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Is There a Potential for Norway to Learn from the Ethics Education in the Educational System of India?

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Abstract: The aim of this article is to contribute to the on-going debate about how the Norwegian educational system can meet increasing diversity in schools. The focus here is to investigate ethics education in the Indian educational system and thereafter discuss to what extent Norway can learn from India. The background study in India was carried out to clarify the justification for, content of and pedagogy for ethics education and draws attention to the intended as well as the implemented sector of education. The following discussion highlights the main findings from the background study and relates these findings both to the current discussion in Norway and to international research in the field. The article concludes that Norway would do well to consider what can be learned from the Indian approach to ethics education in order to meet the challenges of the increasing diversity in the Norwegian schools.

KEYWORDS: ETHICS EDUCATION; INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION; MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION; COMPARATIVE RESEARCH IN EDUCATION; NATIONAL INTEGRITY, RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE; CURRICULUM INQUIRY; EDUCATION FOR PEACE

About the author: Knut Duesund er førstelektor i RLE (associate professor) ved Høgskolen i Telemark. Han har tidligere vært dekan for lærerutdanningene og prorektor for Høgskolen i Telemark. Når det gjelder faglig arbeid, har Duesund skrevet noen lærebøker om filosofi, livssyn og etikk for lærerutdanningene. Hans forskningsinteresse er nå særlig knyttet til flerkulturell utdanning, særlig flerkulturell kompetanse hos lærere. For tiden arbeider han med en undersøkelse der han spør i hvilken grad lærerutdanningene gir tilfredsstillende flerkulturell kompetanse.

Introduction

James Banks points out that "In nation-states around the world there is increasing diversity as well as increasing recognition of diversity". Further, he emphasises that this situation has contributed to the emergence and development of what is known as multicultural education. Banks describes multicultural education as a concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. According to Banks the central idea of multicultural education is to give all students an equal right to learn regardless of their background (Banks, 2009:9 and 1).

Norway has as many other countries been experiencing this increasing diversity, especially during the last 40 years. Consequently, there is a need in education to respond to the new situation and develop education in a multicultural environment. The Norwegian educational reform introduced in 1997, entitled "Reform -97", intended to meet the above-mentioned challenges. One action to resolve these challenges was the inclusion of the subject "Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education" (KRL). The subject aimed to integrate pupils with different cultural and religious background. To fulfil this idea the lawmakers claimed that it would be necessary for the subject to include all students and must therefore be compulsory, (The Royal Ministry of Education, 1999:97 - 98).

The introduction of the new subject resulted in a heated debate because it was made mandatory even though partial exemption was offered if the teaching was clearly perceived as practising another religion than one's own. Several minority groups asserted that the subject was based primarily on Christianity and could not legally be made compulsory and therefore should be subject to a general exemption for minority students. The disputes lead to legal proceedings both in Norway and in the international judicial system. The verdict in the UN Human Rights Committee in 2004 and in The European Court of Human Rights in 2007 concluded that the subject violated the premises of human rights. This led to several amendments of the curriculum. The education law and the national curriculum framework were modified in 2005 and again in 2008. Even the name of the subject had to be changed in order to signal neutrality. The name was first altered to "Christianity, Religion and Ethics Education" and is from 2008 called "Religion, View of Life and Ethics" (RLE). Another consequence of international ruling was an altering of objectives of the Norwegian school system (see Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2011a:1 - 12). The point was to provide unbiased education that respected every religious group and to avoid religious instruction (see more in Lied, 2009:263 - 276).

When the KRL-subject-debate started in the 1990's I began searching for educational systems around the world which Norway could learn from. My choice was to look to India; the reason for that decision will be given in the next chapter. The research question of this article is: Is there a potential for Norway to learn from the ethics education in India?

The choice of India as point of comparison

An immediate question is, of course, why India was chosen as point of comparison? One reason was the fact that India has for centuries been a pluralistic country. For example, India has a population of approximately 1.2 billion inhabitants consisting of three main ethnic groups; Indo-Aryan 72%, Dravidian 25%, Mongoloid and other 3%, and a great number of different languages. Regarding religions and worldviews the country has approximately 80.5% Hindus, 13.4% Muslims, 2.3% Christians, 1.9% Sikhs and others 1.9%. In other words, the country has a Muslim population of approximately 165 million, approximately 28 million Christians and a Sikh population of approximately 24 million (see Central Inteligence Agency, 2013).

On basis of these facts I concluded that the culturally diverse India, with a long tradition of dealing with the cultural pluralism inherent in Indian society, would be a relevant choice for a defined research. I purposely avoided selecting European countries because I expected I would find many similarities to the Norwegian educational system due to close historical connections, the common western cultural heritage, and continuous cultural exchange. In addition Europe has likely had less experience with diversity than India. This was a vital argument for exploring India for unique insights into educational possibilities. In India I expected to experience an educational system that maintained its own Indian traditions in addition to the British influence as its basis. I therefore assumed that the potential of learning from India was significantly different and more varied than from our "neighbours" in Europe.

Furthermore, I had learned that the school curriculum in India was based on the premise that the society is multicultural and is based on the idea "that the educational system needs to respond to the cultural pluralism inherent in our society." (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005;1.4:7). On basis of the arguments listed above my conclusion is that the choice of India as sound and reasonable is justifiable, especially for a limited research.

Next, the second reason for choosing India was unplanned but spontaneous when it became clear that my contacts in India could offer me access to schools and research environment, invaluable assistance for success in international studies.

The educational system in India

The following brief sketch of the educational system in India provides relevant historical background for my study. After independence was gained in 1947, and until 1976, the responsibility of education was given to the regional states. In 1976 the Constitution was amended and education became a matter of the central state. However, a common policy on education was not implemented before 1986, when India formulated *"The National Policy on Education"* (NPE). It provided the foundation for the development of a common national curriculum, called the *"National Curriculum Framework"* which is meant to be a management tool giving direction to and safeguarding a common core of all education in the country.

Today the central government and the Ministry of Education in Delhi are responsible for carrying out the national policy on education. In addition, an

autonomous organisation called "The National Council of Educational Research & Training" (NCERT) has been appointed with the special role of fulfilling this implementation (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005:1.3:5). The regional state governments play a major role in the development of the primary and secondary education sectors (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005, National Curriculum Framework, 1.3:5). The regional states are required to base their educational systems and their curricula on the national curriculum. However, they may include regional or situation-based themes within their regional curriculum making up approximately one third of its overall content, (Maharashtra State Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education, 2005:1 – 3 and 6).

The regional states are responsible for establishing an organisation that is licensed to develop and publish textbooks for the regional state. An important objective is to make textbooks available at a reasonable prices (Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production & Curriculum Research, 2011). There are private publishers as well, and their textbooks are also based upon the official curricula. Furthermore, a regional government organisation is responsible for arranging public examinations (Maharashtra State Council of Examinations, 2011).

As ethics education is the theme of this article it is vital to notice that the authorities in India have made this theme a compulsory part of education. "The National Policy on Education", which is the basic document governing Indian Education, requires that Education shall be based on a common core which also contains a common core of values. Central values mentioned are; India's common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of sexes, protection of the environment and removal of social barriers (Government of India, 1998, NPE 3.4:5) The National Curriculum which implements the National Policy on Education, introduces these values early in the introductory sub-chapter 1.3 and describes details in the following sub-chapter 1.4 on the guiding principle which includes explanations of the central moral values (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005:4-7). Furthermore, ethics education is ensured as a common core element in Indian education through its specific curricular area, in chapter 3.8 entitled "Education for Peace". This curricular area has replaced the precursors entitled value education and before that moral instruction. These two names are still being used in many schools instead of the correct new name. Instituting the concept "Education for Peace" clearly intends to build a culture of peace, which is, according to the introductory chapter, a central goal of education in India. This idea is explained thoroughly in a position paper which points to the fact that the curricular area distinguishes peace education and is a vision as well as an education for life. The relationship between value education and Education for Peace is explained in the following manner:

> *Value education is subsumed in education for peace, but is not identical with it. Peace is a contextually appropriate and pedagogically gainful point of coherence for values. Peace concretises the purpose of values and motivates their internalisation. Without such a framework, the integration of values*

> *into the learning process remains a non-starter. Educating for peace is, thus, the ideal strategy for contextualising and making operative value education. Values are internalised through experience, which is woefully lacking in the classroom-centred and exclusively cognitive approach to teaching. Education for peace calls for a liberation of learning from the confines of the classroom and its transformation into a celebration of awareness enlivened with the delight of discovery.*
>
> *(National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006:1)*

The tradition of a morning assembly has held a central place in Indian school tradition and appears to be quite central in the approach to ethics education. The morning assembly tradition is described in the National Curriculum Framework and is meant to be a part of the school and classroom environment (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005:4.7:92). The content may vary but most often the following elements are included; news and information, singing of the national anthem, moral stories and prayer, often in different languages and representing different religions. An important part is a solemn reciting of the Pledge which normally comes as the concluding point of the assembly. The pupils all rise together lifting their right hands solemnly reciting the "Pledge" in unison:

> *India is my country. All Indians are my brothers and sisters.*
>
> *I love my country, and I am proud of its rich and varied heritage. I shall always strive to be worthy of it.*
>
> *I shall give my parents, teachers and all elders respect, and treat everyone with courtesy.*
>
> *To my country and my people, I pledge my devotion. In their well-being and prosperity alone lies my happiness.*
>
> *(Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production & Curriculum Research, 2011)*

The research approach in the background study in India

The findings of my research in India provides the background for the discussion of what Norway can learn from India; integral also is the research approach as well as the results of my research. Starting with the approach, my research questions in India were these three:

1. How is ethics education justified in the intended sector as well as in the implemented sector of education?
2. What is the content of ethics education according to the intended sector as well as in the implemented sector of education?
3. Which pedagogical approaches are emphasised in the intended sector as well as in the implemented sector of education.

Theoretical and methodological approach

The data gathered to answer the research questions has been collected through two research projects carried out in the regional state of Maharashtra in India in 2005 and 2006. The overall aim of these projects was to explore ethics education as well as to study the context of ethics education. My knowledge of Indian schooling has, moreover, been supplemented by yearly visits to Indian schools since 2006.

In principle, my research projects in India were international studies in education. However, it is difficult to separate international research from comparative research in education. The reason is that as a foreign scholar, one will inescapably implement a comparative perspective when working with a foreign culture. Crossley and Watson describe this development and demonstrate how similar scientific methods will be equivalent whether comparing two or more educational systems or researching one foreign educational system as I did. In both cases a multidisciplinary research approach must be applied which embraces both the cultural context as well as the education itself (Crossley & Watson, 2003:12 - 31). Consequently, I combined an **educational approach** and an **anthological approach.** The first approach investigates the intentions given in curricula; the second documents the governing of the educational system as well as the working processes in schools. The latter deals with the social, religious and political frames of education.

The main theoretical tool of the educational approach focuses on the curriculum theory of John I. Goodlad and his descriptions of the substantive domains of curricula inquiry. He has conceptualised these as different types of domains; ideal, formal, perceived, operational, and experienced (Goodlad, 1979:58 - 75). The analysis of the collected data is based on this idea. The ideal and formal domains in my presentation are combined and referred to as the *intended sector of education*, while the perceived and operational domains are combined and referred to *as the implemented sector of education.* The domain Goodlad has termed the experienced domain was excluded. Goodlad has rightly underlined that this is the most difficult domain to pinpoint as it is necessary to analyze what the students receive, their impressions, learning, and so on (Goodlad, 1979:63 - 64).

The anthropological approach I have developed has drawn insights primarily from the cultural theories of Clifford Geertz who claims that there are no known autonomous value systems. Further, he states that a religion in general gives power or "the ought" to values and the conduct of an individual. The values manifested in a specific curricula, according to Geertz' theory, are seemingly an element of the national ethos. The values depicting the national ethos are likely to be connected to the religion or religions dominating the culture. This means that in countries like India and Norway you may expect to find the roots of the curricular values in the dominant religion or religions (Geertz, 2000:126 - 127).

The intended sector of education was explored by analysing the steering document of education; national regulations and curricula. Further, I examined in which ways the intentions of education were transmitted via textbooks and teacher practices. A survey, group interviews, and observations in school environments provided the data

with regard to teacher practises in schools. The sample for the survey consisted of **82 teacher respondents** (*N*) from ten schools. Four schools were private; these employed English as a medium of instruction; six were public schools. At one of the public schools English was the medium of instruction, while the remaining five used the regional language Marati. The questionnaire was offered in English as well as in Marati. One group of teachers who had already answered the survey was selected at each school to participate in the group interviews. When interviewing at Marati language schools, an interpreter was present.

In addition to the survey and interviews, observations of classroom teaching and morning assembly performances were carried out. As I learned that "Education for Peace" was implemented especially through the morning assemblies it became important to observe these assemblies carefully. I understood that classroom teaching on this area was supplementary to the morning assembly. However, many schools had workshops or occasional project work related to "Education for Peace". These kinds of activities are in accordance with the curriculum that states that "Peace education must be a concern that permeates the whole school life" (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005:58).

With regard to methodological *weaknesses and strengths,* all elements of the selection process represented challenges. However, a potential bias was to a certain extent diminished due to the fact that the majority of the schools incorporated in the sample were selected on the basis of information from local people not involved in educational work. This method of selection limited the risk of sampling schools that are in some sense considered special. Another source of bias may be elicited from the selections which teachers were asked to suggest in completing the questionnaire and also who should be among the interviewees. In both cases the headmasters or their assistants selected respondents; we could not control who they chose, whether objectively or, for example, out of loyalty to the leader. However, my general impression was that the selection was random. Teachers that had some spare time and happened to be available at the time of our visits seemed to be picked out (confer Duesund, 2007).

After this brief review of the theoretical and methodological background I will now turn to the findings related to each research question referred to above.

The findings in India

The justification for ethics education

The first research question was designed to consider how the ethics education subject is justified. When ethics education is a compulsory element of a school curriculum it is insightful to analyse the justification for its inclusion and its purpose. The reason for this is that ethics education is not a neutral subject just meant to give knowledge but clearly a tool to impact the pupils' individual behaviour and to influence attitudes and moral standards of the society as a whole. In this context the

organisation of the educational system is significant due to the extent that ethics education can impact a society. Whether the system is a centralised, governmental educational system or a decentralised, locally dominated one will make a substantial difference.

As stated above, India has a centralised, governmental educational system which implies that the central government has overall control of the content and goals of education including ethics education (Archer, 1979:54). To reveal how this has developed, an analysis of the central educational documents in India as well as the implementation of these intentions in textbooks and the teacher practises is needed.

To begin with, the *intended sector* described in the "National Policy of Education" requires the educational system to institute central values as a part of the common core of education. The foremost justification for ethics education is, however, given in the "National Curriculum Framework" referred to above. Through the inclusion of "Education for Peace" the authorities have determined that specific values and attitudes be an integral part of the national curriculum framework in India. The frequently occuring conflicts in the world is given as a special reason for including this curricular area. The necessity of transmitting values is described as being compellingly clear "in the light of the escalating trends of, and taste for, violence globally, nationally, and locally" (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005in National Curriculum Framework 3.8:57).

Turning to the *implemented sector* of education, the textbooks and the teacher practises are the tools per se where the intentions may or may not be visible. The introductions or prefaces in textbooks have normally included several remarks concerning the argument for teaching values. The "Gift of Life" series from the "Sheth Publishing House" argued that the home is the "first nursery where values are inculcated and parents serve as role models for their children." The role of the schools is therefore to supplement and complement the home. The goal of education is directed towards "imparting and inculcating the prescribed values" (Pereira, S.A.:2). The publisher of the "Treasures of Life" series argued for the inculcation of ethics education into the curriculum supporting the decision to make teaching of values compulsory for standards 1 – 10. The argument was that "several time-tested values are now being questioned." Furthermore, negative influence from media and lack of role models seem to increase the necessity for ethics education in schools, he writes. The publisher emphasised that by learning to recognise values "our children will be empowered with the skills of knowing how to choose what they choose and why they choose to "own certain values" (see Paul, 2006:1 - 3). The series "Foundation for Peace" refers to the Constitution of India as the fundament for the inculcation of values in education. The Constitution emphasises important core values that are particularly vital for building the national character, and next for securing the internalising a core of morality by the individuals of the nation (see Rost, 2007, foreword).

Proceeding to the *teacher practises*, almost 90 % of the teacher respondents answering the survey stated that ethics education, most often called value education in their vocabulary, held a central role at their schools and in their own teaching. The

observations of the morning assemblies indicated that the teachers recognized the importance of educating for peace and understanding, and particularly for religious understanding and tolerance. In all the sample schools the morning assemblies seemed to be observed seriously by the teachers responsible for the performance. Transmission of values and attitudes were without exception the predominant part of the assembly program.

The content of ethics education

The second research question referred to the content of ethics education. As regards the *intended sector*, the introduction to the "National Curriculum Framework" links specific human rights to citizenship and implies that the educational system presents and implements these ideas to the pupils. Among these central ideas or rights are equality, justice, liberty of thought, respect for all faiths, and democracy. These rights or ideas are to be considered guiding principles for all education (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005, 1.4:5 - 7).

The curricular area "Education for Peace" specifies the content of ethics education. It should inculcate norms and values in general to contribute to personal development that supports the building of a culture of peace in the country. The importance of transmitting these values is made visible through a prescribed statement in the curriculum: "it is a concern cutting across the curriculum and the concern of all teachers" (National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005, National Curriculum Framework, 3.8:57 - 58). An unexpected part of the content is the weight put upon national values. "The National Policy" document, which is often referred to in the National Curriculum Framework, mentions national values in addition to the core moral universal values. Though it could be questioned, at least for a foreign researcher, the "National Policy on Education" document does not seem to recognise the contradiction between the general values and the national values. The reasoning indicates possibly that teaching national values will contribute to respect for the numerous cultural and religious groups, which again will be a prerequisite for practicing general moral values (see National Policy on Education in National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005:4).

Continuing to the *implemented sector* the textbooks on ethics education mentioned ten main values. The series "Treasures of Life" refer to these ten values; (1) Sensitivity (2) Punctuality (3) Neatness (orderliness) (4) Gender equality (5) Dignity of labour (6) Scientific attitude (7) Patriotism (8) National unity (9) Courtesy (politeness) and (10) Discipline. The textbook-series classifies the ten values into three sub-categories; personal values, social values, and national values, thus bringing the total to 23 values. (For the division see Shetty, S.A., preface of textbook).The first two categories will clearly be recognised as general values, probably found almost worldwide. The third category, however, will likely be rejected as a general global category of values. These national values that were mentioned related to the intended sector of education, might be perceived as values aimed at rendering one's own country special even exclusive, and they might also be viewed as being contradictory

to the values in the two first categories. Looking at some of the lessons presented in the textbooks, however, we find a more nuanced explanation of these values.

A lesson on *patriotism* refers to the Independence Day and the Republic Day and emphasises the importance of freedom and independence for human beings. In order to demonstrate patriotism for the students, a story is related about a hero sacrificed who his life for his people. Assessed from this lesson, the value of patriotism will in principle be similar to attitudes and teaching practices in other countries. However, in comparison to other countries, the difference might be located in the inclusion of this value in the ethics education program.

A lesson on *national integration* refers to the period of independence for India to explain national integration. According to the lesson every Indian at that time took "a vow to treat every person as an Indian and not as a Hindu or Muslim." Furthermore, the lesson states "Our country was declared secular which meant that it respected and encouraged the existence of different religions." (see for the examples Shetty, S.A.:29 - 38).

The textbooks-series "Vikas Value Education", similarly, the "Treasures of life"-series presents ten main values. Again, the most striking observation for a non-national, is the emphasis given to the national values. The lessons on these themes have the following titles: *"*Are all people of our nation one?" and "Do you love your country?" The first lesson compares India to America stating that these two countries are both made up of people from different religious backgrounds. The lesson explains national integration as the feeling of being one nation despite all the differences. The lesson about love for your country starts with reminding the students that to love your country is to be kind to all people and living creatures and especially to treat everyone equally. Included among the suggestions for the steps a pupil can take to learn to understand what it means to love your country are: learning about the national leaders, the freedom fighters, and people who are a source of pride for India. It seems clear that the pupils are encouraged to represent their country through good behaviour, to be proud of their country, and also to be willing to defend their country and its national values (see Aguiar, S.A:52 - 63)

In the implemented sector in context of the *teachers practises,* the *survey* asked the teachers to identify values mentioned in the "National Policy on Education" that were of particular significance in their teaching. The importance of the different values is signalled by the scores. The alternative for answering was a scale from 1 to 5 where 1 indicates strongly disagree, 2 indicates disagree, 3 indicates neutral, 4 indicates agree and 5 indicates strongly agree. The table below places the values in a hierarchy:

TABLE 1:

Values important in the teachers own ethics education	Strongly agree	Strongly agree plus agree
Protection of environment	76,8 %	95,1 %
Religious tolerance	64,6%	89,1 %
Equality of sexes	62,2 %	87,8
Democracy and secularism	61,0 %	87,8 %
Removal of social barriers	59,8 %	86,6 %
Egalitarianism	57,3 %	85,4
Inculcation of scientific temper	52,4 %	84,1 %
India's common cultural heritage	43,9 %	79,3 %

It should be noted that the results indicate that importance was given to all the major values. However, the most striking result is the top placement of protection of environment. This value gets the highest score whichever way the results are read: either on the basis of the two top scores or only on the top score.

Whereas a preliminary research project had shown the morning assemblies to be the main area of ethics education, the survey included a separate section that asked about which values were emphasised in the assembly gatherings. The results are shown in the table below.

TABLE 2:

Morning assemblies - values' importance	2006 Strongly agree	2006 Strongly agree plus agree
Protection of environment	54,9 %	90,3 %
India's common cultural heritage	46,3 %	86,5 %
Equality of sexes	40,2 %	82,9 %
Egalitarianism	34,1 %	78 %
Inculcation of scientific temper	32,9 %	79,2 %
Religious tolerance	32,9 %	75,6 %
Democracy and secularism	31,7 %	85,4 %
Removal of social barriers	28,0 %	74,3 %

Table 2 demonstrates again that importance is given to all the major values listed in the "National Policy of Education" and lists again protection of environment at the top. The most striking finding seems to be that India's common cultural heritage has clearly been given more weight when the teachers were asked specifically about the

morning assemblies compared to what they answered when asked about their general impression, compare Table 1. An explanation for this could be the recitation of the "Pledge" which is central to the morning assemblies and strongly emphasises a common cultural heritage.

In the *group interviews* the teachers were asked which values were important to transmit to the students. Their answers showed that there is, in general, a clear tendency among the interviewees to refer to the ten different values, as do the textbooks (see above). To rank ten values seemed to be very important as a pedagogical tool when teaching the pupils. However, the interviewees often mentioned also values that in the review of the textbooks are listed among the sub-categories derived from the ten main values. The impression was that in practice the main values and the derived values were not sufficiently distinctive. An important assertion was that all the values were intermingled, and the teachers verbalised that you cannot raise a child without taking into consideration a large range of values.

With regard to the concrete values: patriotism, national integrity, and equality of sexes were often elevated above other values, in addition to religious tolerance. The value of religious tolerance evidently holds a unique position. It was referred to by the interviewees as rooted in the syllabus as well as in the Constitution. As we have seen, this value also received a high score in the survey, thus providing us with a good match between the interviews and the survey. There is no doubt that the investigation clearly indicates that the value of religious tolerance is prominently implemented in the school life.

The *observations* that were carried out were primarily connected to the observation of school activities and morning assemblies and based on the way the "Education for Peace" was organised in schools. The values emphasised in the morning assemblies were primarily everyday values which are meant to help pupils behave properly in places like in school and at home. However, as an indirect or non-verbal confirmation, the structure of the morning assemblies transmitted several important and general values to the students that were repeated every day. In all ten schools this endorsement was visible through especially two consistent elements in the assembly performances. First, the common daily use of prayers from different religions emphasized the cultural heritage as well as demonstrated the value of religious tolerance. Secondly, the daily reciting of the "Pledge" taught the students about national integrity, tolerance, respect, and kindness and courtesy. What Benei has characterised as a *devotional character* of the morning assemblies in schools in the regional state of Maharashtra is in line with my observations though there are variations in degrees (Bénéi, 2008:43 - 50). Clearly the distinctive atmosphere underlines the message.

The Pedagogical Approach in Ethics Education

The third research question focuses on the pedagogical approach in ethics education. As regards *the intended part of education* there are very few comments concerning pedagogical approaches in the "National Policy of Education" document. The most decisive tactic in this respect is the instruction to use a child-centred

approach in all education. (See Government of India, 1998, especially part I - 5: 2 - 20, for citation above see page 14). Furthermore, Chapter 2 of the "National Curriculum Framework" deals with learning and knowledge, and supplies both the basis and the direction for the pedagogical approach in the educational system of India. Of particular importance is the opportunity for children to be active learners, taking part in discussions together with the teachers. Interaction is prioritised and seen as a tool to aid the individual development of the children (see for this review National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2005: 11 - 32).

The section of the curriculum that presents the "Education for Peace" (chapter 3.8) includes very clear instructions to avoid imposing moral values on the children and emphasizes that pedagogical approaches will always have to be adjusted to the developmental stage of the child. Values are viewed as a conviction that should be based on individual reflection and experience. The perspective of peace must in particular be treated in this way. According to the curriculum it is a requisite that the pupils be allowed the opportunity to reflect on this and other themes both from a personal, social, and global perspective.

An interesting source of guidance to the pedagogy is a *position paper* on "Education for Peace" published in 2006. The paper is based on the findings of a national focus group in India; the background for the document was an alarming increase in violence in society. The paper's special plea or vision is that "Education for Peace" should make a difference in changing the minds of the children – the citizens of tomorrow. The importance of the role of teachers for the success of this task is especially emphasised; an entire chapter of the paper deals with teacher education (5.4). Paramount to the task is,the necessity of imparting student teachers with knowledge and skills. In addition, the student teachers should be taught about attitudes and reminded how vital their conduct will be as teachers of "Education for Peace" (See National Council of Educational Research and Training, 2006:19 - 28).

Examination of the *implemented sector of education* indicates a clear tendency in the latest edition of the *textbooks* to adjust to a new pedagogy based on the "National Curriculum Framework" from 2005. In the regional state of Maharashtra marked signals addressed to teachers to renew their teaching methods. The general introduction in textbooks published after 2005 includes important instructive messages to the teachers. They are, for example, called upon to implement the curriculum by making the teaching-learning process child-centred and activity-oriented. This observation is significant as textbooks are the main method of spreading new pedagogies and methods (see as an example Mathematics Standard One, Maharashtra State Bureau of Textbook Production and Curriculum Research, 2006). This guidance to the teachers also demonstrates the link between the regional and the national curricula since a clear message has been conveyed from the national level to change to a more child-centred education.

The outlined development is also seen in the newest textbooks for "Education for Peace". The current editions of the "Treasure of Life" series of textbooks, exemplify the further development of this new pedagogy which was partly present in the editions prior to 2005. Today there is a clear tendency to maintain the curricula strategy to

avoid imposing moral norms on the pupils by giving them hard and fast rules to follow. The newer textbooks are closer to the idea that is signalled in their subtitles, "Learning Values by Conviction". A good example of this change is the choice of titles of each lesson given. The lesson focusing on the value of religious tolerance that was previously called "Respect for all Religions," is now entitled "Live in Harmony". The former edition simply asked the pupils to respect the different religions while the latest edition starts the lesson with a story of a helpful traveller ("The good Samaritan"). The implicit intention is to cause the pupils to identify with this helpful traveller who gives assistance to someone of another faith and to follow his example (compare the two textbooks of Paul, 2006 and S.A. before 2005).

Regarding the *teachers' practises,* the survey included specified questions on pedagogical means in ethics education. The alternatives were taken from descriptions supplied by the "National Curriculum Framework". The table below displays the results:

TABLE 3

Pedagogical means in ethics education	Strongly agree	Strongly agree plus agree
Use of programmes to promote an attitude of respect and responsibility towards women	72,0 %	97,6 %
Celebrating the cultural and religious diversity of India in schools	72,0 %	96,4 %
Use of discussion and dialogues	61,0 %	96,4 %
Use of media	58,5 %	93,9 %
Use of stories and anecdotes	47,6 %	91,4 %
Use of films that promote the values of justice and peace	24,4 %	62,2 %

The overwhelming impression is that, except for use of films, all the listed means impact ethics education. An interesting result is the emphasis given to the celebrating of the cultural and religious diversity of India in schools. This finding demonstrates that the value of tolerance that is clearly encouraged in the curriculum and textbooks is being implemented in the school practise. This result also confirms that programmes which promote respect of women are on the top of the list.

Regarding *the group interviews*, one of the means mentioned is that the teachers themselves act as role models of exemplary behaviour. Values must be learned by identifying with someone that a student respects highly. Stories and anecdotes are also mentioned, as is the principle of "learning by doing". Several teachers stated that one has to allow the children practice what is taught doing different projects that are related to the community. One of the interviewees mentioned that whatever method used, it was inferior unless it demonstrated that the child embedded the value into his/her own mind and actively practiced it. He said, "When a woman is crossing the road and a student from my school helps the woman to cross the road this action

convinces me that: "Yes, I have incorporated the values into my students." (Duesund, 2007:59 - 60)

A large majority of the interviewees placed great emphasis on the *morning assembly*. There was unanimous response stating that the institution of the assembly is value education per se. According to the teachers, the participating pupils will learn by listening to the moral stories and remember the point of the stories. They also absorb new ideas by being given the responsibility to conduct the program of a morning assembly. The values presented in the morning assemblies were often discussed in lessons throughout the school day. Whenever the opportunity arose, the teachers admitted, they would remind the students about the values they were working with this week or that day. Celebrating in a minor way or marking the festivals or drawing attention to the date of up-coming festivals during the morning assembly was considered an effective means of teaching values by the teachers. There are often specific important values connected to a festival, and knowledge about the festivals is therefore a good way of communicating these values. The interviewees confirmed that as the festivals occur annually, they repeatedly reminded the pupils of distinct key values.

With regard to the *observations,* I scrutinized the morning assemblies in particular. These assemblies provided an excellent opportunity to gain insight into the methods employed in ethics education. In the smallest schools there was one assembly for all the pupils. In the largest schools there were separate assemblies for the different school stages. The form of the morning assemblies represented a pedagogical approach itself. One of the school classes and their teacher assumed responsibility for the program of the assemblies; they frequently chose moral stories and skits to underline a particular value or moral challenge. The "Pledge" was an integrated part of the assemblies and seemed to function as a pedagogical means to teach national integrity, tolerance, respect, and kindness and courtesy. The use of prayers from different religions was regularly included and clearly demonstrated the value of religious tolerance. The observations all together strengthened the impression that the morning assemblies are most important to implement the "Education for Peace" and thereby the ethics education and transmission of values in Indian schools. The classroom observation disclosed that the teaching primarily consisted of repeating the specific value from the morning assemblies.

The analysis of the findings from the background study in India offers insights in the next section into what Norway, and potentially other countries, can learn from India.

What can Norway learn from India?

This article has outlined the justification for, the contents of, and the pedagogy of ethics education in the Indian educational system. The purpose has been to locate learning potential from India's long experience with a multicultural educational context. Below I will highlight the central findings and discuss to what extent Norway

can learn from India. However, before entering this discussion the wider context of the theme should be mentioned. The Norwegian and Indian challenges are a part of a worldwide challenge resulting from the globalisation process and human migration. The concept multicultural education has come to comprise these educational challenges in school practises as well as in research.

Multicultural Education

As mentioned in the introduction there is increasing diversity in most parts of the world. Though it is true as Banks claims that diversity is a recognised phenomenon it is also clear that scepticism about openness towards alien cultures, known as multiculturalism, has increased after -9/11. As Charles Taylor states, multiculturalism has become a suspicious term in Europe; he refers to Islam as the cause of this new scepticism. Levey points out that "multiculturalism has been blamed for encouraging cultural relativism..… and for sowing confusion about the appropriate boundaries of the tolerable." (Modood, Levey, & Taylor, 2009:xiii and 3) May finds that post -9/11 multiculturalism as a public policy is apparently in full retreat in a range of nation-states. The response has lead to a more critical understanding of multiculturalism less marked by cultural relativism. Critical multiculturalism provides a more balanced approach to education and the wider nation-state organization, he argues (Banks, 2009:45).

The debate on multiculturalism has influenced the views on multicultural education or international education: a term more commonly used in Europe, while multicultural education seems to be the frequently applied concept otherwise (Banks, 2009:33 - 45). However, in spite of the scepticism and support for the assimilation ideology in education, Banks has demonstrated that education based on this ideology has failed to integrate and to give minority students equal opportunities to learn. He argues that nation-states around the world must respond to the need of education for marginalised groups and immigrants by developing a scientific-based multicultural education. In particular his theory of the dimensions of multicultural education has become defining. Banks has conceptualized five dimensions that he sees as basic to the development of practice, theory and research in the field; content integration; knowledge construction process; prejudice reduction; equity pedagogy; and empowering school culture. The common theme in these dimensions is the importance of including the cultural background of the students in order for them to be able to learn. The knowledge construction, Banks claims, is dependent upon actively using the background of the students to help them understand and for them to succeed in the learning process (Banks, 2009, pp. 15 - 17).

From this wider context review it is relevant to review what Norway and possibly other nation-states can learn from India.

The educational system as a tool for building a national ethos

Norway has for a long time had a centralised national educational system, just as India has had. According to Andy Green the most prominent reason for creating a

governmental educational system is to spread the dominant national culture (Green, 1997). Furthermore, Clifford Geertz claims that every culture has a national ethos, which is rooted in religious beliefs. Geertz understands the national ethos as the "moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements..." He asserts that this national ethos may be conveyed through a national centralised educational system (Geertz, 2000:126 - 127). According to Green and Geertz a centralised educational system is well equipped to transmit to new generations the values and norms that make up the code of conduct of a society. In the same way, a centralised educational system like India's is likely to convey the dominant cultural values and norms to all the students who are enrolled.

Norway, like India, has a centralised educational system thusly there is likely little to learn from their method of organizing the system. There are new concepts to acquire in the manner in which the system is used to cope with the challenges of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic and multi-religious society. There is, however, a great potential of employing this system to determine the direction of education nationwide and to decide what ideas or attitudes that should be spread or implemented. A relevant example is the concept and practice of religious tolerance. The justification of ethics education in India is rooted in the idea of preventing a developing tendency in society of solving conflicts by violence of different kinds.

An examination of the curriculum for the Norwegian subject most similar to the Indian "Education for Peace" indicates that "Religion, Philosophies of Life and Ethics" (RLE) is comparable; however, it seems that Norway has emphasized *knowledge* about religions (compare the curriculum in Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2011b). Philosophy and ethics are included but the ethics education does not represent the core of the subject as in India where study of religion is included primarily to demonstrate religious tolerance and to emphasise that all religions can contribute equally to learn moral values. An inspection of the implemented sector in Norway, represented by RLE textbooks, demonstrates that the textbooks seem to be very knowledge based. There are almost no direct discussions on religious and ethnic tolerance or peaceful solution of conflicts (*4*, 2011; Bondevik, Borgersen, & Schjelderup, 2010); compare Haanes and Lundberg (2011); (Moseng, 2011).

The learning from India indicates that Norway might consider giving greater prominence to the ethical themes and especially religious tolerance and peaceful conflict solutions, and less emphasis on the knowledge element of the RLE subject. Or perhaps the knowledge and information might well be integrated into the ethics education and thereby be developed as a tool to facilitate the promotion of mutual understanding as is done in India. An example is when a religious festival occurs. The minority youth insurrection that Norway has experienced to some degree but which has been a marked tendency in UK, France and Sweden points to a need for including an ethics education that educates for peace and non-violent solutions of conflicts.

The significance of the foundation of the educational system

I have shown, I believe, that the Educational system in India is carried out in conformity with secular values. This system embraces also the ethics education. According to Norwegian thought these educational decisions indicate a neutral platform for education in what is considered a highly multicultural society. An obvious challenge here is to employ a more appropriate definition of 'secular' in India and in the West. Secular values in an Indian context have a quite specific connotation than in a European or American context. The Indian understanding of secular values is to a western mind problematic. A western understanding will emphasise the complete separation of religion and state and school. In an Indian context secular indicates equal acceptance of all creeds and all religion in schools (Bénéi, 2008:61; Gupta, 2006). Rajeev Bhargava claims that other countries can learn from the Indian model of secularism. The secularism practiced both in western and non-western societies have failed by privatising religion. What renders the Indian model better equipped to meet the challenges of modern societies is first its multi-value based distinctiveness and "second that it was born in a deeply multi-religious society,…". The reason for the success of the Indian model is that it applies the principle of distance to religion. It accepts the disconnection between state and religion. On the other hand, it does not exclude religion from the public scene. The Indian model has a contextual character and attempts to bring together individuals and community in finding solutions: its goal is to reconcile and compromise. Though this model has been criticised for being ambiguous Bhargava states that it is practicable and it works (Modood et al., 2009:101 - 107).

The Indian model has been called passive secularism and stands as an antagonism to the kind of secularism practiced in many western as well as non-western countries which has been called assertive secularism. This model of secularism privatises religion and takes an active role to exclude religion from the public sphere (Kuru, 2009:12 and 27). Levey points out that this model is especially challenging to the "public nature" of Islam. The marginalizing of Islam and other religious groups can fortify the tendencies of making ghettoes: a further challenge to the nation-states (Modood et al., 2009:1 - 24). According to Arthur, Gearon and Sears such a secularism foregoes the "contribution religion and religious models of pedagogy might make to citizenship education". The civil and the sacred ought to be reconciled in education. Religions are fully able to contribute to the education of the citizens in a democratic environment, they state (Arthur, Gearon, & Sears, 2010:1 - 8 and 131 - 138).

Turning to the question of what Norway can learn from India in this respect, it is necessary to determine what kind of model Norway is practicing. Apparently this should be fairly simple. Historically, the Norwegian educational system is based on an Educational Act connected primarily to Christianity (see Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2011a:1 - 12). However, the new object clause introduced in 2008 not only includes the fundamental values of Christian and humanistic heritage and traditions, it also includes values that are expressed in different religions and philosophies and that are

also clearly expressed in the Declaration of Human Rights (The Education Act, chapter 1, Goverment, 2010). This object clause seemingly has a built-in disparity linking the foundation of education to Christianity at the same time as the clause opens up for a pluralistic view. The question is if Christianity or the pluralistic element should be most emphasized. Currently this seems unclear. The RLE subject which is meant to have a special role in carrying out this intention also has a built-in discrepancy. According to the objectives the subject is meant to be a meeting place for pupils from different cultures and backgrounds, a description which indicates a passive secularism reminiscent of the Indian model. However, the objectives of education are limited to primarily teaching *knowledge of* Christianity, world religions, views of life and ethical and philosophical themes. It is indicated that the pupils should talk about the challenges of a multicultural society. Including elements from a living religion is restricted, clearly even more so after the two pronouncements against Norway in international courts articulate that no religion must feel unfairly treated. Excursions away from school to places of worship or participating in services or celebrating different religious festivals, *could* offer exemption but thereby disregard the intention of the subject of bringing together pupils from various backgrounds. Clearly, through these provisions the RLE subject tends towards an assertive secularism. However, the issue is even more complicated. The neutrality of the course substance may be disputed as knowledge of Christianity will be a major portion of the learning content of the subject. The emphasis on knowledge about Christianity indicates a religious basis of education (see background in Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2011b:1).

It is indeed difficult to place the Norwegian model within the categories of educational foundations. Still, it is possible to ask how the RLE subject may be developed to meet the challenges of a diverse society and more readily accept religions in the public sphere in line with the Indian model. A very interesting proposal for elaborating the subject has been projected by Sidsel Lied. Giving additional emphasis to a local curriculum would allow teachers of Norwegian Religious Education to choose a more pluralistic content, she points out. An opening for this kind of differentiation permits both "majority as well as the minority pupils to experience that their religious or philosophical affiliation is respected, and that their life interpretation is viewed as relevant and constructive element in the school's curriculum", she claims (Lied, 2009:263 - 273). Implementation of Lied's suggestion would provide an approach to a more neutral and equal treatment of the minorities and in addition it sanctions a pedagogy that may contribute to greater tolerance and respect. It may even reveal the potential to learn from different religions in the context of moral values. Lied's approach might be a successful way of interpreting and implementing the object clause. Moreover, developing a Norwegian model of passive secularism, not identical to but in line with the Indian model, would likely encourage integration and a peaceful development of society.

National Identity

According to Indian teachers, national unity or integrity was, in addition to religious tolerance, the value that might fulfil the ideals of ethics education in India. The attention given to national unity as an important part of ethics education is, in principle, disputed. However, the philosophy behind this approach, both from the perspective of the authorities and the teachers who implement the instructions, did not indicate a nationalistic intention, but rather functioned as a desire to gather all Indians, despite their different ethnic backgrounds and beliefs, under one national umbrella dominated by peace, respect, and tolerance. Looking ahead, Norwegian society can expect growing diversity, such as in India. And as in India an extensively diversified community will require core values that bind together people of different backgrounds with regard to culture, religion and ethnicity.

Morning assemblies as a pedagogical tool in ethics education

The pedagogy in India, including the institution of the morning assembly—a daily element in Indian schools, represents an interesting approach to learning ethics. It is a well-known Norwegian tradition; a half a century ago schools organized morning assemblies. In my mind, an interesting question for the decision-makers is to ask if this kind of meeting place might offer a favourable setting in the new multi-ethnic and multi-cultural situation. A morning assembly for the classes or different levels or for the whole schools, depending upon the size of the schools, as is practiced in India, might provide a meeting place and give opportunity to deal with questions related to culture, religion and ethnicity and thereby become a platform for enlightenment about core values and for developing understanding and tolerance.

There are challenges in introducing the institution of morning assembly, it is clear. Bénéi, for example, claims that the morning assemblies in schools in Maharashtra, India, have a devotional character. The devotional character itself may function as a pedagogical tool which can strengthen in the pupils the content of the teaching. However, Bénéi sees a Hindu atmosphere pervading the classrooms inconsistent with the idea of religious tolerance (Bénéi, 2008:38 - 66, especially 46 - 50). Although I observed this tendency to some degree while visiting village schools in India, my impression was that the morning assemblies functioned as pedagogical instruments and represented primarily a good platform for ethics education. The learning from Benei's research will be to avoid an atmosphere which is not neutral and to emphasise that the purpose is to teach good common values.

Concrete values

In addition to the morning assembly tradition, emphasis on concrete values prevailing in ethics education in India should be considered as a pedagogical approach. As outlined above, the concrete values listed in the curriculum are being interpreted into a range of everyday values implemented in the education. This method is clearly different from the Norwegian curriculum for the RLE subject, with its

general and theoretical approach. The characteristic tendency in the competence aims of the curriculum is to encourage the students to "talk about", to "discuss" and to "reflect" on ethical issues. Just a few concrete values are mentioned:, for example, the Rule of Reciprocity (conf. Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2011b:3 - 8). Textbooks are, I have pointed out extremely knowledge-based, although a few concrete ethical themes are represented (see as axamples Bondevik et al., 2010; Syse, 2011).

It is relevant to discuss if the Norwegian pedagogy on ethics education has become too general and if this development is caused by a "fear" of offending some groups in a multicultural society. Furthermore, it is appropriate to ask if a multicultural society or any society can raise children without specific common core values.

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above of what we can possibly learn from India, it is my view that in a rapidly increasing multi-cultural Norwegian educational context we will benefit by identifying the approach to ethics education in India. It is relevant to consider, not copy, the actions India has taken based on their long experience coping with diversity in education. These programs embrace developing a multicultural education by building a national ethos representing a common core of central values containing respect and tolerance. Developing a national identity across the differences in culture, religion and ethnicity must be deliberated. Not least the foundations of the Norwegian educational system should be clarified in context of both the Educational Act and the RLE subject. Lied has pointed out that this clarification is required in order to demonstrate equality of majority and minority pupils. Regarding the pedagogy, a common practical meeting place through a morning assembly should be considered. Finally, a more concrete approach to the ethics education should be discussed.

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