

Nordidactica – Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education
The Inclusion of Minority Religious Education in the Finnish Comprehensive School:
A Teacher and Teacher Coordinator Perspective
Harriet Zilliacus
Nordidactica 2013:2
ISSN 2000-9879
The online version of this paper can be found at: www.kau.se/nordidactica

Nordidactica
- Journal of Humanities and Social
Science Education

2013:2

The Inclusion of Minority Religious Education in the Finnish Comprehensive School: A Teacher and Teacher Coordinator Perspective

Harriet Zilliacus

University of Helsinki, Helsinki

Abstract: The Finnish education system offers faith-specific religious education throughout the comprehensive school. Today separate minority religious classes are offered parallel to the majority Lutheran and secular ethics education. The purpose of this study is to investigate how minority RE teachers and teacher coordinators view the inclusion of minority religious education in the school culture. Teacher and coordinator perspectives are investigated through an interview study with 23 religion teachers and 3 teacher coordinators in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The results show that teachers and coordinators experienced education as gaining stronger acceptance and equality in the school culture. However, issues of exclusion and discrimination emerged which raise questions on the viability of the current system of RE. The study argues for a need to improve structural issues in education as well as increased teacher participation and dialogue in the school culture.

KEYWORDS: RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, INCLUSION, RELIGIOUS MINORITIES, TEACHER PERSPECTIVE

About the author: Harriet Zilliacus, M.Ed., is a doctoral student at the Institute of Behavioural Sciences, University of Helsinki. Her research interests include multicultural and religious education. Address: Institute of Behavioural Sciences, University of Helsinki, PO Box 9, FI-00014 University of Helsinki, Finland. E-mail: harriet.zilliacus@helsinki.fi

Introduction

A major concern within religious education (RE) research today is how the increasing religious plurality of pupils and school cultures are to be taken into consideration (Jackson, 2004; Kallioniemi, 2013). The Finnish system of RE gives pupils the right to religious or secular ethics education according to parental religious or non-religious belonging. On a formal level the system of education represents an active effort to accept religious plurality in Finnish society and support the inclusion of religious minorities in the school culture (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2012). This faith-specific education system currently offers 12 minority religion curricula and a secular ethics curriculum parallel to the majority Lutheran curriculum throughout the 9-year comprehensive school (age 7–16). Among the diverse models of RE within Europe, countries such as Austria and Belgium also offer faith-specific RE (Schelander 2009; Loobuyck and Franken, 2011). Similarities to the Finnish system are also found in Australia (Byrne, 2012). It is characteristic of the Finnish RE model that religious minorities participate in RE, which is non-confessional in character and organized within the public school system (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2012).

The present system of education is a subject of ongoing public debate and has also been debated in the Finnish Parliament. Frequently the present system of education is questioned in favour of a common subject of RE or ethics (Kallioniemi, 2013). The fact that pupils are separated into different instruction groups has been subject to criticism. This has partly been in reference to the lack of dialogue between groups as well as the problem of individual pupils experiencing isolation (Zilliacus & Holm, 2013). The organization of education has also been shown to create challenges, importantly through the shortage of competent teachers (Sakaranaho & Salmenkivi, 2009). The critique raises questions concerning the position of minority RE in the comprehensive school culture. Possible experiences of exclusion and discrimination among pupils or teachers stand out as fundamental obstacles for the development of an open and interactive school culture (Banks, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to investigate how teachers and teacher coordinators view the inclusion of minority RE in the school culture. The context of minority RE is pursued through teacher and coordinator perspectives on the status of the subject of religion, the position of minority RE teachers as well as minority RE pupils in the school culture. Teachers' perspectives on education across different RE groups have not been studied previously. Through the perspectives of 23 teachers, rotating in up to 17 schools, and 3 coordinators the study aims to contribute empirical findings concerning a large number of comprehensive schools (grades 1–6) in the metropolitan area. Through this focus the study also strives to further illuminate the challenges and possibilities inherent in the Finnish faith-specific education system.

The Finnish RE System and Education in Minority Religions

Finnish RE alternatives have historically been limited to majority Evangelical Lutheran and minority Orthodox instruction. They represent the two national churches and 76% and 1% of the population respectively (Statistics Finland, 2012). Due to increasing immigration starting in the 1990s as well as increasing secularization, new religious instruction alternatives have been introduced. Today, the national framework curriculum includes Evangelical Lutheran, Orthodox, Catholic, Jewish, Islamic, Buddhist, Herran kansa ry, Christian Community, Latter Day Saints, Free Church, Adventist, Bahá'í, and Hare Krishna religious education and secular ethics education. At the school level some schools provide RE lessons in at least six or seven different forms (Vaara, 2013). This change towards offering a diversity of RE alternatives is mainly found in southern Finland. In Uusimaa, a region in southern Finland, the number of pupils in Orthodox and other religions amounts to 6,5% and is steadily increasing. However, on the nationwide level pupils taking minority religion are still small in numbers. In 2010 93% of comprehensive school pupils took Evangelical Lutheran classes, 3% secular ethics, 1% Orthodox religion, and 2% other religions (Statistics Finland, 2011).

Municipalities have the duty to organize minority religious or secular ethics instruction if there are three or more pupils in the school district belonging to the same denomination or who are non-affiliated. A parental request for instruction is required, apart from instruction in Orthodox religion and secular ethics, which are organized solely on the basis of the number of pupils (Freedom of Religion Act (2003); Basic Education Act (2003)). In grades 1–6 pupils attend one lesson in religion or secular ethics per week, and an additional second lesson a week over a period of two years. The timing of this second lesson is decided upon locally in schools (Finnish National Board of Education 2004; 2006). Education is commonly organized in multi-age classes, and classes include pupils of age 7-13 (Zilliacus & Holm, 2013).

Finnish RE takes a separative approach, dividing up pupils into different groups (Knauth & Körs, 2008). In countries such as Austria, which also has a separative approach, the religious communities are responsible for the curriculum and instruction as well as authorizing RE textbooks (Schelander, 2009, p. 22). Similarly, in Australia religious communities play a key role in RE (Byrne, 2012). However, in Finland RE curricula is made in co-operation between the Board of Education and the religious communities, and instruction is controlled and enforced within the comprehensive school system (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2012, p. 179).

The Finnish model offers a contrast with RE models found in other Nordic countries, even if these countries have a similar religious background through a history of state Lutheran religion (Biseth, 2009). In Sweden RE was renewed in 1962 when the comprehensive school started to offer RE as a single compulsory subject to all pupils (Selander, 1993, p. 10). Similar models of RE have been developed in Denmark starting from 1975 under the subject heading “Christian knowledge”, and in Norway from 1997 under the title “Christianity, religion and ethics” (Jensen 2007; Lied 2009). The RE subjects within these countries differ from each other, but are

non-confessional in the sense that the subjects do not derive from pupils' denominational backgrounds, and do not nurture into religious practice. RE is viewed as a general compulsory academic subject and the content of education draws from a variety of religions and worldviews (Cush, 2011, p. 71). However, there has been discussion in all three countries on the role of Christianity within education, and how well education reflects a pluralist view (Jensen, 2007; Lied, 2009; Brömssen & Olgac, 2010). In 2008 in Norway RE was renamed "Religion, worldviews and ethics" to advance the notion of a neutral subject, which all students could partake in, and lessen requests for opt-outs on religious grounds (Biseth 2009).

Finnish RE is confessional in being organized according to pupils' religious denominations. However, this education is officially defined as non-confessional, in the sense that education does not include religious practice. Education is oriented towards knowledge *about* and *from religion* rather than *into religion*. Religious rituals such as prayers may be taught in class, but cannot be practised in class. Other religions and worldviews besides one's 'own' are also to be studied (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2012). From a human rights perspective offering RE according to the pupil's religious or non-religious background represents support for religious freedom in its organization (Kallioniemi & Matilainen, 2011). This system may be seen as not only tolerating plurality, but, in line with Modood (2009), as accepting plurality and thereby also cultivating it. However, as Sakaranaho (2006, pp. 333-44) argues, the background to the Finnish approach does not primarily lie in furthering plurality and minority rights, but in securing the place of majority Lutheranism within RE against the pressure to develop religion as a general subject for all.

Teacher education within minority RE has been developed since 2007, whereas Orthodox teacher education has had a longer teacher education tradition. Teacher education within minority RE has generally confronted many challenges and there is still a serious shortage of qualified teachers. In order to be qualified, a master's degree-level education, including subject competence and pedagogical studies, is required. The fact that knowledge in Finnish or Swedish is required to start studies has been a particular challenge for applicants with an immigrant background (Sakaranaho and Salmenkivi, 2009; Kallioniemi & Matilainen, 2011). Legally, being qualified as a religion teacher is not linked to membership in a religious community. However, minority teachers often have strong bonds to their religious communities and perceive their religious identity and belonging as central to being a minority RE teacher (Lyhykäinen, 2009; Zilliacus, forthcoming).

Criticism of the current legislation has focused on the fact that the choice of instruction is linked to parental congregational belonging and does not give minority and majority pupils the freedom or equal rights to choose instruction groups. For instance, minority students may if they wish also opt for Lutheran instruction or secular ethics, but, conversely, Lutherans may not do the same (Basic Education Act, 2003). The fact that the decision which instruction group the pupil joins is made according to parental religious or non-religious belonging may also be criticized for not adequately reflecting the plural identities of pupils (Kallioniemi & Matilainen, 2011; Zilliacus, forthcoming). Furthermore, there is concern that the number of

congregations demanding RE will be unsustainable as diversity continues to increase (Sakaranaho, 2006). The organization of classes requires substantial administrative resources. However, the financial resources required for RE are still comparable to subjects like history and geography, which are not strongly resource-demanding subjects (Iivonen, 2010).

The Inclusion of Minority RE in the School Culture

Inclusion can generally be seen as a process of responding positively to pupil diversity and aiming at reducing exclusion within education (UNESCO, 2009, p. 8). Arnesen, Mietola, & Lahelma (2007) argue, in line with UNESCO, for the concept of inclusion to refer to the whole school culture, not only special education, as is often the case. Inclusion is closely connected to recognizing differences and pursuing equality within education (Arnesen, Mietola, & Lahelma, 2007). The concept of inclusion has many uses within educational research, but refers here to developing an educational culture where teachers and pupils as well as other school staff experience themselves as equal and integrated. This contrasts to a process of exclusion, which implies experiences of marginalization within the school culture.

From a critical multicultural educational viewpoint, which this study is grounded in, the process of creating inclusion, like integration, involves everyone in the school, not only pupils with an immigrant background, as has often been the case (Holm & Londen, 2010). Religion represents one aspect of diversity alongside other cultural aspects, such as ethnicity, race, nationality, social class, gender and language. Inclusion in the school implies both preserving pupils' own culture, be it majority or minority, and becoming part of the school culture (Banks, 2006). Active interaction and participation between different cultural groups stands out as fundamental (Sakaranaho, 2006, p. 407). Banks (2006) argues that by including pupils with diverse backgrounds and creating educational equality, an empowering school culture can be achieved.

Finnish as well as Nordic education has a tradition of developing a unitary school with collective equality, thereby offering the same education for all. This tradition is still present, even if a more individualistic view of education is gaining pace (Arnesen & Lundahl, 2006; Reay, 2011). The current model of RE with separate curricula for each religion may not necessarily be seen to support this tradition of solidarity. Minority group belonging may be emphasized and possibly create isolation and fewer opportunities for dialogue (Raunio, 2012). Dividing pupils into different groups has often been disputed, such as in separations on the basis of immigrant or cultural background or academic achievement. Byrne (2012) argues, from the perspective of the Australian RE model, that simply making a distinction between separate RE groups is in itself segregating. Separation in this view implies negative categorizations of pupils, which create conflict and prejudice. However, Banks (2006, p. 226) argues for the need to make distinctions between separatism and segregation in education.

Separatism, as in grouping pupils, does not necessarily imply experiences of segregation or exclusion.

On a policy level, the Finnish educational system stands out as recognizing different minorities, and aims at creating an open and inclusive educational environment (Holm & Londen, 2010; Ubani, 2013). Also, local school policies encourage schools to accommodate religious plurality within the schools alongside the Finnish Lutheran culture (Kuukka, 2010). Some researchers, for example Ali-Tolppa Niitamo (2002) and Halonen (2009), have argued that Finnish minority religious instruction can be a notable means for integrating pupils with an immigrant background into school and society. Inclusion is supported by the familiar cultural atmosphere in classes which include many immigrant pupils, i.e. pupils with first- or second-generation immigrant background.

The main focus of previous research in minority RE has focused on the structural challenges of organizing education, classroom heterogeneity, and the lack of qualified teachers (Sakaranaho & Salmenkivi, 2009; Zilliacus, forthcoming). The structural challenges within minority RE, such as the lack of text books and teaching facilities, may be experienced as discriminatory, i.e. lead to actions that deny the equal treatment of pupils as well as teachers within the school culture. Discrimination can be seen as structural when the policies of the educational institution, and the behaviour of teachers and school principals who implement and control these, indirectly have a differential or harmful effect and uphold inequality (Pincus, 2006, p. 21-24).

Individual discrimination of religious minority pupils has been shown to exist in the Finnish school culture. Individual discrimination constitutes behaviour of individual members in a group which is intended to have a differential and/or harmful effect on members of another group (Pincus, 2006, p. 21). Racism can, as Rastas (2007, p. 12) points out, be seen as ways of thought, speech or action that refer to assumed or claimed aspects of individuals or groups, either biological or cultural in nature, which are seen as essential and unchangeable. These ways of thought, speech or action create power relations and subordination. Halonen's study of Muslim pupils as well as other studies in the Finnish basic school, such as Rastas (2007) and Souto (2012), show that individual discrimination and racism are commonly experienced among pupils with minority religious identities. However, few studies have investigated discrimination connected to participation in a minority RE class. Our earlier study across four minority RE groups showed that some pupils expressed feelings of otherness and isolation in relation to majority pupils (Zilliacus & Holm, 2013). My forthcoming study on pupil identity within minority RE classes shows that minority RE teachers do not experience direct discrimination and racism as a common problem within the classroom, although it does occur at times. Discrimination is often connected to the diversity in the cultural and religious backgrounds of pupils (Zilliacus, forthcoming).

Method and Data

To answer the research question of how teachers and coordinators view the inclusion of minority RE in the school culture, a field study consisting of semi-structured interviews was undertaken in 2010-11 in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The present study is part of a thesis project on pupil identity and inclusion of minority RE in the Finnish comprehensive school. The study seeks an insider perspective of the educational context through the voices of teachers and teacher coordinators. This perspective is notably limited to minority teacher and coordinator views, and does not include the perspectives of other teachers or of principals in the school culture. Pupils' perspectives are likewise not directly pursued, but sought for through teachers' experiences. The present study seeks to illuminate RE teachers' views across religions in the metropolitan area, and thereby gain contextual understanding of the school cultures in this area (Leganger-Krogstad 2011, p. 34).

The semi-structured interviews were on average 50 minutes long. All in all, 23 teachers and 3 teacher coordinators participated in the study. Four of the interviews were made in connection with a participant observation study (Zilliacus & Holm 2013). Teachers of Orthodox (5), Catholic (5), Jewish (2), Islamic (7), Buddhist (2), Baha'i (1), and Hare Krishna (1) religion participated. This represented all forms of instruction offered in the metropolitan area, and approximately 40% of all the minority religion teachers in the school year 2010–11. Nine teachers had immigrant background as first-generation migrants to Finland. All but one teacher, who was a class teacher, rotated between different schools, and taught in up to 17 different groups. Seven of the teachers worked only part-time. The municipal coordinators interviewed represented three out of the four current coordinators in the metropolitan area. 15–20% of their work was allocated to administrating and supporting minority RE within their municipality. Depending on the municipality, the coordinators had somewhat varying functions, for instance in regard to how much direct pedagogical support they gave teachers.

All participants were informed that their participation in the study was voluntary and confidential throughout the study. The number of existing minority religion teachers was limited, and efforts were therefore made to ensure the confidentiality of teachers by leaving out information that might reveal their identities. In the findings the informants are referred to by numbers and the names of schools or municipalities are not given.

My own religious identity stems in general from a Lutheran background, but in not having a strong adherence to one particular religion I did not feel explicit partiality towards any group of teachers. The informants commonly showed a willingness to take part in the research and to thereby support the development of minority RE. Language difficulties were clearly present in several of the teachers' interviews, which constrained communication during interviews at times and created limitations in the interpretations of the transcribed material.

The interviews included three general themes on inclusion, namely the status and organization of the subject, the position of minority teachers, and the position of

minority pupils in the school cultures. These themes were generated through theory and the participant observation study made in one comprehensive school context (Zilliacus & Holm 2013). In the interviews the concept of “inclusion” was used synonymously with “integration”, and was also explicated through the notions of “being an equal part” and “having equal status”. The thematic data analysis took the themes of the semi-structured interviews as a basis and searched inductively for patterns within the data (Hatch, 2002, p. 152–79). In the first stage the analysis searched for patterns that emerged within and across themes as well as new themes in the material. This analysis was supported by the use of Excel, and generated a large number of themes. In the second stage of data analysis the full data was re-analysed and re-structured into three main sections. The emerging themes were inductively grouped and then checked and further refined through repeated rereadings of the material.

Findings

The findings are presented in three sections. Firstly the informants’ views on the inclusion of minority RE as a school subject, secondly the inclusion of minority RE teachers and finally the inclusion of minority pupils in the school culture.

The Inclusion of Minority RE as School Subjects

The analysis showed first of all that RE and the minority classes appeared in the informants’ views as a gaining a stronger position and acceptance in the school culture. Secondly, minority RE still predominantly appeared in the informants’ views as a lower status subject in relation to majority Lutheran classes and other comprehensive school subjects. Thirdly, important issues of structural discrimination emerged as central to the subject position.

A subject gaining stronger acceptance

About half of the teachers responded positively, the other half more critically to the position of their subject in the schools. Among those who felt that their subject generally had a good status, several expressed this as created through the system of education, which recognizes religions and different worldviews in the curriculum and school culture. Teachers often expressed satisfaction about the current organization of RE as strengthening religious minorities. One teacher, for instance, held that “the municipality gives all religions equal status. [Education] is defined according to children’s belonging and what parents want, and then it is arranged. This is excellent.” (Teacher 7). Another teacher emphasized education as reflecting tolerance and multiculturalism in Finnish society. These teachers expressed satisfaction at the mere existence of minority RE. Teachers as well as coordinators saw a development towards a more equal status and acceptance of minority RE in schools and that the “the machinery is gradually starting to work” (Teacher 31). In teachers’ views principals and teachers had made an effort to put the subject on a level with other

school subjects. As one teacher stated: “I’m really pleased with how things are [in the schools]. Things are well organized and the principals ask how things are going, and also take care of it [minority RE] as well as clearly recognize it as a subject (Teacher 23)

The increasing number of pupils with immigrant background and the presence of religious cultures in the schools also seemed in teachers’ views to strengthen the position of the subject. Some principals and schools recognized minority RE as “giving a different perspective on families [with immigrant background] and a link for dialogue (...) as well as addressing important ethical issues and giving basic knowledge about other religions” (Coordinator 1). Several teachers and coordinators noted that a curricular project called the multicultural festive year, which involved minority RE in a limited number of schools, had in their views increased a sense of equality between religions and classes in these schools. According to teachers the project had also given minority pupils’ positive experiences about their own religion.

“Not discriminated, but of less value”

Despite the above voices of optimism and content there were also teachers who felt that minority RE was not being included in the school culture. Half of the teachers stated that their subject had a lower status than other subjects in schools, and that all minority religions were in this same position. In a few teachers’ views Catholic and Orthodox religion were in a more equal position to Lutheran instruction than other classes, whereas generally minority RE had an inferior status concerned as a whole. Teachers described their subject commonly as “not being discriminated against, but of less value” (Teacher 20). With regard to pupils’ attitudes a teacher complained that there was a need “to remind pupils that RE is part of the curriculum and that they should listen carefully and behave in the same way as in other classes” (Teacher 9).

Often teachers experienced inequality as to how the subject was taken into account in curricular planning and organization. As this coordinator expressed, there were principals who had strong critical attitudes towards minority religions and often RE in general:

We also have a strong minority of principals who would much rather see that we had a single common subject of religion in the school, if even that. And they feel that this current system is terribly burdensome and complicated, making for instance scheduling and classroom planning difficult. (Coordinator 2)

The majority of teachers did not consider that direct discrimination against their subject was common. However, three teachers had experienced overt discrimination in individual schools in relation to pupils’ choice of class. One teacher had “experienced that the negative attitudes of the class teacher may have had an effect on [pupils’ perceptions of classes] and in one school that the transfer of a pupil to secular ethics was influenced by the class teacher” (Teacher 31).

The presence of religions in the school culture was also at times subject to criticism and affected the position of RE classes. According to teachers and coordinators negative attitudes towards Islam classes and Muslim traditions did exist. In the view of a coordinator “newcomers, such as Islam awake many kinds of thoughts and probably fears when the [religion] is not known” (Coordinator 1). Several religion teachers felt that they kept a low profile about their subject in their schools and that the majority Lutheran RE had a dominant position in the school culture. Only in the few schools which had equal or close to equal numbers of Islam or Orthodox pupils, were these religions equally present in the school cultures.

Issues of structural discrimination

Structural issues came strongly to the fore in the informants’ views. They were regarded as an obstacle for inclusion as minority RE was not “in the same position [as other subjects] even from the start” (Teacher 20). According to one teacher the presence of structural inequalities affected the atmosphere in classes:

Regardless of the religion, all small [RE] classes have the same problem in that the atmosphere isn’t good, as for instance in some schools they have to be in small classrooms with no utilities. Also (...) problems may emerge because of the teachers, as not all teachers in these small groups are qualified. Another reason may be the instruction materials; they do not have books. (Teacher 30)

The issues which appeared to be central were the *lack of teacher competence, lack of textbooks, difficulties in scheduling and grouping*, as well as *inadequate classrooms*. In comparing minority religion instruction to Lutheran instruction, Lutheran instruction seemed to have a more dominant position in school, partly in relation to these issues.

Lack of competence had an important role as 50 % of the religion teachers participating in this study did not have full qualifications with a master’s degree in education. This put them in a lower position than qualified teachers in the schools. Organizing a teacher substitute was in many cases also a problem, as few teachers were available. As a consequence, minority religion classes were often not held if the teacher was absent. This unreliability was seen by several teachers to affect the position of the subject.

The lack of textbooks was a second fundamental concern among all teachers. Only pupils in Orthodox religion had complete textbooks for all grade levels, however even these teachers complained that they were not adjusted for age-integrated instruction. Minority RE clearly differed in this respect from majority Lutheran instruction, which offered complete text books. The teachers largely used the internet as a source, individually translated texts from English or other languages, and sometimes got support in making material from the coordinator. Instruction also often relied on religious scripts and textbooks not specifically written for children.

Scheduling and grouping pupils presented a third major challenge. Scheduling involved integrating pupils from all grade levels and in some schools also organizing transfers of pupils to another school. The increasing number of pupils particularly in Islam created a pressure to include new pupils each year. In some schools Islam classes had up to 30 pupils from different grade levels. The second curricular lesson, which only took place at two grade levels, was particularly difficult to fit in. Teachers sometimes only had 15 minutes to get to another school. One teacher commented: “If I leave a little before the end of class, I can make it” (Teacher 30). Sometimes pupils were late for classes as the schedules within or between the schools did not match. Coordinators also at times had difficulties in interpreting legislation on the pupil’s right to instruction in the ‘own’ religion. In the case of, for instance, Krishna education coordinators had difficulty in knowing which congregational belonging was required to take part in the class.

Inadequate classrooms represented a fourth issue. Teachers saw their classroom situation as improving each year, but there were still teachers who changed rooms each class, taught in a shared space with another instruction group, or alternatively in a crafts class, a library, a computer room, or even a teachers’ common room. Teachers complained that they did not have access to teaching equipment such as smart boards. Several teachers mentioned teaching in spaces in which there were constant interruptions from other pupils or teachers, creating tension among pupils and making pupils uneasy about expressing themselves in class.

The Inclusion of Minority RE Teachers in the School Culture

Three central themes emerged in teachers’ views of their position in the school culture. First of all, that the minority teachers’ position in the school cultures was generally seen as being distant and weak. Secondly, a lack of communication and dialogue stood out as an obstacle for further inclusion. Thirdly, experiences of exclusion through instances of teacher discrimination and conflicts in the school culture emerged.

Minority teachers as guests in the schools

Most minority RE teachers felt that they did not have a close connection to any of the school communities where they taught. One teacher reported that “due to our tight schedules we minority RE teachers feel isolated. We do pass by the teachers’ room, but only quickly to photocopy or print and then we’re off (Teacher 9). Teachers rotated between schools and had up to 17 different schools. Minority RE teachers were generally in a different position than other class teachers in the schools. Partly this depended on how the teacher supervisor roles were arranged. In one municipality the coordinator functioned as a teacher supervisor, in another it was the head of the educational department and in the third case a principal in one school who functioned as supervisor. In all cases the minority RE teachers was not required to participate in class teacher responsibilities, such as staff meetings, projects and supervisions. Only one teacher in Orthodox religion functioned as a class teacher and therefore had these

responsibilities. The different position of minority teachers to that of class teachers made some teachers “naturally feel that they are in an unequal position (...) as they don’t have their own school” (Coordinator 3).

For many of the teachers the other minority RE teachers within their municipality represented their closest colleagues. Teachers commonly experienced this community as gaining importance to them, partly through the municipal meetings taking place each or every second month. A yearly one-day education joint-organized by the three municipal coordinators also supported this community. In general the teachers expressed satisfaction about the support given on the municipal level, seeing it as representing “good background support” (Teacher 17) for their work. Many teachers also saw the bond with their congregation and in some cases the pupils’ families as important.

Among some teachers an urge to work independently emerged, without the need to be closely included in teacher communities. These teachers explicitly stated that they wanted to work independently, and did “not desire to bond with any one school” (Teacher 10). In several cases teachers experienced a sense of being “a welcomed guest” in the schools (Teacher 10). These teachers did not feel they suffered from being outsiders in schools.

However, the majority of teachers did express frustration about not being part of the teacher communities. One coordinator believed that “some of the teachers felt they were total outsiders, and probably there is a rather cold ride in some schools, where they may be completely invisible” (Coordinator 1). In one teacher’s view pupils “thought he was a substitute... an odd character who shows up at particular times” (Teacher 18). The teachers argued that there was great variation between schools regarding support from colleagues. In some schools teachers actively made contact, whereas support was completely lacking in others. As one teacher reported, there are schools where “no one cares and no one comes and tells us what we need to know” (Teacher 9).

The need for more communication and dialogue

Teachers commonly felt there was a lack of communication among both teachers and with parents. This created conflicts among the teaching staff and was evident when teachers complained of not knowing about changes in schedules or the school curriculum in general. These situations often reflected the fact that neither majority nor minority teachers actively engaged in dialogue. Often the teacher’s own lack of Finnish language skills made communicating more difficult. Also the parents’ lack of Finnish sometimes made the contact with pupils’ families challenging. Problematic situations occurred when teachers were not informed about their pupils being absent or new pupils beginning or switching to another class:

They [pupils] suddenly disappear from class. Oh! Someone may have changed to another [class], getting tired of transferring from a faraway [school], or possibly changing to secular ethics. But this is the kind of [information] I had to fish out for myself, (...) These [changes] I’m often not

*automatically informed about. It's bad, and creates an awful lot of problems.
(Teacher 18)*

Unlike the majority of teachers who experienced little dialogue in schools, four out of seven teachers in Islam reported a more active relation to principals and teaching staff as well as parents. The religious traditions and rituals such as, fasting, prayer, and the use of the veil frequently gave rise to discussion in the teachers' room, as well as with pupils and parents. These teachers clearly felt they acted as interpreters and advisors concerning Islamic religious traditions. One teacher often also acted in his free time as a consultant and language interpreter between the school and parents. Teachers recounted frequent requests from teaching staff to come and tell about Islam in the school community or at parental evenings: "The teachers have asked a lot [about Islam] (...). Each time I arrive, I need to answer a teacher's question about Islam" (Teacher 20). In these cases the teacher had a closer connection with the school communities, and was in the best cases seen as a resource:

There have been many discussions [among teaching staff] in the school how good it is that we also have this [minority RE] teacher with whom we can talk about a pupil matter which relates to a particular culture. In a way [these teachers] have been recognized as a resource. (Coordinator 1)

Instances of teacher discrimination and conflict

Teachers in general reported that there were only occasional instances of discrimination in the school culture, or within their classes (see also Zilliacus, forthcoming). Several teachers underlined that generally there was a tolerant attitude to different RE classes. One teacher, for instance, argued that "one principal in a school was prejudiced against Islam and minority religions, but no other teachers were" (Teacher 17). Similarly, another teacher noted that "there have been only a few small situations this year, (...) these are small incidents, and there is no need to talk about them" (Teacher 19). Teachers explicitly underlined that discrimination was a marginal problem and said they had not suffered from racist abuse.

However, coordinators did consider that teacher discrimination was a reoccurring problem, even though tolerance and acceptance was seen as the rule. In one case, a coordinator argued: "Pupils had a terribly contemptuous attitude towards the teacher, and the teacher did not want to teach in the school anymore" (Coordinator 1). In those schools where teachers did experience prejudice and discrimination this created severe discomfort and in several cases the teacher requested to stop teaching in the school in question. Teachers' own diverse cultural backgrounds and language difficulties could easily set them apart from the majority teachers in the school. One minority RE teacher with a Finnish ethnic background argued that "when you yourself have a Finnish background...the attitude changes completely... this [person] speaks Finnish!" (Teacher 20). In one coordinator's view the school culture in individual schools put minority RE teachers under great strain:

We also have schools in which it is quite tough for the teacher to go each week. [Schools] where the teacher has to defend his or her right to be there, and where it may easily happen that if a small matter occurs, then immediately a complaint is made [by other teaching personnel or the rector]. The complaint is made because the person involved is a RE teacher. (Coordinator 2)

Furthermore, often discussions and conflicts arose, which had to do with the presence of confessional elements in instruction (See also Zilliacus, forthcoming). Teachers had at times experienced pressure from parents either for or against confessionality in education. The issue of the teacher being religiously affiliated was important for both parents and religion teachers themselves, even if it was not required as a qualification. In one Islam class there had been criticism of a teacher being female, as well as in other classes of two teachers not being Muslim. In the cases of the non-Muslim teachers severe criticism had occurred and as a consequence many parents had taken their children out of the class and applied for home education in the subject.

Conflicts among teaching staff and parents also arose regarding religious traditions, mainly concerning Islam. Conflicting views emerged for instance with regard to pupils' diets and the wearing of the veil. In several cases the minority teacher reported not engaging in discussion with the class teacher in question: "I don't want to interfere with the teacher's business" (Teacher 8). When a teacher did confront a conflict it was primarily worked out together with the class teacher and principal. The coordinator participated to varying degrees, depending upon how the supervising role was defined.

The Inclusion of Minority Pupils in the School Culture

Central to the informants' views of the position of minority pupils, it emerged, firstly, that these pupils were not in general seen as being subject to exclusion. Secondly, concerning dialogue, only occasional dialogue was seen to take place between minority and majority RE pupils, and sometimes this was restricted by the focus only being on one's 'own' religion.

"Only individual students are isolated"

In teachers' views pupils experienced their minority identities in various ways, ranging from feelings of belonging to feelings of exclusion or indifference. Several teachers argued that pupils were simply aware of there being different instruction groups in the school, and that being in another group was not problematic or did not make a particular difference: "Pupils don't differ in going [to their own religion classes], they just go along with the others, nothing stranger than that" (Teacher 20). Sometimes this had to do with pupils not being familiar with the religion and "first and second graders not even knowing what religion they belong to when asked" (Teacher 12). In one teachers' view pupils just felt that they were just "in another class

room with peers, rather than it being a question of discrimination” (Teacher 10). Other teachers commonly reported that classes represented one out of many identities and group belongings in the school. Differences emerged as something “natural”, and religious belonging seldom divided pupils into groups. Only among Muslim groups did a few teachers see clear groupings of Sunni and Shia pupils, as well as groupings according to the mosque which the pupil attended.

In many teachers’ views pupils predominantly had a strong sense of belonging and were proud of being part of the minority group, and that pupils were open about this. Often teachers mentioned a spontaneous curiosity rather than suspicion among peers, as for instance in the case of one Lutheran pupil who wanted to participate in the class and “jokingly said that he is also Muslim and wants to come along” (Teacher 21).

However, across religions, teachers did recognize that individual pupils in their classes experienced otherness and discrimination. A few teachers also noted that their pupils would not necessarily come and talk to them if they felt discriminated against. Teachers noted that some pupils expressed fear or withdrawal when other pupils commented on their traditions: “Pupils do not want to be different from others, and are afraid that a peer comes up and asks things like ‘why do you eat with your right hand, or why don’t you eat pork’” (Teacher 8). Some pupils compare themselves to majority Lutheran pupils or the society at large, “feeling it as a burden to be different from others” (Teacher 22). Particularly pupils in small classes of only 1–5, had expressed feelings of isolation in relation to their peers. In a few cases the negative experience had been so strong that the pupil had switched classes. The importance of having peers in a class was emphasized and in many cases the lack of friends and peers in the group would be a reason for pupils to wish to change classes. According to teachers, pupils’ experiences of otherness were strongly related not only to religion, but to many cultural differences, including ethnicity, immigrant background and nationality both within minority RE classes and in relation to the majority pupils. Also in teachers’ views, structural issues, such as lack of classrooms, lack of textbooks and poor scheduling (see previous section), significantly affected pupils’ sense of difference in relation to majority pupils.

Even if teachers recognized the existence of feelings of exclusion they did not question the way classes were separated and the value of minority instruction. To a certain degree a sense of difference was assumed, which appeared in such comments as “pupils need to accept themselves, that they are different, look different, have different language, and have a different religion” (Teacher 9). Teachers’ views frequently reflected the view that pupils’ identities were predefined to a particular religion and not in a process of constant development. Pupils with plural and mixed identities were therefore not always taken into consideration (see also Zilliacus, forthcoming).

The majority of teachers expressed satisfaction regarding the way in which schools took pupils’ different religious traditions into consideration. In one teachers’ view, for instance, the question of different diets was handled in schools similarly to other considerations, such as vegetarianism or allergies, as ‘routine tasks’: “It is not really a big issue. In my opinion diets are taken well into consideration by the school”

(Teacher 19). However, in some teachers' views pupils' religious traditions, and predominantly Muslim pupils, were subject to instances of intolerance and lack of knowledge, both among pupils and with teachers. One teacher's pupils had said, that "they do not want to explain [their traditions], as they had explained, but had not been understood" (Teacher 8). Several teachers reported conflicts when a class teacher had forced Muslim pupils to eat during Ramadan, or advised them to eat with both the right and the left hand. Even if these instances were not the norm, they reflected recurring problems and conflicts that needed to be discussed and sorted out. A few teachers said they had engaged in dialogue both within the school and with parents. However, minority RE teachers frequently reported that their work schedules as rotating teachers prevented them from getting engaged with pupils' problems in the school culture.

Dialogue between classes as second priority

Among the curricular goals the goal to strengthen one's 'own' religious identity often seemed to have priority over the goal to strengthen dialogue in the school and among peers. One coordinator argued that dialogue could well take place outside the classes at other times with the whole school community. However, teachers often could not find the time or the energy to engage in dialogue with majority pupils in the school or get involved in what happened outside their classes. Discussions about tolerance were therefore held largely within the classes. Even if dialogue between classes appeared to be a positive aim it seemed to many teachers an extracurricular matter.

According to a few teachers, intolerance within the school culture sometimes restrained pupils from engaging in dialogue at school. Also, several teachers of Islam mentioned that in some classes dialogue between different RE classes had been a contested issue and had created tension. One teacher stated that in class he had needed to make a clear distinction between familiarizing pupils with another religion and conversion. Pupils "had [at first] not wanted to hear about other religions, but then thought about it positively after we had discussed the matter in class; that it is about familiarizing oneself, not about converting to another religion" (Teacher 9). In a similar vein there were tensions about being exposed to other religions within the school. According to several teachers, Lutheran traditions dominated the school culture, and that other religions were not equally present. In a few teachers' views the celebration of Christmas was seen as troublesome. A Judaism teacher stated that "it is very hard for pupils to avoid Christmas when you are in a Christian school" (Teacher 3). In these cases dialogue appeared to be restricted by an urge to protect one's own religion.

Teachers generally argued that dialogue only occurred occasionally between RE classes. Now and then minority RE teachers acted as a substitute in another RE class. Also, some pupils had presented their religion in another class or in the auditorium, or put up posters about their subject on the walls in the school. In a few schools RE teachers had organized joint classes in which each teacher had presented their

education. Also, a few schools had participated in a multicultural festive year project, mentioned previously. When dialogue took place in schools and among pupils teachers described this in very positive tones. It was regarded as beneficial for pupils, for instance when “pupils visited other RE classes, and saw and asked questions about [each other] and wrote essays on this (...) This was interesting, the class went quickly, and pupils were content” (Teacher 21).

Conclusions

From the analysis we can conclude that teacher and coordinator views on the position of minority RE in the school culture frequently emphasized how the subject, its teachers, and its pupils, were becoming more accepted and integrated into the school culture. Teachers expressed satisfaction both about the legislative rights of this education as well as the support given by coordinators, principals, and the community of minority RE teachers. These were seen as important strengths in the current system.

However, despite the fact that many teachers felt that minority RE was gaining a stronger and more equal position, aspects of exclusion were clearly present. In line with previous research (cf Sakaranaho & Salmenkivi, 2009) the analysis shows how the presence of important structural issues can hinder inclusion, i.e. the lack of teacher competence, textbooks, difficulties in scheduling and grouping pupils, and inadequate classrooms. The lack of teacher qualifications and textbooks is a serious concern in respect to the current system of RE bearing in mind that the current curricula date from 2006. This structural discrimination raises the question whether minority RE has the resources to meet its curricular goals and reach the same level as the majority Luther instruction and other comprehensive school subjects. As the number of pupils from different denominational backgrounds will continue to increase, the viability of the current system can be questioned (see also Kallioniemi, 2013). To ensure the quality of minority RE education, substantial efforts and resources are currently needed both within teacher education and the organization of education.

We can also conclude that minority teachers often felt they were not being included in the school cultures. Minority RE teachers’ sense of being merely guests in schools and not being a true part of the school culture, made many of them feel excluded. Overall, teachers engaged relatively little in dialogue in the school, even if the need for dialogue and communication among both teachers and pupils was pronounced. In contrast to most teachers, as Rissanen (2012) also argues, some Islam teachers engaged in active dialogue with schools and parents, and functioned as interpreters of their religion and culture. However, the overall lack of communication among teaching staff shows a need to increase dialogue within the school cultures and make minority teachers more closely connected to schools.

We can furthermore conclude that many teachers and coordinators emphasized that positive attitudes towards minority pupils and teachers did exist in schools, and that discrimination was not a common occurrence. Pupils’ religious belonging and traditions were generally felt to be taken into consideration in schools, though there

was a certain degree of intolerance about Islam. This contrasts with previous studies on Finnish school culture, which show discrimination and racism as common occurrences. However, as Souto (2010) argues, teachers may not be aware of the discrimination that is taking place in the school culture (see also Zilliacus, forthcoming). Although teachers commonly reported that individual discrimination was rare, discrimination and prejudice was perceived as a severe problem in individual schools. In several cases the confessional affiliation of the teacher emerged as a source of discrimination and conflict. Furthermore, a number of teachers felt that some pupils experienced discrimination and isolation as members of minority RE classes. This finding is in line with a previous study on pupil perspective, which showed feelings of otherness and isolation despite pupils generally being content about having their own RE class (Zilliacus & Holm, 2013). The presence of experiences of discrimination within the current system of RE needs to be taken seriously and addressed within education and in school cultures at large.

In some teachers' views a preference for separation and an urge to protect the "own" religion was seen. Minority RE classes were not seen as excluding or segregating, but rather as simply separating to ensure a focus on the specific religious tradition. At times minority RE teachers appeared to take pupils' identification with their "own" religion for granted and to assume a sense of difference and otherness in the school culture (see also Zilliacus, forthcoming). This may not be beneficial for the pupils' sense of belonging in the school culture. To illuminate pupils' experiences of separation it would be valuable in future research to further investigate pupils' as well as parents' views on separate RE classes.

From a multicultural point of view it appears critical that the opportunities for dialogue between RE classes emerged as only occasional. The need for dialogue within RE is internationally perceived as a central aim of education (Jackson, 2004). Dialogue has often been argued to be supported by having RE as a single subject such as in the other Nordic countries. To strengthen dialogue within the current system there seems to be a need to articulate the aims of a dialogue between classes and religions in schools at the curricular level. Alternative joint classes within the realm of the current system are currently being developed in certain schools (Sarlin, 2013). The presence of conflicts and discrimination in the schools calls for initiatives which open up the classroom and create dialogue. Teachers in this study did not always have the capacity to sort out problems in the school when an instance of discrimination or conflict took place in the class or school. It would be essential that teachers should have more competence and support to confront conflicts and not let situations involving discrimination go by.

In closing, many teachers and coordinators within this study expressed satisfaction with the current system of RE and the position of minority RE. However, teachers also pointed to serious issues of structural and individual discrimination within the school culture and a lack of dialogue. An increasingly plural school and society has put growing pressure on the Finnish system of RE. There are great challenges to be met with regard to both the organization of education and teacher education. This creates a serious concern for the inclusion of minority RE in the comprehensive school and may

determine whether the current system of separate classes has a future. For the future of minority RE as an integral part of the comprehensive school substantial resources and efforts will be required.

References

- Alitolppa-Niitamo, A. (2002). The generation in-between: Somali youth and schooling in metropolitan Helsinki. *Intercultural Education*, 13(3), pp. 275–90.
- Arnesen, A.-L., Mietola, R. & Lahelma E. (2007). Language of inclusion and diversity: Policy discourses and social practices in Finnish and Norwegian Schools. *International Journal of Inclusive Schools*, 11(1), pp. 97–110.
- Arnesen, A.-L. & Lundahl, L. (2006). Still social and democratic? Inclusive education policies in the Nordic welfare states. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 50(3), pp. 285–300.
- Banks, J. A. (2006). *Cultural diversity and education: Foundations, curriculum and teaching*. 5th ed. Boston: Pearson.
- Biseth, H. (2009). Democracy and education in a multicultural Scandinavia: What mandate is designated to educators? *Intercultural Education*, 20(3), pp. 243–254.
- Byrne, C. (2012). ‘Jeesis is alive! He is the King of Australia’: Segregated religious instruction, child identity and exclusion. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 34(3), pp. 317–333.
- Brömssen, K. & Olgac, C. (2010). Intercultural education in Sweden through the lenses of the national minorities and of religious education. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 21(2), pp. 121–135.
- Cush, D. (2011). Without fear of favor: Forty years of non-confessional and multi-faith education in Scandinavia and the UK. In Franken, L. & Loobuyck, P. (eds.), *Religious Education in a Plural, Secularised Society: a Paradigm Shift*, pp. 69–84. Münster: Waxmann Verlag.
- Freedom of Religion Act 453/2003. Finnish Parliament.
- Halonen, M. (2009). Islam alakoulussa: Koulu kaksisuuntaisen sopeutumisen kenttänä. *Finnish Journal of Youth Research*, 27, pp. 33–46.
- Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in educational settings*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Holm, G. & Londen, M. (2010). The discourse on multicultural education in Finland: Education for whom? *Intercultural Education*, 21(2), pp. 107–120.

Iivonen P. (2010). Uskonnonopetuksen tulevaisuus. Available at: http://www.ekumenia.fi/sen_toimii/kasvatus_ja_ekumenia/arvot_mekin_ansaitsemme_5-632010/

[Accessed 24 October 2012].

Jackson, R. (2004). *Rethinking religious education and plurality: Issues in diversity and pedagogy*. London: Routledge Falmer.

Jensen, T. (2007). Religious pluralism in Denmark. *Res Cogitans*, 4(2), 1–26.

Kallioniemi, A. (2013). Uskonto- ja katsomustieto kehittävä uudeksi oppiaineeksi. *Niin ja Näin*, 1, pp. 73–75.

Kallioniemi, A. & Matilainen, M. (2011). Headmasters' conceptions of the Finnish religious education: Solution from the perspective of human rights. *Nordidactica – Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education*, 2011:2, pp. 1–14.

Kallioniemi, A. & Ubani, M. (2012). Religious education in the Finnish school system. In Niemi, H. & Toom, A. & Kallioniemi A. (eds.), *The Miracle of Education: The Principles and Practice of Teaching and Learning in Finnish Schools*, pp. 177–87. Rotterdam: Sense.

Knauth & Körs, (2008). European comparison: Religion in schools. In Knauth, T. Jozca D.P., Bertram-Troost G. & Ipgrave, J (eds.), *Encountering Religious Plurality in School and Society: A qualitative study of teenage perspectives in Europe*, pp. 397–404. Münster: Waxmann.

Koikkalainen, A. (2010). *Uskonnonopetus ja ihmisoikeudet*. Ihmisoikeusliitto: Helsinki.

Kuukka, I. (2010). Opetuksen eriyttäminen uskonnollisista syistä. In Immonen-Oikkonen, P. & Leino A. (eds.) *Monikulttuurinen kouluyhteisö*. Helsinki: Opetushallitus, pp. 75–87

Leganger-Krogstad, H. (2011). *The religious dimension of intercultural education: Contributions to a contextual understanding*. International practical theology, Vol. 14. Münster: Lit.

Lied, S. (2009). The Norwegian Christianity, religion and philosophy subject *KRL* in Strasbourg. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 31(3), pp. 263–275.

Loobuyck, P. and Franken, L. (2011). Towards integrative religious education in Belgium and Flanders: Challenges and opportunities. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 33(1), pp. 17–30.

Lyhykäinen, K. (2009). The aims of Orthodox religion teachers. In G. Skeie (Ed.), *Religious diversity and education*, pp. 197–207. Münster: Comenius Institute.

Modood, T. (2009). Muslims, religious equality and secularism. In Modood T. & Levey, G. B. (Eds.), *Secularism, religion and multicultural citizenship*, pp. 164–85. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

National Board of Education (2004). *National core curriculum for basic education*. Helsinki: Board of Education.

National Board of Education. (2006). *National core curriculum for other religions within basic education*. Helsinki: Board of Education.

Pincus, F. (2006). *Understanding diversity: An introduction to class, race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Rastas A. (2007). *Rasismi lasten ja nuorten arjessa: Transnationaalit juuret ja monikulttuuristuva Suomi*. Thesis (Ph.D.). Tampere: Tampere University Press & Nuoristotutkimusseura.

Rautio P. (2012). Keskustelua uskonnonopetuksesta: Haastateltavana Arto Kallioniemi. *Teologia.fi*. Available at: <http://www.teologia.fi/artikkelit/uskonto-ilmiona/768-keskustelua-uskonnonopetuksesta-haastateltavana-arto-kallioniemi> . [Accessed 2 January, 2013]

Reay, D. (2012). What would a socially just education system look like?: Saving the minnows from the pike. *Journal of Education Policy*, 27(5), 1, pp. 587–99.

Rissanen, I., (2012). Islamic education teachers as negotiators. Paper presented at the Finnish Educational Research Association, 22 November 2012 in Helsinki, Finland.

Sakaranaho, T. (2006). *Religious freedom, multiculturalism, Islam: Cross-reading Finland and Ireland*. Leiden: Brill.

Sakaranaho, T, and Salmenkivi, E. (2009). Tasavertaisen katsomusopetuksen haasteet: Pienryhmäisten uskontojen ja elämänkatsomustiedon opetus Suomessa. *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 5, pp. 450–70.

Sarlin, T. (2013). Kulosaarella kehitetään uskonnonopetusta. *Kirkko ja kaupunki*, 2 May 2013.

Selander, S.-Å. (1993) *Undervisa i religionskunskap*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Schelander, R. (2009). Austria: Facing plurality. In Ziebertz, H.-G. and Riegel, U. (eds), *How teachers in Europe teach religion. An empirical study in 16 countries*, pp. 21–30. International practical theology, Vol. 12. Berlin: Lit.

Souto, A.-M. (2011). *Arkipäivän rasismi koulussa: Etnografinen tutkimus suomalais-ja maahanmuuttajanuorten ryhmäsuhteista*. Thesis (Ph.D.). Helsinki: Nuorisotutkimusseura.

Statistics Finland. (2011). *Education: Subject choices of pupils 2010*. Helsinki: Statistics Finland.

Statistics Finland. (2012). *Religious affiliation of the population 2003–2011*. Helsinki: Statistics Finland).

Ubani, M. (2013). Threats and solutions: Multiculturalism, religion and educational policy in Finland. *Intercultural Education*, 24 (3), pp. 195-210.

THE INCLUSION OF MINORITY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE FINNISH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL: A TEACHER AND TEACHER COORDINATOR PERSPECTIVE

Harriet Zilliacus

UNESCO. (2009). Policy guidelines on inclusion in education. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf> [Accessed 15 August 2012]

Vaara, M. (2013) Jakomäessä opiskellaan viittä uskontoa: Pienten uskontojen oppilasmäärät kasvavat pääkaupunkiseudulla jatkuvasti. *Helsingin Sanomat*, March, 29.

Zilliacus, H., and Holm, G. (2013). 'We have our own religion': A pupil perspective on minority religion and ethics instruction in Finland. *British Journal of Religious Education*. doi:10.1080/01416200.2012.750707

Zilliacus, H. (forthcoming). Addressing religious plurality – A Teacher Perspective on Minority Religion and Secular Ethics Education. *Intercultural Education* 24(6).