



Learning Interculturality From rEligion



TEACHING (ONE) RELIGION

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“All religions, arts and sciences are branches of the same tree. All these aspirations are directed towards ennobling man's life, lifting it from the sphere of mere physical existence and leading the individual towards freedom.”

Albert Einstein

“A good general knowledge of religions and the resulting sense of tolerance are essential to the exercise of democratic citizenship . . . Knowledge of religions is an integral part of knowledge of the history of mankind and civilizations. It is altogether distinct from belief in a specific religion and its observance. Even countries where one religion predominates should teach about the origins of all religions rather than favor a single one or encourage proselytizing.”

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Recommendation 1720 (2005) on education and religion.

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At a time of rising concerns in Europe over radicalization and violent extremism, the role that education and intercultural dialogue can play in promoting respect for diversity, pluralism and human rights is increasingly under the spotlight.

Education is the competence of the Member States and the European Union's role is one of support and coordination. In 2008, the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, the European Commission identified intercultural dialogue as *'essential for creating respect for cultural diversity, improving coexistence in today's diverse societies and encouraging active European citizenship'*. This was to be achieved by raising awareness of the cultural sphere to empower EU inhabitants 'to manage cultural diversity'. Education can contribute both inside and out of schools.

1. Some basic definitions: conceptual definition of religion (Council of Europe)

Belief is a state of the mind when we consider something true even though we are not 100% sure or able to prove it. Everybody has beliefs about life and the world they experience. Mutually supportive beliefs may form belief systems, which may be religious, philosophical or ideological.

Religions are belief systems that relate humanity to spirituality. The following definition provides a good overview of the many dimensions of religion: it is a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes,



to moral values. Many religions have narratives, symbols, traditions and sacred histories that are intended to give meaning to life or to explain the origin of life or the universe. They tend to derive morality, ethics, religious laws or a preferred lifestyle from their ideas about the cosmos and human nature. Many religions have organised behaviours, clergy, a definition of what constitutes adherence or membership, congregations of laity, regular meetings or services for the purposes of veneration of a deity or for prayer, holy places (either natural or architectural), and/or scriptures. The practice of a religion may also include sermons, commemoration of the activities of a god or gods, sacrifices, festivals, feasts, trance, initiations, funerary services, matrimonial services, meditation, music, art, dance, public service, or other aspects of human culture. However, there are examples of religions for which some or many of these aspects of structure, belief, or practices are absent.

In the simplest sense, religion describes “the relationship of human beings to what they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual or divine”. It is usually accompanied by a set of organised practices which foster a community of people who share that faith. As discussed above, belief is a broader term and it also includes “commitments which deny a dimension of existence beyond this world”.

Religions and other belief systems in our environment have an influence on our identity, regardless of whether we consider ourselves religious or spiritual or not. At the same time, other parts of our identity, our history, our approach to other religions and groups considered “different” will influence how we interpret that religion or belief system.

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2. Multi-culturalism and inter-culturalism: a political overview

All living cultures are outcomes of intercultural communication. This becomes particularly evident in the globalization era where the ever-fast evolving cultural landscape is characterized by an intensified diversity of peoples, communities and individuals who live more and more closely. The increasing diversity of cultures, which is fluid, dynamic and transformative, implies specific competences and capacities for individuals and societies to learn, re-learn, and unlearn so as to meet personal fulfilment and social harmony. The ability to decipher other cultures in fair and meaningful ways is predicated not only on an open and pluralistic spirit but also on self-cultural awareness. When a culture is critically aware of its own strengths and limitations, it can extend its horizons and enrich its intellectual and spiritual resources by learning from alternative visions in epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and worldviews.

Approaching cultural diversity requires that the broadest possible range of competences be identified and promoted, especially those that societies have devised and transmitted throughout succeeding generations. Because intercultural interactions have become a constant feature of modern life, even in the most traditional societies, the very manner in which individuals and communities manage encounters with cultural others is under scrutiny. Hence the growing awareness among policy-makers and civil society that intercultural competences may constitute a very relevant resource to help individuals negotiate cultural boundaries throughout their personal encounters and experiences. Intercultural competences are abilities to adeptly navigate complex environments marked by a growing diversity of peoples, cultures and lifestyles, in other terms, abilities to perform “effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini & Tirmizi, 2006).

Schools are a central place to nurture such skills and abilities and given their relevance for social and political life, the scope of intercultural competences is much wider than formal education. They have to reach out to a new generation of citizens, notably young men and women who have unimagined opportunities for global conversation.



2.1 – Multiculturalism in Italy: the agreements between the State and religions and denominations other than the Catholic Church – “Intese”

The 1948 Constitution includes four main dispositions on religious freedom:

article 7, on relations between the Italian Republic and the Catholic Church;

article 8, on general equality between religions and relationships with the State for non-Catholic confessions;

article 19, which protects freedom of conscience for citizens as well as foreigners;

article 20, which prevents any discrimination of treatment between a religious and a non-religious society.

As the Lateran Treaties are explicitly mentioned in article 7, along with mutual independence for State and Church, the Roman Catholic Church remained the State official religion until the revision of the Concordat in 1984. Since then, while Catholic priests are no longer paid by the State, a system of indirect fiscal funding is provided by the eight per thousand on the tax return, by which citizens can choose to donate 0.8% of their individual income to either the Catholic Church, or another religion which signed an *Intesa* with the State, or to secular charities. The mechanism of the *Intese*, whose purpose is to guarantee particularities of non-Catholic religions according to article 8 of the Constitution, was used six times between 1984 and 1995, with the Waldensian and Methodist Churches (1984), Seventh Day Adventists (1986), the Assemblies of God in Italy (1988), the Union of Jewish Communities (1989), Baptist Churches (1995) and Lutheran Churches (1995). Subsequent projects of *Intese* were all halted, or annulled in the case of Soka Gakkai (which recently signed the *Intesa* in 2016) before the conclusion of six agreements voted by the Italian Parliament between June and December 2012, with the Hindu and Buddhist federations, Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Latter-Day Saints Church, the Apostolic Church and the Sacred Orthodox Archdiocese of Italy and Malta and Exarchate for Southern Europe. Under the level of the *Intese*, the status of *culti ammessi* (‘tolerated cults’) from the law of 06/24/1929 allows, under strict conditions of registration, limited facilities for worship and recognition of the legal validity of religious marriages.

The weaknesses of this system are twofold. On the one hand, while this status gives a



substantial and symbolical legitimacy to recognized religious organizations, it has followed a mimetic trend concerning the fields covered (religious education, degrees conferred by confessional colleges...), without being on an equal footing with the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, the steps to recognition, especially the status of *culti ammessi*, are matched by a part of discretionary choices and vulnerability to changes in political majorities in Parliament. In other words, if Italian multiculturalism exists, it is top-down, institutional, focused on religious aspects and not integrated.

For instance, although being Islam the second most popular religion in our country after Catholicism, none of the attempts by Muslim organizations towards an *intesa* came to term since the 1990s, and the only recognized organization according to the 1929 law is the Islamic Cultural Centre of Italy, based at the Great Mosque of Rome and close to diplomatic representations of Muslim States to Italy and to the Holy See, due to a presidential decree in 1974. Islamic association in Italy reflects the plurality and diversification of Muslims in our country. The increasing number of associations is also due to the structure of Islam: unlike the Catholic Church, which is hierarchically organized through an official clergy, an institutionalized form of priesthood is totally absent in Islam. Moreover, some associations, especially those that bring together first-generation migrants, are structured with reference to the country of origin.

One of the most well-known associations is the *UCOII (Union of Islamic Communities in Italy)*, which gathers around 200 places of worship in Italy. The UCOII was founded in 1990 and is currently chaired by Izzeddin Elzir. In 1992 UCOII attempted to conclude an *intesa* with the State and took part in the 'Consulta' for Italian Islam promoted by Interior Ministers Pisanu and Amato. It subsequently joined the Permanent National Conference "Religions, Culture and Integration" established by Minister for Integration and Cooperation Andrea Riccardi.

The *Islamic Alliance of Italy* has been working for more than ten years but has become an association in 2010. It is formally a member of the UCOII and the Federation of Islamic Organizations in Europe. The association deals with ethical and religious issues and its activities are carried out at different Islamic Centers.

The *COREIS (Italian Islamic Religious Community)*, born in the nineties, is an organization far from political ideologies that aims to represent the religious interests of Muslim citizens. In



1996 COREIS proposed a draft agreement to the Italian State for an *intesa*. From 2005 it has participated in various consultative bodies wanted by the interior ministers.

As it was mentioned above, the *Islamic Cultural Center of Italy* manages the Grand Mosque of Rome, inaugurated in 2005. Since 1974, the center is the only Italian Islamic body with legal personality and is chaired by Abdellah Redouane, Secretary-General of Moroccan origin. Since 2008, with an initiative supported by the government of Rabat, the Center has begun to connect Islamic centers across the country managed by Moroccan leaders.

The *Italian Islamic Confederation (CII)* was set up in Rome on March 21, 2012. The Confederation is a national organization that brings together 14 Islamic Regional Federations in order to coordinate all the places of worship associated with it, which are spread across the national territory, promoting the unity of goals, projects and actions, as well as the dialogue between them and the Italian authorities at national and local level.

In February 2017, Marco Minniti, who serves in the Government of Italy as Minister of the Interior since December 2016, has signed the “National Pact for an Italian Islam, as expression of an open and integrated community, adherent to the values and principles of the legal order of the State”, drafted with the collaboration of the Council for Relations with Italian Islam and recognized by the Ministry of the Interior. The document was signed by the leading Islamic associations and organizations in Italy, representing about 70% of Muslims currently living in the country.

While the religious components of Italy have shown significant changes, without questioning the effectiveness of the Roman Catholic Church in terms of representation and influence, even since the collapse of Christian-Democratic currents, new issues have come to visibility, such as the place of religious symbols in public offices and schools (Lautsi v. Italy, EtCHR, 03/18/2011).

As *laicità* (secularism) is intended in a positive, active sense of intervention to guarantee religious freedom (Constitutional Court, decision 203/1989), it is nonetheless an unequal system, while some political formations like *Lega Nord* (Northern League) clearly define religious pluralism as a threat to national (or, in the above mentioned case, regional) identity and while the question of Islam is still dealt with by national media in terms of security and ‘reciprocity’.



On these grounds, multiculturalism in Italy has been first debated as a dangerous schema by some intellectuals and politicians, while the Italian situation might provide a fruitful field of experimentation for policies of recognition of pluralism in the future.

List of the agreements so far implemented, approved by law pursuant to article 8 of the Italian Constitution:

<i>Religious Confession</i>	<i>Signature Date</i>	<i>Law of Approval</i>
Tavola valdese	21 Feb. 1984	Law 449/1984
	25 Jan. 1993 (amendment)	Law 409/1993
	4 Apr. 2007	Law 68/2009
Assemblee di Dio in Italia (ADI)	29 Dec. 1986	Law 517/1988
Unione delle Chiese Cristiane Avventiste del 7° giorno	29 Dec. 1986	Law 516/1988
	6 Nov. 1996 (amendment)	Law 637/1996
	4 Apr. 2007	Law 67/2009
Unione Comunità Ebraiche in Italia (UCEI)	27 Feb. 1987	Law 101/1989
	6 Nov. 1996 (amendment)	Law 638/1996
Unione Cristiana Evangelica Battista d'Italia (UCEBI)	29 Mar. 1993	Law 116/1995
	16 Jul. 2010 (amendment)	Law n.34/12
Chiesa Evangelica Luterana in Italia (CELI)	20 Apr. 1993	Law 520/1995
Sacra Arcidiocesi ortodossa d'Italia ed Esarcato per l'Europa Meridionale	4 Apr. 2007	Law n. 126/12
Chiesa di Gesù Cristo dei Santi degli ultimi giorni	4 Apr. 2007	Law n. 127/12
Chiesa Apostolica in Italia	4 Apr. 2007	Law n. 128/12
Unione Buddhista italiana (UBI)	4 Apr. 2007	Law n. 245/12
Unione Induista Italiana	4 Apr. 2007	Law n. 246/12
Istituto Buddhista Italiano Soka Gakkai (IBISG)	27 June 2015	Law 28 giugno 2016, n. 130

Italian Government, Presidency of the Council of Ministers, Service for Relations with Religious Confessions and Institutional Relations



RE within the *Intese* - The agreements between the state and religions and denominations other than the Catholic Church (*Intese*), also concern teaching their religion in public schools. They identify and defend the right of pupils and parents belonging to the relevant denomination not to attend classes teaching Roman Catholicism. Contrary to the case with the IRC, these religions or denominations have to finance the teaching themselves and the time for teaching must be found outside the regular timetable. Besides, while IRC is also a ‘regular’ school subject in terms of the fact that grades are given to the pupils attending it, this is not so in the case of other kinds of confessional RE. This system also stipulates the right of the relevant denomination to organize the teaching of religion in State schools, under two conditions: a congruous number of students will have to request the activation of the teaching, and that teachers shall be paid by the denomination. Article 10 of the agreement with Waldensians, stipulates that in case arrangements are made for classes teaching Protestantism in State schools by Waldensian teachers, this must be paid by the ecclesiastical authorities (gli oneri finanziari sono a carico degli organi ecclesiastici competenti). The same phrasing is reiterated in Article 12 section 3 of 2007 *intesa* with Mormons enacted in 2012.

Article 33 of the Italian Constitution - The majority of pupils in Italy are educated at public schools. Article 33 of the Constitution, in reference to “private schools”, states that entities and private persons have the right to establish schools and institutions of education at no cost to the State. The Republic guarantees the freedom of the arts and sciences, which may be freely taught, and also establishes general rules for education and institutes State schools of all branches and grades. The law, when setting out the rights and obligations for the non-State schools which request parity, ensures that these schools enjoy full liberty and offer their pupils an education and qualifications of the same standards as those afforded to pupils in State schools. Private schools are mostly Roman Catholic (an average of 75% over the last 20 years): Concordat of 1984 (Act No. 121 of 1985) strengthens the general protection granted by Article 33 of the Constitution and the general laws regulating the inclusion of private schools in public education. Article 9 of Act No. 121 of 1985 provides a specific guarantee of freedom and autonomy of Catholic schools – further, article 10 of Act No. 121 of 1985 secures the autonomy of ecclesiastical educational establishments, and a framework for civil recognition of academic degrees delivered by Catholic institutions.



For decades, a large section of the public opinion has opposed State funding for private schools. Reflecting this position, some legal experts have argued for a strict interpretation of the “*at no cost for the State*” (*senza oneri per lo Stato*) clause, emphasizing the principle that State funding of private schools is constitutionally illegitimate (Ventura 2013: 195). This has become a marginal position, but establishing a system of equal State funding of State schools and private schools meets a large opposition in the country; defence of the priority of State schools embodies a consolidated pattern, deeply rooted in the national customs.

Today the debate has shifted from whether the State should fund private schools or whether full parity in State funding of State and private schools should be established. Catholic Bishops have taken a clear stand in favor for the latter position and have put pressure on governments. The credit crunch and the debt crisis have deepened the divide between those who push for full parity, who criticize the inefficient State schools, while defenders of the impoverished State school are the victims of neo-liberal cuts in the State budget. If State funding of private schools remains below European standards, parity in the recognition of degrees has been basically achieved. Also, private schools integrated in public education enjoy extreme freedom, with little, if any, State control on the effective compliance of private schools with the agreed-upon standards (Ventura 2013: 195-196).

Today, private state authorized schools are managed partly by lay bodies and partly by religious bodies. In terms of structures, the number is equivalent (1.924 schools are run by religious entities and 1.749 by lay people), while in terms of enrollment religious state authorized schools are prevalent with about 218.000 users (62% of the total number of state authorized schools students)¹.

¹ <https://www.istat.it/it/files/2017/04/Studenti-e-scuole.pdf>



3. Brief overview of the legal situation and legislation

In retracing the history of Religious Education in Italy, it is important to take into account several thematic key points, such as the relationship between the State and the Church, religious freedom in education, teaching freedom and the paradigm of a secular way of life which gradually established and which range from the liberal catholic secularism of the XIX century to the later secularization processes, in search of a positive, competent, and up to date secularism .

In the framework of current and future school reforms, planned in every country of the EU, Religious Education has been included in an overall process of renovation, with results which sometimes differ greatly from Country to Country; in some cases this subject has a cognitive role, in others it has ethical and civic duties, and there is no doubt that there is a strong distinction between a *confessional teaching of religion* and a *cultural teaching about religion*. An important and widely accepted objective is to educate a culturally and religiously heterogeneous school-attending population concerning the nature of a multi-cultural world.

3.1 - Religion in the Italian educational system (XIX century-1929)

An essential moment in this process can be identified without a doubt in the 1929 Lateran Pacts - a Treaty establishing the State of Vatican City, and a financial settlement, that was signed on 11th Feb. 1929 and ratified by the Italian Parliament on 27th May 1929 (Law 27th May 1929, No. 810) - thanks to which the education of Catholic religion was extended to both the secondary and high school curricula. Article 36 of Law No. 810, dated 27th May 1929, states that Italy considers the teaching of the Christian doctrine, in the form received by the Catholic tradition, to be the foundation and crowning achievement of public education. It thus consents Religious Education in public elementary schools to be continued in secondary schools, in compliance with forthcoming curricula to be established by the Holy See and the Government; this subject will be taught by lay teachers, priests or religious figures, which have been approved by the ecclesiastical authority and also with the help of lay teachers who have earned a certificate issued by the Ordinary of the Diocese. Withdrawal of the certificate by the Ordinary of the Diocese deprives the teacher of the ability to teach. Textbooks are only those approved by the ecclesiastical authority. The idea for this kind of education was of a confessional nature: a catechetical education to be imparted according to the educational view



of the Catholic school.

Royal Decree No. 289, dated 28th February 1930, allowed those children whose parents expressly requested it to the school head master to be exempted from religious education. It was allowed for certain accepted religions (ex lege No. 1159 dated 1929) to introduce non-catholic education.

3.2 - Teaching religion in Republican Italy schools

Concerning the teaching of religion, the political environment which had radically changed with the passage to a Republic and with the adoption of constitutional regulations did not change the established agreements: in Italian schools, the usual hour of religion as catechetical education, a compulsory discipline from which parents were allowed to withdraw their children, continued for several decades after 1946. On March 25th, 1947, the majority of the Constituent Assembly, with the casting vote of the Communist Party, decided to integrate the Lateran Pacts in the brand new Italian Democratic Constitution, a real foreign body in the democratic life and religious freedom of a modern country. Piero Calamandrei - Italian author, jurist, university professor and politician who was elected to the Constituent Assembly in 1945 and, as a Social Democrat, to the National Assembly in 1948 - who was strongly opposed to that decision, described the scene as follows:

“When the outcome of the vote was announced (359 in favor, 149 against) no one applauded, nor the Christian Democrats, who seemed greatly annoyed by a victory achieved with that help. Not even the Communists seemed cheerful; and many noticed that while coming out late at night from that unforgettable session, they were speechless and walked keeping their heads down”.

Suddenly, that moment represents a huge weight that will influence Italy's democratic life in all its multiple dimensions, since the succeeding democratic governments will all uphold the Pacts signed in 1929 by Benito Mussolini during the Fascist dictatorship.

It was only in the '60s that it started to appear necessary to identify and implement choices which could establish a new relationship between school and religion, which would take into account heretofore unheard examples of cultural and religious pluralism, thus acknowledging the presence of children coming from families with different views or practices concerning religion. An epistemological analysis on the subject accompanied the discussion, as can be



easily inferred by the number of published papers, studies and even new text books which offered alternative paths and methods for approaching the religious issue. Discussions which were held in the late '70s were crucial, and they would pave the way for the turning point in 1984: different points of view discussed and collided, sometimes expressing positions which could not find a common ground.

During this time, the 1984 Concordat (known as *Accordi di Villa Madama*) signed by Bettino Craxi and by the secretary cardinal of the Vatican, Agostino Casaroli, established a non-compulsory confessional hour of Catholic religion, no longer intended as catechetical education, but rather as a cultural approach to the religious phenomenon from a Catholic point of view. It was also established that Catholicism was no longer the only religion in the Italian State and, with respect towards the right to freedom of conscience and towards parents' educational responsibility, it was guaranteed that every student of every kind of schooling level or type could choose to attend the hour of catholic religion or not. Ever since, the teaching of Catholic religion in public schools, of every level and type, is imparted in compliance with the doctrine of the Church and in respect of the students' freedom of conscience, by teachers who have been considered suitable by the religious authority and have been assigned, in full agreement, by the school authority. In kindergartens and elementary schools, this subject can be taught by a class teacher who has been considered to be suitable by the religious authority and who agrees to teach it.

Altogether, the agreement has little to do with the spirit of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which addressed relations between the Roman Catholic Church and the modern world with an innovative approach towards enhanced openness to the world at large.

In *La religione a scuola*, Emilio Butturini noted some elements of inconsistency: on one hand, The Italian Republic recognizes the value of religious culture and the principles of Catholicism as part of the historical heritage of the Italian people, on the other hand it calls on freedom of conscience with respect to the possibility of choosing whether to attend CRE or not. The new conception of the agreement is expressed by the concept of 'cooperation' between the Catholic Church and the State with regard to the cultural maturation of the pupils. In this perspective, it is made clear that the teaching of the Catholic religion is not a form of catechesis, but rather the proposition of a «religious culture» to be elaborated in the «[public]school framework» (Law n. 121 of 25th March 1985). It represents one of the many inconsistencies of the



agreement because, if that were the case, then it would not be clear the reason why CRE teachers, although paid by the State, should be chosen by the bishops of the Roman Catholic Church.

An agreement between the appropriate school authority and the CEI - Conferenza Episcopale Italiana (Italian Episcopal Conference) has established: the curricula for the various types and levels of the public schools; the ways in which said subject is organised, including the way it is positioned within the frame of the other lessons; the criteria for choosing textbooks; the professional profiles for choosing the teachers. Currently, the curricula for the hour of religion are established for each level and type of school by the Ministry subject to an agreement with the CEI, in the understanding that it is the latter who has the competence to define their conformity with the doctrine of the Church. Kindergarten is assigned a yearly total of 60 hours (one and a half hours per week), elementary school is assigned two hours of CRE per week while I and II level secondary school are assigned one hour of CRE per week. Catholic schools of every level and type were assigned additional hours, in compliance with the Educational Offer Plan established by each school.

The magistrate Gian Paolo Meucci argued that the solution achieved with the agreement represented an authentic betrayal of the educational function towards the new generations, because the State and the Church have ultimately failed in one of their fundamental missions, which is *“to be educative communities and not exclusively supporters of principles, ideologies and power dynamics that concern both the two institutions and the politically-oriented choices of (adult) individuals.”*²

Alternatively to the CRE, the regulation provides for several options: an alternative activity established by the school itself which should, as suggested by the 1986 Ministry Circulars, Nos. 128, 129, 131, and 131, address topics concerning ethics, values, tolerance and peace. This activity should be imparted by any teacher who is, at the time, available. Another option is tutoring (revision, in-depth studying) or, for high school, a study activity without the presence of any teacher, within the school premises; lastly, a very used option is the early exit from school (or delayed entry).

² G.P. Meucci, Una politica per i giovani, «Bambino incompiuto: per una nuova cultura dell’infanzia e dell’adolescenza», 1, 1984, pp. 6-7, cit. in E. Butturini, La religione a scuola, cit., p. 228.



As for grading, Law no. 824 of 1930, in implementation of the Lateran Pacts, is still in force: instead of marks and examinations, the teacher drafts a special report for the student's parents, which is attached to the regular school report card concerning the interest with which the student is following the subject and the benefit which he or she is gaining from it.

The Consolidated Law on School Legislation (Article 309 of Legislative Decree 297/94) provides that, unlike before, the special report is "to be delivered together with the regular school report" and no longer "to be included in the school report" as recalled in the 1930 law.

As for the teachers, the criteria necessary to be able to teach this subject are established by the Agreement between the Italian State and the Catholic Church, according to which in kindergarten and elementary schools CRE can be taught by section or class teachers which the religious authority has deemed to be suitable. It is possible for laymen and deacons, priests and religious people possessing the necessary qualification (diploma issued by an institute for religious sciences recognized by the CEI) to teach religion.

Since 2003, after having passed an open competition (written and oral test concerning general teaching and training techniques), 70% of the teachers are hired permanently; all religion teachers possess not only a duty assignment paper, like other teachers, but also a special warrant issued by the local Bishop who recognises their suitability to teach - it should be noted that in the last years this activity has more and more taken an interest with laymen and women rather than religious people.

So, with Law n. 186, 18th July 2003, concerning "*Rules on the legal status of catholic religious teachers of institutes and schools of every order and degree*", an open competitive exam was launched in order to recruit RE teachers and eventually took place in 2004. Since then, no other open competitions were convened and this caused serious problems related to the staff of religious teachers within schools: since some teachers have retired and no other open competition has been held, schools face problems of staff shortages and are forced to hire new teachers through fixed-term contracts every year. The problem lies in the fact that the European Court of Justice - Judgment of the Court (Third Chamber), 26th November 2014 - has ruled that school temporary employees - those in precarious employment - , with more than 36 months of service are entitled to a permanent contract. The ruling revived the hopes of hundreds of thousands of precarious workers who have covered vacancies within schools,



research bodies, universities and all public administration bodies for years.

During the government of Romano Prodi, at the end of the legislature, the outgoing Minister of Public Education Giuseppe Fioroni, with Circular 22nd April 2008 no. 45, laid down detailed rules concerning “Curriculum Indications [related to kindergartens and to the first school cycle - primary school and lower secondary school] with regard to the teaching of the Catholic Religion.” The ministerial text granted, without objecting, the request of the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) to 'harmonize' the teaching of Catholic religion with other teaching subjects - a proposal that brings with it the idea that the entire public school education activity should be permeated by the Catholic doctrine.

Further, it was still Minister Fioroni who set up a special 'school credit' for students attending the teaching of Catholic religion, which represents a strong advantage related to the calculation of the average of marks in view of the final exam. The inconsistency lies in the fact that this is only theoretically possible for those who choose alternative activities, which schools often do not provide.

In 2009, with ruling No. 7076, 17 July 2009, the T.A.R. of Lazio allowed two appeals addressing the annulment of the Ministerial Orders issued by Giuseppe Fioroni, the then Minister of Public Education, for the State Examinations of 2007 and 2008, which required the evaluation of the students' attendance to the Catholic Religion Education course in order to establish the overall school credits, and thus the full inclusion of Religious Education teachers during the assignment for marks. The Council of State (May 7th, 2010) reversed the ruling of the T.A.R. of Lazio, which had expressed itself against the Fioroni decree.

On October 29th 2008, Decree Law no. 137, better known as the Gelmini Decree (Mariastella Gelmini served as Italian Minister of Education in the Berlusconi IV Cabinet until November 16th, 2011), was converted into Law no. 169 of 30-10-2008. As for grading, an analytical judgment has been added to the decimal marks, in order to avoid reducing the whole evaluation activity to a mere accounting process. Promotion to the next class can only be denied by unanimous decision of the teachers in the primary school and by a majority decision in high-school. The promotion of the student depends on the decision expressed by the class council – so, not on the basis of the average of marks - of which the CRE teacher is also a member with deliberative vote.



In November 2014, with reference to the consultation promoted by former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi preparing a reform of public school (*“La buona scuola”*), some Italian professors of historical-religious subjects, belonging to SISR (Italian Association of Historians of Religions), had addressed a document to Stefania Giannini of the Ministry of Education³. They were asking for a meeting to discuss the possibility to insert an hour of *“Storia delle religioni”* (*“History of religions”*) in school curricula. This meeting never occurred.

For what concerns the reform, which was eventually adopted by the government of Matteo Renzi (Law July 13th, 2015, n. 107), it is featured by the absence of any reference to CRE teachers or the teaching of Catholic religion. The law deals generally with the management of teaching staff without going into the details of individual subjects, apart from a few exceptions that still do not concern CRE.

4. Religion/s and Multiculturalism (considering other religions and/or considering intercultural aspects inside the religion of the country) inside the curriculum (current situation)

The principle of *“laïcité positive”*, as applied to education, can refer to the knowledge of the religious phenomenon and of religions in general, in the respect of differences and faiths (or non-faiths), in personal (non) religious beliefs. In this sense, places of meeting, exchange, and education are multi- and inter-cultural laboratories which should spearhead all new challenges for creating processes for peaceful interactions and cohabitation among cultures, including religious cultures (Willaime 2014).

As for the Italian case, an increasing share of students coming from a diverse population and religiosity are disrupting the long-established cohabitation of the Catholic Church and the State in the public sphere. Today Italian schools, especially due to immigration fluxes during the last two decades - which have put the country among the top receiving destinations in all of Europe since the 2000s - are characterized by a strong diversity: Italian residents with foreigner origin (5-19 years) are 799.714, more than 13% of the population. The largest foreign community comes from Romania (22.9%), followed by Albania (9.3%) and Morocco (8.7%). Accordingly, several languages are also spoken in the country: the Romanian language

³ <http://sisr.unime.it/>



is the mother tongue for more than 800,000 people in Italy, followed by Arab (almost 500.000 people), Albanian (almost 400.000 people) and Spanish (255.000).⁴

The same variety is found concerning cultures and religions. Although national census in Italy does not include questions about religious affiliation, a majority of the population, one way or another, still identifies itself as Catholic and is affiliated to the Catholic Church, while about four percent are members of other religions or other Christian denominations. In Italy, as in many other countries in Europe, Muslims represent an increasing number of the population (about 1.500.000), primarily due to immigration, in particular from the area of Maghreb.

Catholicism, furthermore, is often said to be central to Italy's collective identity as well as to its culture and national heritage. However, critics as well as younger generations and students attending school observe that Italian culture and life are no longer as Catholic as they once were (Mazzola in Willaime 2014). According to Eurispes - Institute of Political, Economic and Social Studies (Italy Report 2016), ours is still a Catholic country, but only one in four is actually practicing: 71.1% of Italians still identifies itself as Catholic, but only 25.4% is actually practicing.⁵

The different relationships entangling Italy's political and cultural institutions and the education system traditionally regard the search for a common path that conciliates religion, religious diversity and secularism as a confrontational and divisive field of action.

From a practical point of view related to the contents of CRE, the curricula are determined on the base of a Decree of the President of the Republic (D.P.R.), in particular:

D.P.R. 11th February 2010, concerning CRE programs for kindergartens and first school cycle - primary school and lower secondary school;

D.P.R. 20th August 2012, no. 176, related to the implementation of the *Intesa* between the CEI (Italian Episcopal Conference) and the MIUR (Italian Ministry for Education, Universities and Research), concerning recommendations for the teaching of Catholic religion in Secondary Education and Vocational Education and Training.

⁴ <http://www.tuttitalia.it/statistiche/cittadini-stranieri-2016/>

⁵ <http://eurispes.eu/content/rapporto-italia-2016-la-sindrome-del-palio>



For the purposes of this research and of the project in general, we will analyze the main features of D.P.R. 11th February 2010, which refers to CRE in kindergartens and first school cycle.

Kindergarten is assigned a yearly total of 60 hours of CRE (one and a half hours per week). The set of Skills Development Goals conceived by the legislator are entirely permeated by the doctrine of the Church: the pupils discover in the stories of the Gospel the person and the teaching of Jesus, from whom they learn that God is the Father of all, and that the Church is the community of men and women united in his name; they start to recognize some symbolic and figurative languages typical of Christians' traditions and life (signs, religious holidays, prayers, songs, gestures, environments, arts, etc.) and they start to learn some of the terms of Christian language, listening to simple biblical stories.

For what concerns the first school cycle - primary school and lower secondary school - the description of the Learning Objectives included in D.P.R. 20th August 2012, no. 176 is indicative and states: "*Learning objectives for each age group are divided into four theme spheres, taking into account the centrality of the person of Jesus Christ:*

1. *God and men, with main historical and doctrinal references to Christianity;*
2. *The Bible and other sources, in order to provide for knowledge on a documental basis;*
3. *Religious language, in its verbal and non-verbal declinations;*
4. *Ethical and religious values, in order to illustrate the link that connects religious elements with the growth of a moral dimension and the development of a civil, responsible and sympathetic coexistence."*

Catholic Religious Education, while offering a first overview of the historical-positive elements of the Christian Revelation, encourages and follows the intellectual development and all other aspects of the person through an in-depth critical analysis of the core issues of life. The educational proposal of CRE allows reflection on the big questions related to human condition (identity research, relationship life, complexity of the reality, good and evil, value-based choices, origin and end of life, radical questions of meaning ...) and urges the comparison with the answer developed within the Christian tradition in respect of the process of personal growth and in different ways according to the specific age group, by studying in depth the anthropological, social and moral implications and by promoting a



comparison through which the student, in the exercise of his/her own freedom, reflects and is oriented towards the choice of a responsible life project.

The set of Skills Development Goals and Learning Objectives related to the different school grades feature the presence (yet weak) of elements concerning the issue of “interreligious dialogue”, in particular: students are aware that the Bible is the sacred text for Christians and Jews and a fundamental document of our culture, knowing how to distinguish it from other categories of texts, including those of other religions; students are aware of events, people, and structures of the Catholic Church since its origins and compare them with those of other Christian confessions, highlighting the perspectives of the ecumenical path; students are aware of the origins and development of Christianity and other great religions and are able to identify the most important aspects of interreligious dialogue; students are able to compare the Bible with the sacred texts of other religions; students discover the answer that the Bible gives on human condition and are able to compare it to the ones of the major non-Christian religions.

At the end of the first school cycle, students should be able to interact with people with different religious beliefs, developing an identity that is open to confrontation and dialogue. This, together with other competences, is to be achieved through the following Learning Objectives: to understand some fundamental categories of the Jewish-Christian faith (revelation, promise, covenant, messiah, resurrection, grace, Kingdom of God, salvation, ...) and compare them with those of other major religions; to identify the specific elements of the Christian prayer, also making a comparison with those of other religions; to know how to express the main reasons supporting the ethical choices of Catholics concerning affective relationships and the value of life from its beginning to its end, in a context of cultural and religious pluralism.

Some Learning Objectives link religion to the field of art and cultural heritage, in particular: to identify the biblical texts that inspired the main Italian and European artistic productions (literary, musical, pictorial ...); to recognize the expressive languages of faith (symbols, prayers, rituals, etc.) by learning to appreciate them from an artistic, cultural and spiritual point of view; to recognize the Christian message in Italian and European art and culture of the late-ancient, medieval, modern and contemporary times.



It is also worth mentioning the ambitious attempt, included in the set of Learning Objectives, to propose a non-conflicting vision of the relation between religion and science: “to consider the perspective of Christian faith and the results of science as distinct but non-conflicting interpretations of man and the world”.

As mentioned in chapter 3.2, alternatively to the CRE, the regulation provides for several options: an alternative activity established by the school itself which should, as suggested by the 1986 Ministry Circulars, Nos. 128, 129, 131, and 131, address topics concerning ethics, values, tolerance and peace. This activity should be imparted by any teacher who is, at the time, available. Another option is tutoring (revision, in-depth studying) or, for high school, a study activity without the presence of any teacher, within the school premises; lastly, a very used option is the early exit from school (or delayed entry).

With regard to the first option (alternative activity established by the school itself), it is worth mentioning that some Italian schools provide themselves with ‘enhancement teachers’, who are nominated by the Regional School Office. In Liceo Classico A. Mariotti (Perugia, Umbria) for example, since the program of constitutional and civic education is often not carried out (in this case, it should be up to History and Philosophy teachers) and since a law course is not foreseen in the educational planning of the school, the headmaster along with the teaching board decided to introduce a course of constitutional and civic education addressed to those who have chosen not to attend the hour of CRE. Other schools, especially technical institutes, opted for the implementation of technical courses, more suitable to their specific educational planning.

Display of the crucifix in Italian State schools - In the last decades the display of the crucifix in State schools has been defended not as a religious symbol, but as a cultural and national symbol (Ferrari 2011; Luzzatto 2011; Giorgi and Ozzano 2013). Both in political and cultural debates, discussion revolves around three different cultural and religious meanings of the crucifix: a *sacred/religious* symbol, a symbol of *cultural heritage and national/western identity*, and a universal symbol of *tolerance and freedom*. Because of the ambiguous juridical framework and these meanings, different frames have emerged about the crucifix displayed in public spaces and particularly in schools. The Italian debate stands out in relation to the rest of Europe because it was the only significant debate about Christian symbols in public schools to be raised in a EU Member State (Giorgi and Ozzano



2013). Additionally, the issue was enlarged to involve Europe, with the ECHR and the development of oppositions, coalitions and tensions (Annicchino 2010).

The obligation to display crucifixes in schools goes back to the times before Italian Kingdoms were unified, in which the Catholic Church detained the monopoly of education. The practice was maintained in the early system of public education in the Kingdom of Italy after it was unified. However, as a result of tensions between the Catholic Church and the State, and following the secularization of Italian society, the obligation of displaying crucifixes was hardly met. In an effort to enrol Roman Catholicism to its cause, Fascism endeavoured to restore the crucifix in classrooms. In Circular No. 68 of 22 November 1922, a few weeks after the Fascist takeover, the Ministry of Education took position against the lack of compliance with regulations regarding the crucifix.

A new relationship between State and Church began, marked by unilateral measures. Among these were the introduction of doctrinal Catholic Education in primary State schools and the reintegration of the crucifix in public places and State school classrooms, where it had been previously removed for being seen as the symbol of Roman Catholicism. It was thus seen as inappropriate in the school of a modern State committed to liberalism and separation. Under the Republican Constitution, in an increasingly secularized social climate, the crucifix disappeared from many schools. The display of the crucifix was overtly challenged after the Concordat of 1984, declaring that Italy was no longer a Catholic State. In an Opinion of 27 April 1988 (No. 63), the *Consiglio di Stato* proclaimed that the display of the crucifix was not incompatible with the secular environment of Italian State schools: the price to pay for 'saving' the crucifix was to emphasize its cultural dimension instead of its religious meaning. In fact, the crucifix, the administrative judges held, was not the symbol of the State religion, but it symbolized a universal value independent of any specific religious creed. But the story wasn't over yet.

In the context prosecuting someone for refusing to serve as an election inspector in a polling station where a crucifix was displayed, the *Corte di Cassazione* (Court of Cassation) in 2000 held that the presence of the crucifix infringed on the principles of secularism and impartiality of the State; the court upheld the principle of freedom of conscience of those who did not accept any allegiance to that symbol. It expressly rejected the argument that displaying the crucifix was justified because of it was a symbol of 'an entire civilisation or



the collective ethical conscience', and also of 'a universal value independent of any specific religious creed'. However, something different occurred in the following years. In the Lautsi case on the crucifix (2002-2011), after having exhausted national remedies – as we will see – the applicants complained to the European Court of Human Rights - ECHR that the display of the Catholic symbol in State schools' classrooms violated their consciences (Ventura 2013). The Lautsi case had originated in 2002, but Ms. Soile Lautsi applied to the Court of Strasbourg on July 7th, 2006 in her own name and on behalf of her two children, Dataico and Sami Albertin, after the Italian administrative courts had dismissed her claim. Ms. Lautsi alleged that the display of the crucifix in the classrooms of the Italian State school where her children attended breached her right to ensure that they receive education and teaching in conformity with her cultural philosophical convictions under Article 2 of Protocol No. 1, as well as her freedom of belief and religion under Article 9.

An unanimous chamber of the ECHR concluded that the compulsory display of a symbol of a particular faith, exercised by public authority in relation to specific situations subject to governmental supervision, particularly in classrooms, restricts the right of parents to educate their children in conformity with their convictions. It also infringes on the right of schoolchildren to believe or not believe. The Court was of the opinion that the practice infringes upon those rights because the restrictions are incompatible with the State's duty to respect neutrality in the exercise of public authority, particularly in the field of education. Italy was condemned for the violation of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 taken together with Article 9 of the Convention. The European Parliament, acting collectively, supported the previous view of the Italian government, arguing that in this specific context religious symbols had a secular dimension and should therefore not be removed.

The Grand Chamber reversed the 2009 decision on 18 March 2011 and three fundamental assumptions presided over the judgement. Firstly, the Court disappointed those who believed that at the core of the question was the incompatibility of the crucifix as the symbol of the State and the constitutional principle of Italy as a secular State. Instead, the judgement read that it was not for the Court to rule on the compatibility of the presence of crucifixes in State-school classrooms with the principle of secularism as 'enshrined in Italian law'. Second, the Court recognized in Italian authorities a wide margin of appreciation, taking the view that the decision whether or not to perpetuate a tradition



falls in principle within the margin of appreciation of the respondent State. The third assumption, which the Court found in favour of the Italian government, was that the Court accepted the heavy discrepancies in Italian case law in the subject matter, and the uncertain nature and reach of the disputed regulations.

The Grand Chamber did not accept the claim by Ms. Lautsi that the presence of the crucifix had a negative impact on non-Catholic pupils. The Court argued that there is no evidence that the display of a religious symbol on classroom walls may have an influence on pupils, so it cannot reasonably be asserted that it does or does not have an effect on young persons whose convictions are still in the process of being formed (Ventura 2013). The ECtHR ended up endorsing the view of the Italian government that the crucifix had to be regarded as a “passive symbol” whose impact on individuals was not comparable with the impact of “active conduct”. In addition, the European Court stated that the applicants had to conform to the will of the majority since it is compatible with the Convention that ‘the country’s majority religion’ enjoys a ‘preponderant visibility in the school environment’. The judges bought, without any serious scrutiny, into the inaccurate version by the government that ‘Italy opens up the school environment in parallel to other religions’. The Grand Chamber concluded that the display of the crucifix did not violate the Convention. It was decided to keep crucifixes in the classrooms of the State school attended by the first applicant’s children. Thus, the authorities acted within the limits of the margin of appreciation left to the respondent State – exercising the functions it assumes in relation to education and teaching – in the context of its obligation to respect the parents’ rights to ensure such education and teaching is in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.

The idea, widespread in the public and political debate, that the crucifix is a part of the Italian culture and history clearly still shows that Italy, despite its growing pluralism at social and popular level, still perceives itself and acts as a Catholic country in cultural terms and from an institutional point of view.

This marks the end of the story – for now.



1. The pedagogical approach

5.1 Teaching religion and pedagogical approaches after the Second World War

After the end of the world conflict, the Ministry of education decided to publish the Primary School Programs. In these documents the religion was constituted as a specific discipline. The writing of these programs benefited of the contribution of the American pedagogue Carleton Washburne, a student of John Dewey. The religion was conceived and was designed, like other disciplines, to promote the free development of the pupil so that he would create a feeling of fraternity. In the specific warnings of the religious program, it is stated that "religious education" inspires [...] the gentle figure of Jesus, as it is from the Gospels, "so that" in the children the love for God and the neighbor is improved». Always in the same warnings, it became clear that the particular importance to be given to the figure of Jesus was to be aimed at illustrating the moral and social teachings that came about and reminded that the teacher could draw religious education from the other subjects of the curriculum.

Appropriate figurations and reproductions of masterpieces of sacred art were intended as a contribution to the efficacy of this teaching, "acknowledging and pointing to an interdisciplinary approach, albeit at the principle of such teaching".

On 1st of December 1952, with a Ministerial Decree concerning timetables and teaching obligations in the media, classical, scientific and magisterial institutes, the weekly schedules of the various disciplines were established. For the teaching of religion, a weekly lesson of one hour was held in the gymnasium and in almost all the high schools, while two hours were appointed in the pedagogical high school.

Again in 1955 the new programs, in the premise, indicated that the purpose of primary education was to "ensure to all citizens the basic training of intelligence and character, which is a condition for a real and conscious participation in the social life. This training, prior to any professional purpose, means that primary school is elementary, not only because it provides the elements of culture, but above all because it educates the basic skills of a man. It was recalled that the indications expressed were "to our humanistic and Christian educational tradition: that is to the recognition of the dignity of the human person and to the respect of the values".



The general reform of the pre-secondary school (*scuola media*), established in the 60ties for the specific program of religion, recalled that "the teaching of religion will contribute eminently to the harmonious and complete development of the pupil". Attention was shifted from its strong recognition in the education system to its active role in promoting the development of the pupil. Always in the preface to religious programs, the teacher was called upon to help, through the presentation of the revealed truths, "to discover and live in the Church his vocation as a Christian, to imitate virtues, to observe, with the help of the Sacraments and of the prayer, the Lord's precepts", emphasizing through acknowledging the cultural value, its catechetical character.

In 1985, new educational programs for elementary school are published. The New Programs show that they have already received the spirit. Indeed, in the First Part of the General Premise, it is stated that elementary school "recognizes the value of religious reality as a historically, culturally and morally incarnated figure in the social reality of which the child has experience and, as such, the school makes it object of attention to the complexity of his educational activity, having regard to the religious experience that the child lives in his family and to mature feelings and behaviors of respect for the different positions on religion and refusal of any form of discrimination".

It appears very clear that towards the long path from the Second after-war time and the renovation of the General Agreement between the Italian State and the Catholic Church done in 1984, different are the aspects of novelty highlighted by the new formulation. Firstly, the same denomination, never used in precedents, of teaching the "Catholic" religion (although in the previous formulations the reference to the Catholic tradition was taken). This indicates that this teaching does not aim at a generic study of the religious phenomenon of human religiosity, but draws on religion itself and specifically to the Catholic religion in the forms and expressions in which the latter has historically manifested itself. This indication, however, should not be understood in a rigid and restrictive sense as if the religious teacher did not or could not deal with the developments and manifestations of the religious phenomenon present in the history of humanity. This openness can be seen if we consider the programs referring to religious education, which, in the years following the new agreement and the implementation of the Intesa of 14 December 1985, were enacted by Decrees of the President of the Republic.

However, in primary school of infancy, the "educational aspects of the educational activity of this school order" are the "universal aspects of religiousness", clearly alongside the specific aspects of Catholic values. For upper secondary education among the goals set out in the religious education program, it should be noted that the pupils "will begin to mature with the ability to compare Catholicism, other Christian denominations, other religions, and the



various systems of meaning; to understand and to respect the different positions that people take in ethical and religious matters", emphasizing in this way not only a notional approach to religions, but the need for comparison, respect and dialogue with different religious confessions and experiences.

This formulation of the Catholic religion programs, elaborated in the second half of the year, took into account the new current multicultural and social context.

The enhancement of religious culture should not be confined to a historical reconstruction of it, in particular of the Christian one, cannot be restricted to historical information. It must also take into account the continuous and proactive contribution in formulating answers to the fundamental questions of the Research of the meaning of the humanity. In particular, for the Primary school, it was stated that the choices of didactic activities had to take as a starting point the needs and interests of the children and the experiences that they live in the family, in the school, in the social environment and in reference to the Christian community. And later, among the criteria to be used in choosing the activities to be organized, it was stressed that it is necessary to "always enhance, without discrimination, the different experiences of children"

More recently, in 2009, the indications related to the school of childhood and the first cycle defined the goals of the development of skills and learning objectives for teaching religion. It is stated that "activities in the teaching of the Catholic religion [...] offer opportunities for the integral development of the personality of children, opening to the religious dimension and enhancing it".

Even more significant are the statements referring to religion as a discipline for the school of the first cycle. The recognition of the value of religious experience by the legislator starts, among other things, as always evidenced in this text. "The explicit comparison with the religious dimension of human experience plays an irreplaceable role for the full education of the person. It allows, in fact, the acquisition and proper use of cultural instruments that [...] allows communication also on otherwise unrepeatable and unknowable facts". The forms of confrontation with the religious dimension is also referred to the historical process of Catholicism: the comparison, then, with the historical forms of Catholic religion plays a fundamental and constructive role for civil coexistence, as it allows to understand fundamental aspects of the cultural identity of belonging and helps relationships between people of different cultures and religions. This formulation contains also the acknowledgment of the educational and social value played by the teaching of the religion in contributing to a civic coexistence open to dialogue and differences.



5.2 Religion as a discipline in Italy: the state of the debate

The main discussion in Italy is oriented along the vision that are more proper and relevant.

For some authors we can propose an ethno-historical-anthropological, religious culture, that could, as an alternative to the creation of a new discipline, be promoted by taking into account the dissemination of the different aspects of this culture in different disciplines. In this case, the disciplines that study and teach art should take care of the artistic aspects present in religions.

A second approach proposes the presence of religious culture as a "comparative study of religions". In this case, the school should guarantee a cultural approach to the phenomena that characterize Christian, Muslim, Hindu religion or other religions, and compares them to highlight the aspects of correspondence and difference, building a sort of synoptic reading of religions. In the school environment, this approach could result in religious education paths proposed in the different grades of school according to the comparative method.

A third approach proposes religious culture in the "scientific-critical-theoretical" sense, and as such it does not primarily aim to explain "how things are" but to critically consider the reasons why a certain religious culture is justified. In the case of Europe, and of Italy in particular, the discussion is addressed to the faith of Christian religion, but there's also a debate related to other religious traditions. Understanding in this way religious culture cannot stand out from confrontation with confessional theologies.

This is related to the contextual state of the art that allows to prospect the impossibility of the study of the religion, without the object of the study (religion without a religious context).

This one is the way the Italian government intends to propose for teaching this discipline in schools.

There is also a fourth approach: religious cultures can be understood in the sense of "psychogenic and philosophical-pedagogical" and the questions to which they are to answer refer to how, where and when the dimension of faith and religion is born and developed in the "man and the related accepted possibility of a free transcendence of the transcendent in human life and in the world to make the first and the second understandable". (*G. Bertagna, uale cultura religiosa nella scuola criteri per uno sguardo alla situazione italiana ed europea, in . aimi, a cura di, Autorit{ e libert{. Tra coscienza personale, vita civile e processi educativi. Studi in onore di Luciano Pazzaglia, cit., p. 356.*)



In short, the approach to a pedagogic research in term of religion as a discipline begins with a problem, but the effort to solve the problem or discuss it (because the problem is strictly related with a variety of attempts to understand the meaning of the human being) stir a plurality of suspicions or hopes that can be translated into acts. From these, the discipline takes shape, as a set of knowledge grouped according to specific criteria which, in the field of education, give rise to teaching and study religion as a subject.

In this perspective, interesting is the reflection of the Center for Educational Research and Innovation (OERC). In the text there are some first terminological definitions that trace the methods of meeting and working between disciplines. In particular, multidisciplinary and interdisciplinarity are defined.

Multidisciplinary is defined as juxtaposition of different disciplines, sometimes without any apparent relationship between them. Ex: music + math + history. This is the case with a problem that requires knowledge from two or more disciplinary sectors without, however, that the disciplines called to contribute are mutually modified or enriched. Somehow there is some disciplinary autonomy in solving the problem without the benefit of the discipline itself from the other disciplines involved.

Interdisciplinarity is understood as a juxtaposition of disciplines more or less close to within a certain field of knowledge. Ex.: Mathematics + physics or in the field of letters: French + Latin + Greek. In this case, it is emphasized the role of a specialist or not, a process of solving a problem, which uses external and diverse contributions from the disciplines without worrying about the issues inherent in the disciplinary elements that have proved to be useful to the predefined purpose. Focus is on solving the problem and not on the epistemological implications of the disciplines involved (CERI, Interdisciplinarity. Problems of teaching and research in universities, OCSE, Parigi 1973).

If we can divide the teaching of the religion in phase, we can propose this didactic approach stated that the *inter* and *multi*-disciplinarity is the pedagogic area in which the religion finds its conceptual place.

The **first phase**, *Analysis of the Educational Needs*, highlights, from an analysis of the Educational, Cultural and Professional Profile of the Students, the needs that the teacher points out in school. It is important at this stage to know the students, to identify the personal characteristics of the students, their communication skills, the openness to the other, the expansiveness or the confidentiality of the character, the expectations that move them to the proposals of the School, the personal resources they own.



In the **second phase**, *Identifying a Scope of Social Life and formulation of hypothesis*, the teacher should pay attention to the diverse cultural and associative realities of the territory to select the particular contexts that can be configured as a means of promoting students' unified knowledge and allowing them to achieve the identified educative objective. It will be useful at this stage to have a mapping of cultural and welfare associative realities, as well as institutional ones, without which it is difficult to design a formative alternative pathway that links school and society in the specific cultural and social context . More generally, this mapping phase should involve the school institution in order to build a "database" available to any other teacher and thus have a broad view of the territory and the training opportunities that it can offer to the school

The **third Phase**, identifies the educative action and the impact of the educative action. In this phase the use of the storytelling as way to discuss the problematic and critic interaction between the man and the religion. The story of the Bible, or better the stories of the Bible are origin of different approaches and cultural perspectives.

This discussion can/should generate an interaction among the students and the teachers, being the religion the pivoting discipline that can bring the class to increase the awareness about the problems and the personal ethic approaches.

5.3 Expected Pedagogic impact

The teaching of the religion, in particular the most common (the catholic religion) has impress an educative pathway to the personal ethical issues. The religion should contribute to prepare the students to face their social and ethic life, allowing them and prepare them to answer to questions related to the inner life and to the philosophical approach in life.

It can contribute to a more critical attitude towards the challenges of the social life, in particular related to the personal approach to behaviours and social relationships, preparing the students to have a critical and personal position and reactions to critical issues, such as drug, bullying and social networking extreme behaviours.



5.4 Conclusion

The main difference between teaching religion in schools and catholic Catechesis resides on the method and the language used and also in the formative proposal, that is very different from the "performative" announcement of catechesis. The teaching of religion is rooted in the school context. Catechesis is a requirement of the ecclesial context. It aims at the formation of man, who welcomes the vocation of being a Christian, responding to an announcement that can involve himself in person until a totalizing membership. Teaching religion's goal is the formation of man-citizen, also through religious culture, particularly Catholic, in comparison with the different visions of the world in the community. Teaching religion proposes specific content as an opportunity to read the cultural, existential, and spiritual context in which the pupil and the family live. It is based on motivations of anthropological-social, historical-cultural, pedagogic-didactic, in interdisciplinary dialogue. For this reason, teaching religion in order to develop a knowledge of skills, as indicated in the National Curriculum Guidelines, and to take into account the skills development goals at the end of primary school, declines them through four -modulated environments in each of the five years, respecting key competences, recommended by the European Parliament and the Council in December 2006 (2006/962 / EC).

In this context the teaching of the catholic religion is open to the presence of other believers that can contribute to the discussion about the ethical issues and find space for increasing the personal skills without changing their religion views and beliefs.



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