new experience and the lack of initiative and tolerance. The fear of “being involved into a religious community” was mainly based on prior negative knowledge. The students were worried that they “get” into a totally strange environment among “the others” who have their own system of faith, lifestyle, which, as it is thought, do not correspond to their attitude towards life and beliefs. “Panic” is a primary students’ reaction to the fact that they will have to participate in the activities of a non-traditional community about which they have a negative preconception. The category of “reticence for new experience” is closely related to the category of fear. It is defined in two features, i.e. students’ insularity for everything that is strange and that does not correspond to their personal imagination of world and lifestyle practicing. Another tendency that emerged was reticence in general for any innovations and lack of motivation. The students’ passivity towards the activity and participation, lack of attitude to provide volunteer help were some of the most common phenomena as well. Another students’ preconception is named as “the lack of tolerance”, one manifestation of which is a negative attitude towards religious and cultural otherness, is related to a stereotyped opinion common in the society. The prior distrust in a religious community is another tendency which is
also related to the society’s negative attitude and created stereotypes. A prior negative attitude against a community reveals the lack of dialogism which predicts the taking of prior defensive position, prior assumption that they will have to fight for their ideas and values and does not predict preparation for mutual respectful discussion.

Summarising the students’ prior position, it is possible to claim that such negative aspects as intolerance of “a different one”, insularity for new experience, fear of innovations and otherness, lack of the attitude of volunteering and initiative are dominating. The student’s primary reaction to attending of religious communities can be named as a negative, hostile and at the same time passive (expressed by unwillingness to acquire knowledge actively, to participate, contribute to the activities of a community) and this relates to the fact that religious communities are labelled as being of other cultural and religious identity and are assumed as “strange” towards the attitude of the personal religious identity. The identification of religious communities as “strange” and labelling as of other cultural identity applies to the traditional and non-traditional religious communities as well. The traditional religious communities as the representatives of a conservative moral position are assumed as not corresponding to the personal identity that represents a liberal evaluation of issues of the modern morality. Meanwhile non-traditional religious communities are treated as “strange” because they express other culture, other way of life and religion profession, other religious and moral teaching and are more or less evaluated as negative by the society and due to these facts they do not correspond to the Catholic identity (which is assumed as a part of a Lithuanian’s identity as well).

While analysing students’ attitudes during the participation, the change in attitudes, which occurred from the beginning to the end of the participation, was noticed. At the beginning of the participation the primary negative emotions and attitudes, i.e. negative reaction to activity in community, to community’s religious practices and ideology, hostility for different way of life and thinking and passivity, remained. In the middle of the participation (weeks 5-13) students started analysing and comparing the belief, way of life, religious practices of communities, began noticing the diversity of opinions; the attitude of dialogism, tolerance for otherness appeared, while the hostility directed towards the religious communities or the novelty of the course disappeared. Such authors as R. Jackson (2004) and J. Ipgrave (2004) notice that communication with the people sharing different beliefs, familiarization with their ideology and discussions allow expanding the level of tolerance and the thinking about one’s beliefs, taking into consideration the diversity of beliefs allows a greater tolerance for diversity and weaker conception about the existence
of “the only absolute truth”. In the course of participation the fears and worry for participation expressed by the students also started disappearing.

Summarising it is possible to claim that during the participation, constantly analysing, thinking and comparing, the diversity of opinions is seen, which evokes emerging of tolerance for otherness, and the abilities of critical thinking are also strengthened. A lot of researchers, for example Gottlieb and Robinson (2002), who evaluated the contribution of service-learning and citizenship education, notice the tendencies of strengthening of the cognitive abilities by participating in communities.

At the end of the participation (during the last weeks and at the end of the course) the rethinking and generalisation process of the possessed experience and acquired knowledge begins. The students started thinking about a volunteer activity in future, further communication and collaboration with the community, a wish to learn about other communities appeared and students began noticing the dynamics of their attitudes (see Table 2):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Subcategory</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>Respect for otherness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emerging of the attitude of dialogism</td>
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<tr>
<td>Openness for new experience and diversity</td>
<td>Wish to know others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wish to acquire knowledge of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural consciousness</td>
<td>Conception about otherness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conception about the diversity of opinions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of volunteer help</td>
<td>Transformation of passive observation into an active participant providing help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transformation of the participation due to obligation into the participation because of a wish to help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be noted that the majority of the categories presented in the table are reflected in the intercultural competence distinguished by Byram (1997). The category of “tolerance” provides for the emerging of a more positive attitude to dialogism and respect for otherness. The students notice that while participating in communities and having acquired more knowledge of the system of faith, and the purpose of activity, they start being more permissive for other’s choice, opinion, they start understanding that they can accept the other one in the way one is. The participation in communities allowed themselves to experience the society’s position towards a
different one, to understand that it is very easy to judge lacking knowledge of the other one. The respect for otherness emerges.

Before participating in communities the position of reticence, the rejection of a possibility to communicate with “a different one” finally grows into another dimension which is called “openness for new experience (otherness)”. This reflects an interest and a wish to have contacts with “the different ones”, to know more about non-traditional religious communities and to explore the ideology of communities more. A cultural consciousness, i.e. understanding and acceptance, that diversity and oppositions exist emerge. The negative initial position, insularity for new experience and unwillingness to visit communities that emerged at the beginning transformed into a wish to continue volunteer activity in future. Students noticed that the attitude to attend religious communities only because of the course requirements grew into interest and wish to help. When a feeling of successful self-realization in a community appeared, a wish to continue the activity that was started emerged as well.

Summarizing it is noticed that during the research the negative primary position, insularity for new experience and unwillingness to visit a community and fear turned into the attitude of dialogism, interest, conception and acceptance of diversity, a wish to help, to continue the activities that were started and openness for a new experience and diversity.

Conclusions

The research revealed that the chosen methodology of service-learning with parallel application of reflective practices allows educating a new intercultural type of citizenship and religiosity reflecting the ideals of modern democracy.

During the service-learning students demonstrated the expression of intercultural citizenship-religiosity. While discussing with the representatives of other religions, analysing religious practices and systems of faith, completing tasks, reflecting on and thinking over their beliefs (moral and religious attitudes), world-view, the way of life and religion profession, they found out more about the others and at the same time about their religion, they acquired a better understanding about their religious and cultural identity and strengthened it. The students started comparing, interpreting, explaining the doctrines of their religion and those of the others, they started trying to avoid conflicts and reducing interreligious tensions. A whole range and dynamics of the above described values, feelings and attitudes, i.e. from fear, panic and passivity to an interest, wish to explore the philosophy of a specific religious
community (especially in the field of morality) and lifestyle in future, or a wish to know religious communities with other religious, moral beliefs and different lifestyle, conception of diversity, ability to accept and not to condemn those who think differently, openness, respect for “the other one”, wish to help and continue a volunteer activity that was started, emerge. It can be reasonably claimed that this determined the conception of the diversity of opinions, devotion and lifestyle acquired during the experiential education.

It is possible to claim that religious education (which in this case was realized in religious communities during the described action research) by applying the service-learning can contribute to the education of the preferable desirable forms of citizenship, i.e. to develop a multicultural democratic and participatory citizenship. Service-learning provides the complementarity of religious and moral education, allows to familiarize with “otherness” through the practical activity of service and to develop the attitudes of tolerance, openness for otherness, dialogism and volunteering, through personally experienced conflicts and solution of problems and the reflection of one’s personal experience.

Literature


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