



Dialogue Culture as a Response to the Challenges of Secularity in Democratic Societies to the Religion Teaching

Eugenijus Danilevičius

Vytautas Magnus University, Department of Religious Studies, Gimnazijos g. 7, LT-44260 Kaunas, Lithuania,
eugenijus.danilevicius@vdu.lt

Annotation. The first part of the article analyses specific challenges established in modern democratic societies, such as consumerism, moral relativism, secularity, pluralisation, also problems, tensions, and conflicts in the religion teaching. The second part of the article focuses on the search for ways how the development of dialogue culture. The third part of the article presents the practical recommendations for the creation of a culture of dialogue in the religion teaching.

Keywords: *dialogue culture, development of dialogue culture, educational challenges religion teaching.*

Introduction

In modern democratic societies, consumerist philosophy, moral relativism, and secularity generate contradictions and tricky situations in the educational field as well. The pluralistic society calls for the abandonment of many traditional moral norms and seeks to remove them from the real life. A society in which not generally accepted, universal norms of human behavior and action are followed seeks to accept different competing or contradictory systems of these norms. By ignoring the existence of unified morality one as well rejects the possibility of developing constant moral principles and moral behavioral criteria in man. In Western societies, such changes are triggered by the rejection of religion as a source of values and norms of conduct. It is stated that the sacral, transcendental religion is inconsistent with the reign of progress, mind, and freedom, with all that has fully occupied the intellect of Western societies under the veil

of modernism. Nevertheless, the retreat from God, the moral crisis does not mean its death, yet these changes affect the moral behavior of people. A large part of humanity is experiencing a difficult era of the change in worldview and moral behaviour. One must survive the decline of the binding traditional moral influence and the emergence of a new relative morality.

Modern democratic societies are confronted not only with the challenges of the emerging secularity and a culture of despair that eliminates faith in God. In Eastern societies, especially those who profess Islam, a dialogue searching for common points of view is becoming almost impossible due to the cultural differences and the increasing religious radicalism, often resulting in an aggressive warfare. However, Pope Francis (2019) stresses the necessity of „interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding between the followers of both religions (Christians and Muslims), in this year that marks the eight-hundredth anniversary of the historic meeting between Saint Francis of Assisi and Sultan al-Malik al-Kāmil“. Such dialogue becomes complicated and with radical Christian religious groups or sects. Thus Christians, especially teachers of religious education, are faced with a very special task to be the creators of ecumenical interreligious dialogue.

In the face of the development of the spectrum of religions and the emergence of religious syncretism in Western societies, ecumenical dialogue becomes a necessity. Paul VI (1965) already stated that “in our time, when day by day mankind is being drawn closer together, and the ties between different peoples are becoming stronger, the Church examines more closely her relationship to non-Christian religions. In her task of promoting unity and love among men, indeed among nations, she considers above all in this declaration what men have in common and what draws them to fellowship” (§ 1).

Provisions emerging in a pluralistic society present new challenge for a growing and maturing person. Since there appears to be a few pluralistic approaches and relativism, one is convinced that there are no permanent moral principles, that many moral solutions are of temporal character and are dictated by the conditions in which one lives.

Moral relativism also influences educational thinking. What was accepted as the obvious and the true in previous educational didactic programs and was approved by parents and teachers, becomes debatable and controversial in a pluralistic society? In Europe, this stems from the philosophical world-view revolution: traditional Christian education in society has given its leader position to the philosophy of free consumerism. At the same time, the worldview, hierarchy of values, and lifestyle of most people changed. Pontifical work for ecclesiastic vocation (1997) describes the social and cultural situation in Europe as a multi-faceted contradiction among opportunities, events, excess supply and lack of goals, suggestions and planning: “Different and contrasting “values” are represented and exist together, without any precise gradation. <...> In such a context it is difficult to have a unitary conception or vision of the world, and in consequence, the ability even to plan one’s life is weakened” (§ 11).

From a religious point of view, this fragmented society needs a unifying factor for diverse groups and individuals. This factor could become a culture of dialogue, although today's information society is characterized by a lack of fair, people-centered dialogue. Bauman (2002) notes that contact with others is seen as a luxury (p. 28). The use of communication tools from a human point of view does not substitute the benefits of live dialogue.

In the face of these challenges and issues, the teacher faces a personal challenge in identifying and inducing his or her individual professional vocation by living in the "love dialogue of the two freedoms" (John Paul II, 1992, § 36) and not following the trend in modern consumer and pragmatic society to decouple the professional vocation from the order of love and theological vocation, which is the source of every vocation. Benedict XVI (2006) notes the direct connection between the dialogue of love and the truth: "the dialogue of love by its nature reinforces and enlightens the dialogue of truth".

Methodology

The formulation of the research methodology involved the development of a scientific framework for theoretical research. The main parameters of research were formulated.

Dialogue culture was chosen as *a research object*.

The research problem has been clarified by a question: how react to the challenges of consumerism, moral relativism, secularity, and pluralization to the religion teaching?

The purpose of the research was set: to present the culture of dialogue as a response to the challenges posed by modern democratic societies to the teaching of religion.

To achieve this purpose, the following *research objectives* were set: 1) to describe the challenges to the teaching of religion posed by the materialistic attitudes that have become entrenched in modern democratic societies; 2) to highlight the importance of building a culture of dialogue in the light of the challenges to the teaching of religion posed by the materialistic attitudes that have become established in the societies; and 3) to make practical recommendations for the development of a culture of dialogue in the teaching of religion.

The following *research methods* are used in the article. The scientific sources selected for the research were analysed using elements of textual analysis. The following types of analysis methods were used: "*Content analysis* – categorizing and discussing the meaning of words, phrases, and sentences. *Thematic analysis* – coding and closely examining the data to identify broad themes and patterns. *Discourse analysis* – studying communication and meaning in relation to their social context" (Scribbr Editing Services, 2021). The analysis of the object of the research necessitated the synthesis of parts of the dialogue, the integration of elements into a whole, of one object, or of various elements of one object into a coherent whole. The synthesis of the complex structure of the phenomenon of the

culture of dialogue and its various aspects justifies the interdisciplinary nature of the object of study. The elements of *synthesis methods* such as *systematisation of information* and *generalisation approach* were also used.

Challenges of materialistic attitudes of the modern democratic societies as reflected in the religion teaching

“Consumer society everywhere and always works in a very similar and stereotypical way – raising to the level of sacrum, not God, not culture, not morality, but *consumption* as the sole and absolute condition of self-survival” (Balčius, 2002, p. 13). In such an aggressive, consumerist environment towards fostering eternal values, the teaching of religion is becoming a challenge since it has little monetary value and does not aim to teach students how to make even more money. The pupils who choose religion classes do not expect any of this. However, how can one convey the message that man’s relationship with God is the essential one if the hearts and minds of most students are permeated by a man-reducing attitude, claiming that man is only the creator of matter and economics whose main task is to produce, offer, procure, and consume? How to convey a message to students affected by consumerism that a person is a religious being called to love, worship, and glorify God? The search for answers to these questions reveals a contradiction of the worldviews between a teacher of religion and most of his students. A teacher of religion may believe that a person is by nature a religious being because he lives in God, of Him and for Him; that an exceptional feature of man is not his ability to buy and consume, but a gracious call to live in unity with God, who in his grace helps to be his friend; that man must study theology not only because it is intellectually interesting or personally attractive, but because his life depends on the knowledge and love of God, and this knowledge brings joy and hope to man. Due to these provisions, most schoolchildren in a school regard a teacher of religion as a rather strange, difficult-to-understand, and absent-minded man.

The materialist conception of man, introduced by consumerism, that a person is a representative of humankind, a rational animal, an individual that can be treated as an object, essentially destroys the possibility of interpersonal interaction between a teacher and a student. Internalized into the inner spiritual world of a person, this materialistic concept of a human being makes interrelationship commodified, grounds them on pragmatic principles of gaining hedonistic pleasure or benefit. Due to the emergence of consumerism ideology within school pupils’ worldview, educational interaction and dialogue are practically impossible.

Pope Francis (2015) notes a certain dependence of human being on consumption: “Many people know that our current progress and the mere amassing of things and pleasures are not enough to give meaning and joy to the human heart, yet they feel

unable to give up what the market sets before them” (§ 209). The consumerist ideology’s aim to master the worldview of young people triggers an objective to develop resistance of young people to consumerist addiction.

Moral relativism prevents the acceptance of authoritative, traditionally accepted truth, renders any proclamation of it irrelevant, and fails to recognise its objectivity. Pontifical Council for Culture (2004) concludes: “A large part of secularised societies lives with no reference to religious authority or values” (§ 4). The skepticism of many current students is much higher than that of the teachers. The doubts of young people as to whether it is possible to know the truth first and foremost rise not from the difficulty of getting to know it, but from the more and more radical belief that it is not possible to know it at all. They are disappointed with the very idea of truth. Therefore, teachers of religion in state schools are faced with the challenge to be successful witnesses of the truth of life which has the ultimate Meaning and Purpose to students who often find themselves in *an existential vacuum* (Frankl, 1997) impacted by skepticism.

They wander in this vacuum between adolescent denial and adult intellectual moral agnosticism without ideals, without perfection standards, without reliable guides to distinguish the truth from lies. This is a regular phenomenon since students grow being influenced by pop culture in which cunning manipulation of facts and feelings is more valued than the truth, also, rapidly changing world of images in which spirituality is overshadowed by external forms, and the cult of a young body and artificial smiles overshadow the inner life dramas of man. Thus, most contemporary students model their lifestyles not according to the lives of the saints, but according to the cult of “stars” and celebrities created by mass media. When it comes to important life choices, many young people rely not on trustworthy authorities - the wisdom accumulated by mankind, on the teaching of the Church - but they admire and create their future based on the short-lived “stars” who often lead immoral lifestyle.

Moral relativism complicates the conveying of moral imperatives to students who, for example, often find it difficult to understand how a concept of being a human can be morally incorrect, if, in their opinion, each person can decide individually what it means to be human. In the presentation of religions, an educator teaching the moral question of a bioethical problem based on the teachings of the Catholic Church faces the challenge of pluralism of opinion, since many pupils consider the Magisterium’s attitudes, often contradictory opinions expressed by some theologian, a teacher or themselves are equally true and acceptable. These examples show that there is no moral authority and unquestionable truth in the worldview and culture affected by consumerism, based on which one can decide what is right and what is wrong.

Secularity, calling for immediate and complete separation between the state and the Church, is fundamentally contrary to the practice of religious education. It is particularly important for secularity to separate state-controlled institutions, such as schools, social work institutions, economic, cultural, and political divisions from religious institutions

and norms. It is also necessary to highlight the penetration of secularity into the family institution, which often attempts to limit the right of parents to educate their children according to their religious and moral beliefs and is often attempted to use the repressive structures of the state. In modern- society, under the influence of secularity, there is a certain expropriation and privatization of faith and religious beliefs, meanwhile depriving traditional religious institutions of their rights or possibilities to act. Traditional religious institutions have a duty to care for the spiritual life of men and the salvation of souls, especially in the fields of education, social care, and culture. With secular attitudes in the society, modern religiousness is reduced to a superficial commemoration of the mundane religious festivals and almost no longer affects the moral decisions of people. By isolating traditional religious communities from state institutions secularity impoverishes and subdivides society itself, since the mission of these communities is to provide man with spiritual orientations on self-knowledge, the meaning of life and orientation of life goals, the hierarchy of values, the problem of inevitable suffering, the salvation of the soul. Pope Francis (2014) discloses the true goal and consequences of secularity: "The process of secularization tends to reduce the faith and the Church to the sphere of the private and personal. Furthermore, by completely rejecting the transcendent, it has produced a growing deterioration of ethics, a weakening of the sense of personal and collective sin, and a steady increase in relativism. These have led to a general sense of disorientation, especially in the periods of adolescence and young adulthood which are so vulnerable to change" (§ 64).

However, secularity, in this case, does not seek the utopian idea of embracing religions and religiousness from society, it directs its forces to minimize the influence of institutionally strong traditional religious communities on society. In a sense, it eliminates serious competitors, whose place is taken by a variety of religious substitutes created by a religious syncretism that meet the need for human religiosity. Today's apologists of society secularization emphasize the sensitivity to the spiritual area of the human being since the question of spirituality is relevant to every person and is related to the acceptance and realization of universal values of goodness, love, truth, and beauty in their life. Thus, on the one hand, syncretism seeks to isolate traditional churches from the state and eliminate their practice in everyday life, especially where religious practices are not popular, where indifference towards traditional forms of experiencing faith flourishes, and on the other, religious syncretism becomes popular by offering alternative forms of religiosity and placing them under an attractive label of the new spirituality. In this perspective, religious syncretism encourages every person to create his own unique personal religion and spirituality. In this case, the teaching of religion faces the difficult-to-realize need for an almost absolute individualization of the teaching process.

One of the definitions of contemporary society is a pluralism. Contemporary society is characterized by high developmental levels of public goods, so it gets its pluralistic character on public and on cultural questions. Pluralism has an impact on the formation of

people's attitudes, public opinion and formation of culture. In such a society, a pluralistic mentality emerges. In the influence of pluralism, a person is given several choices and options, starting with purely materialistic goods of consumerism, services and ending with widely advertised various styles of living. An abundance of choices and options is attractive to the free citizen and creates a positive view of pluralism. Serious existential problems emerge because in the long term the view of a pluralistic world and influence of consumerism gets a radical form of imperative, while the opportunity for a morally valuable choice is significantly decreased by moral relativism which is taking over together with pluralistic ideology. Thus, in such pluralistic, consumerist, and plural valued societal system, especially a young person, is simply forced to choose from one side, while from the other side guidance of the eternal moral-ethic values which determines the success of this choice making is seen as an outdated and non-modern alternative among many others.

The creation of dialogue culture faces radical moral value changes in education because of impact of pluralism:

1. In classical education, the teacher and the student were both called to accept the absolute moral supremacy of the Decalogue and to follow its rules at school and in life. The common moral authority recognized by both participants of educational interaction was used as a starting point solving personal, communicational, or societal problems and was used as a moral ideal for both the teacher and the student and was their common goal. Because of the impact of pluralism and moral relativity in contemporary education, the absolute constant morality (the Decalogue) is rejected as outdated and dictatorship-like and instead they are invited to use relative personal morality. After abolishing moral ideal as a common goal, the implementation of educational function is impeded because then both participants lose their directions for improvement and starting point solving problems of various complexity levels and their meetings become a self-targeted exchange of equivalent opinions.
2. In classical education the teacher has attributed the authoritative part of the manager and in contemporary education affected by pluralism is prevailed by attractive humanistic ideas that exalt the child to the center of the process. This pedocentrism often is made absolute and grows into a cult worshipping the student. Instead of asking the child to obey to the spirit of thinking and calling to use established behavioral and moral norms, it moves to tolerating manifestations of child's selfishness and gratifying them.

In the face of challenges created by society's materialistic attitudes to the religion teaching problem, questions arise: What answers to these challenges a religion teacher can give? How to rebuild the interaction between the student and the teacher which was damaged by materialistic comprehension of a man? How to resonate with the God written desire for love and truth in the students and stay in dialogue with them?

The importance of creating a dialogue culture in a society prevailed by materialistic attitudes in the perspective of religion teaching

To summarize challenges which are created by prevailing materialistic attitudes facing religion teaching in modern democratic societies we can say that based on human naiveness and natural desire for happiness materialism offers worldview models which confuse students' hierarchy of values, rule young people and lead them to addiction of various consumable objects.

Impacted by materialistic worldview a person interiorizes the act of a consumer. He takes himself and other people as goods whose value depends on the extent of their demand. This approach to a human being leads to the use of a person as an object to reach your own goal. Having this understanding of another person pierced by consumerism he is unable to make interpersonal relationships with other people, nor with God, thus determining himself for loneliness, because the love connection is possible between subjects, but not between objects. Ratzinger (1995) affirms that "if there is no truth about a person, then he also has no freedom".

Contemporary pedagogical thought is increasingly aware of the decisive role played by interpersonal relations and the culture of dialogue in the realisation of human existence. Wojtyła (1997) puts an accent the importance of dialogue maxim: "The dialogue maxim is so successful, because it doesn't look away from tension, conflicts and battle, which are testified by the lives various communities and also it raises that what is just and good, what can be the source of goodness for the people. We need to acknowledge the dialogue maxim despite hardships with which we deal when implementing it" (p. 347).

A human being is really existing, individual, spiritual and embodied, able of making interpersonal relationships and a being. Direct personal relationships make present the people creating them, improves them and they open to each other. Do religion teachers in schools teach children to communicate, listen and talk? These are very important parts of creating and maintaining dialogue. The art of communicating helps make connections with other and helps to search for the truth with all people of the community, which, according to Benedict XVI (2009) is important for the beginning of communion: "Truth, in fact, is *lógos* which creates *diá-logos*, and hence communication and communion" (§ 4).

Nowadays a religion teacher understanding his calling to be the creator and the supporter of dialogue culture, must know the inner world of students very well so that he could find ways to communicate with them in such a way so they could hear him. Encountering one sided imprints of materialism in the worldview of many students a religion teacher must determine the causes why many students become people who do not understand him. This way the job of a religion teacher will become a joyful and merciful service to students affected by materialism.

Madden (2020) „raises two concepts as integral to professional learning in a Catholic context: Dialogue and Community. These concepts are highlighted as theologically and strategically important for Catholic school communities to attend to and explore“. Dialogue is one of the most important methods of developing interpersonal communication and education. Education is a communication process, interaction between the teacher and the student, and for the smooth running of it, the teacher needs the competence of dialogue creation and theological-philosophical knowledge. This competence strengthens mutual trust, helps the student feel dignified, enhances his development, facilitates the exchange of thoughts, opinions, and intentions, also creates the atmosphere of trust. Dialogue culture is becoming an important educational action which ensures accurate and adequate communication activities in everchanging and most often unpredictable educational situations. The competence of creating dialogue can be attributed to common competences, because it fits the attributes in their definition: “common competences are knowledge used in the long term, skills, views and moral value orientations, which determine the overall education of the personality, its professional flexibility and mobility” (Laužackas, 1999, p. 41).

A dialogue is a conversation between two people. Stančienė and Žilionis (2006) claim that the understanding of dialogue according to the representative of dialogue philosophy M. Buber is based on “personal encounter with God, with the Other, that is the act of address-say, during which is listened and being listened to” (p. 45). Buber (1937) when trying to define logic of finite objects and subjects uses the term “me-item” and when defining relationships based on infinity uses “me-you” term. He says that love is not a feeling when one subject desire the other, but the quality of “me-you” relationship, which appears without intervention.

Dialogue is an essential component of the concept of vocation. John Paul II (1992) defines vocation as “the history of an inexpressible dialogue between God and human beings, between the love of God who calls and the freedom of individuals who respond lovingly to him” (§ 36). F. Ciardi (2005) reveals the true meaning of vocation, which “reveals in this fruitful dialogue of love. *The meaning of vocation is the love dialogue itself*” (p. 10).

Integrating these insights, we get new definitions of the teacher’s vocation: “The vocation of a teacher is the embodiment of personal presence in the dialogue of love between the two freedoms in the interpersonal pedagogical interaction between educator and pupil. The vocation of a teacher is the consolidation, in a dialogue of love, of the inclinations, abilities, professional interests and demands of the world of work” (Danilevičius, 2013, p. 94). In this perspective, the teacher’s vocation is love dialogue inspired “God’s invitation and an internal impulse to gift oneself for the society in professional field and trying to give a meaning and reaching personal professional purposefulness, interest and motivation” (Danilevičius, 2008, p. 63). Being in the dialogue of love gives the teacher feelings of altruistic and self-sacrificing love, serving others and the common good, creating future, living purposefully, harmony between personal life and God given plan.

The creation of interpersonal love dialogue between the teacher and the student, respecting each other's freedom, persons subjectivity, uniqueness, and otherness are what must become the most important part of teaching religion in a school. So, each teaching interaction has the character of being unique and non-repeatable. Teaching religion requires consensus, not dictate; it is an offer, not an imposition; it is an opportunity, not a necessity; it also has some risk that the interaction will fail, because a good intention is not enough to guarantee its success. John Paul II (1992) says that every person has a single, non-repeatable and unique vocation, spiritual experience, and life story (p. 75). An exercise is made to the religion teacher to take each student's persona with respect. Each educological interaction must focus on a young person, who is understood as a child of God who has his own development and potential, who needs to get the best possible conditions to bloom for his own and society's good. The human experiences, searching and internal spiritual life of a student doesn't fit into the syllabus and behaviour norms. Non-reducible human dignity coming from God and the fact that the student is human and free decision making makes the basis for teaching religion.

Dialogue has to become one of the main methods used in religion teaching. Interpersonal interaction between the teacher and the student makes the interaction accurate and possibly adequate communication activity in changing pedagogical situations, so to make, keep and manage the pedagogical interaction competence of creating dialogue is needed, which requires interdisciplinary preparation. A teacher who can communicate with students creates conditions to exchange thoughts, opinions, and moral values, mutual improvement happens in this pedagogical interaction. Also, a trusted environment is created, which is an important requirement in creating dialogue.

The dialogue creating competence of a religion teacher can be called a competence of dialogue culture creating and it is characterized by respecting the dignity of a student as a person, strengthening his confidence in his own powers and ability to recognize, promotion of material absorption and creative thinking. Religion teaching in the form of love dialogue requires full openness of all its participants, sensitivity to other person and his thoughts, getting rid of egoistic teacher-know-it-all position, and, at the same time, empathic acceptance of another person.

Religion teaching raises the task of creating a place for the happening of love dialogue and being the place, in which using actual learning material and suitable means and methods in love dialogue a new environment open to changes directed for good are created. But dialogue creation and keeping might encounter a lot of interferences: teachers' inability to create love dialogue because of lack of competences or being used to authoritarian relationships with students, too big concentration on passing on knowledge, using schematism and memory-based teaching/learning methods, not overcoming routine activities and others. In the practice of education policies, teacher preparation, and pedagogical activities the competence of creating dialogue is not valued enough.

The development of religion teachers' competences of dialogue creation becomes an agent of spreading dialogue culture in society and encourages the respect for a person and his dignity, revealing the talents and abilities of the person, strengthening the trust of other members of society develops the material absorption and creative thinking abilities.

Pontifical work for ecclesiastic vocation (1997) sets out the main tasks for the person of the future: 1) To participate in dialogue and love culture. 2) To unite more and more the Churches and peoples of Europe and to reconcile souls. 3) To know the mystery of God more intensely and to know how to celebrate the experience of God and to show the presence of God in the events of life. 4) To witness and celebrate the beauty of human love blessed by God (§ 12). These tasks could be used as guidelines for the contemporary teacher of religion who seeks to develop witnesses of hope, faith, and love.

Practical recommendations for creating dialogue in teaching religion

1. To strengthen the self- and other-awareness, communicative competences, awareness, harmony of faith, and lifestyle of teachers of religion.
2. To include more theological, philosophical, and psychological courses in the studies curriculums of preparing religion teachers, also to introduce mandatory modules of philosophy and communication psychology.
3. Disseminate through information sources the importance of creating and maintaining dialogue to give meaning to the professional activity of teachers of religion. To organise TV programmes, lectures, celebrations, and events to promote the idea of dialogue.
4. To cherish the dialogue creating a school community, encouraging learning working together, the use of reflections, team and individual problem solving or using other active learning methods, to enhance dialogue situations between teacher and students during school activities.
5. To strengthen the solidarity of the school community which consists of the students, their parents, school personnel, and their social partners creating more opportunities to communicate and work together.
6. To implement mandatory education philosophy and communication psychology modules, to teach not only the theory of communication and dialogue creation, but to also develop practical communication skills with students of various ages. It is very important to develop interpersonal dialogue keeping abilities, which are essential in creating good relationships with students, like showing understanding and agreeing, active listening, avoiding critique, using paraphrases and other communication methods. Satisfactory communication maintains the symmetry of relationships, learning on both sides and helps develop partner-like competence of communication.

7. The quality of pedagogical activity and results directly depends on teachers' communication abilities, so the standards of preparing religion teachers should be updated with the new *competence of creating dialogue*.

Conclusions

The domination of consumerism, moral relativity, secularity, and pluralism in contemporary democratic societies disturbs the creation of dialogue culture, raises moral value chaos which burdens the opportunities of moral teaching and creates positive terms for a person to be found in existential loneliness. In this anti-dialogue culture, the eternal universal values lose their significance, the person becomes an object of consumerism, the aim to have better opportunities to consume material goods and experience pleasure is put into the center of life. The material understanding of a person pushed by consumerism deforms the educational interaction between a teacher and a student from its core.

Moral relativism complicates the passing of moral imperatives to students by destroying authority and traditionally accepted truths. When evaluating one or another moral problem, the teachings of the Magisterium, the opinion of one or another theologian, the position of the teacher or themselves students affected by moral relativism take as equal and are guided not by authorities of acknowledged moral provisions, but by moral norms created by themselves.

The secularization happening in contemporary modern-day societies encourages the formation of new, non-traditional religions. Due to immigration, the number of Islam believers are rising. These tendencies raise a special problem for religion teachers to be the creators of ecumenical interreligious dialogue,

In the face of challenges raised by materialistic attitudes to teaching of religion the mission of the religion teacher forms: to be the testifiers of hope and creators of dialogue culture. So, religion teachers are important dialogue partners to their students on questions about faith and life. This dialogue is often happening not only during religion lessons, but also after them. As the dialogue proceeds among the teacher and the students, they are searching for answers to essential existential questions: Who am I? What is a human? Why do I live? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What is good and bad? Where does suffering come from? Which road leads to true happiness? What happens after death? Does God exist? etc. Creating and maintaining dialogue culture religion teachers play a crucial role in the school and in a modern democratic society. This service of religion teacher is important not only for the development of students in their worldview, but also it strengthens the humanity and community of schools and society.

The vocation of the teacher of religion is the personal embodiment of the dialogue of love between the two freedoms in the interpersonal pedagogical interaction between the teacher and the pupil. The competence of creating love dialogue is the ability to move a

personal love dialogue between two people, which is described as a theological vocation - love dialogue between man and God, to an interpersonal pedagogical interaction between a teacher and a student, a love dialogue of two freedoms. The existence of this dialogue allows the teacher to feel meaning in his activity and inspires professional improvement.

Dialogue helps to communicate in family, at school, to resolve conflicts, adapt to new conditions and carry out professional duties. It is especially important to develop the competence of dialogue creating for religion teachers, which is essential in creating good relationships with students: showing understanding and support, active listening, avoiding negative critique. But still, the art of dialogue is almost never taught in schools, nor implementing new programs of preparing religion teachers. So, this competence must be added to the standard of preparing religion teachers, their study curriculums and basic development programs trying to achieve teaching dialogue competences since primary school. The ability to create interpersonal love dialogue is an important factor for life's fullness. Being able to keep a dialogue helps in families, at school, resolving conflicts, carrying out work duties, achieving qualification development. The art of creating and maintaining dialogue is not included into interpersonal communication studies curriculum.

Trying to increase people's abilities of communication, talking, and dialogue creating, especially for future teachers, changes need to be made in preparing new teachers. Future teachers have to be taught not only communication theory, but also practical communicating among people. It is important to develop teachers' competence in creating dialogue, which is essential in creating good relationships with students, i.e., showing understanding and support, active listening, avoiding negative critique. The competence of creating a dialogue ensures symmetry of interpersonal relationships, learning on both sides, and helps develop common communication competence.

Perspectives for future research. For teachers preparing scientists and researchers who are solving fundamental paradigm problems it is offered to organize a wide discussion on the dialogue creating competence questions of development and providing, organizing, and performing needed wider studies on methodology of dialogue culture creation in educological, psychological, philosophical and theological research, and to the professionals of teacher preparation to take care of effective dialogue implementation in practice.

References

- Balčius, J. (2002). Vartotojų visuomenė ir kultūra. *Darbai ir dienos*, 31, 7–16.
- Bauman, Z. (2002). *Globalizacija – pasekmės žmogui*. Vilnius: Strofa.
- Benedict XVI (2006). *Dialog miłości i dialog prawdy*. [Dialogue of love and dialogue of truth]. http://www.opoka.org.pl/biblioteka/W/WP/benedykt_xvi/przemowienia/jednosc_chrz_17112006.html

- Benedict XVI (2009). *Encyclical letter Caritas in veritate*. http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20090629_caritas-in-veritate.html
- Buber, M. (1937). *I and thou*. Edinburg: T. & T. Clark.
- Danilevičius, E. (2008). Teologinio pašaukimo suvokimo svarba profesinės veiklos įprasminimui. *Soter*, 26, 59–70.
- Danilevičius, E. (2013). Profesinio pašaukimo identifikavimo kompetencijos ugdymas – asmenybės tiesos apie save pažinimo prielaida. *Logos*, 76, 91–100.
- Francis (2014). *Apostolic exhortation evangelii gaudium*. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html
- Francis (2015). *Encyclical letter laudato si*. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html
- Francis (2019). *To the members of the diplomatic corps accredited to the holy see*. http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/speeches/2019/january/documents/papa-francesco_20190107_corpo-diplomatico.html
- Frankl, V., E. (2013). *Žmogus ieško prasmės*. Vilnius: Katalikų pasaulio leidiniai.
- John Paul II (1992). *Post-synodal apostolic exhortation Pastores dabo vobis*. http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_exhortations/documents/hf_jp-ii_exh_25031992_pastores-dabo-vobis.html
- Laužackas, R. (1999). *Sistemoteorinės profesinio rengimo kaitos dimensijos*. Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universiteto leidykla.
- Madden, R. (2020). Dialogue in community: conditions and enablers for teacher professional development in Catholic schools. *Journal of Religious Education*, 68, 125–139. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s40839-020-00104-8>
- Paul VI (1965). *Declaration on the relation of the church with non-christian religions*. http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html
- Pontifical Council for Culture (2004). *Where is your god? Responding to the challenge of unbelief and religious indifference today*. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/pontifical_councils/cultr/documents/rc_pc_cultr_doc_20040313_where-is-your-god_en.html
- Pontifical work for ecclesiastic vocation (1997). *New vocations for a new Europe*. http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ccatheduc/documents/rc_con_ccatheduc_doc_13021998_new-vocations_en.html
- Ratzinger, J. (1995). *Tiesa ir laisvė*. <http://www.katalikai.lt/index.php?id=6&nid=323>
- Scribbr Editing Services (2021). *How to write a research methodology of dissertation*. <https://www.scribbr.com/dissertation/methodology/>
- Stančienė, D., Žilionis, J. (2006). Dialogo struktūros ir genezė. *Pedagogika*, 84, 44–47.
- Wojtyła, K. (1997). *Asmuo ir veiksmas*. Vilnius: Aidai.

Dialogo kultūra kaip atsakas į sekuliarizmo demokratinėse visuomenėse keliamus iššūkius tikybos mokymui

Eugenijus Danilevičius

Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Religijos studijų katedra, Gimnazijos g. 7, LT-44260 Kaunas, eugenijus.danilevicius@vdu.lt

Santrauka

Pirmoje straipsnio dalyje analizuojami moderniose demokratinėse visuomenėse įsigalėjusio vartotojiškumo, moralinio reliatyvizmo, sekuliarizmo, pliuralizmo keliami iššūkiai tikybos mokymui, aptariamoms problemoms, įtampoms ir konfliktams. Antroje straipsnio dalyje atskleidžiama dialogo metodo svarba ugdymo praktikai, o ypač tikybos mokyme. Trečioje dalyje ieškoma būdų, kaip dialogo kultūros ugdymas ir puoselėjimas gali tapti atsaku į modernių demokratiinių visuomenių keliamus iššūkius tikybos mokymui. Praktinį mokslinį straipsnio naujumą sudaro viena iš tyrimo išvadų-rekomendacijų, siūlanti dialogo kultūros kūrimo kompetenciją įtraukti į Mokytojų rengimo standartą, mokytojų rengimo studijų programas ir bendrojo lavinimo programas, siekiant mokyti dialogo meno jau vidurinėje mokykloje. Mokytojų dialogo kūrimo kompetencija yra būtina kuriant gerus santykius su mokiniais, t. y. parodyti supratimą ir priitarimą, aktyviai įsiklausant, vengiant pasmerkimo ir neigiamos kritikos. Dialogo kultūros puoselėjimas tampa ypatinga mokytojų misija, tačiau dialogo kūrimo ir palaikymo menas dar nėra pakankamai įtrauktas į interpersonalinės komunikacijos dalykų mokymo (studijų) turinį. Tikybos mokyme dialogas tarp mokytojo ir mokinio sudaro sąlygas vertybių interiorizavimui, dorybių ugdymui, užtikrina sklandų asmens vystymąsi, palengvina kitų žmonių supratimą, vysto sugebėjimus, leidžia formuoti nuomones, pažiūras ir pasaulėžiūras ir religines nuostatas.

Esminiai žodžiai: *dialogo kultūra, šiuolaikiniai iššūkiai tikybos mokymui, dialogo kultūros ugdymas ir puoselėjimas.*

Gauta 2021 08 04 / Received 04 08 2021
Priimta 2022 03 10 / Accepted 10 03 2022