

Discovering and supporting spiritual intelligence: Richness of spirit for the individual, blessing for the community

Final communiqué

1. The educational crisis of the last decades in Europe has made educators and teachers aware of the fact that school cannot only concentrate on the curriculum, but has to rediscover the dimension of holistic education.
2. Society in Europe sends out contradictory signals: on the one hand a new awareness for the meaning and purpose of life, values and longing for happy life, on the other hand persisting in a secular mentality combined with the inability to find an answer for all these questions in the Christian doctrine and the experience in established religions.
3. Religious education can provide valuable support to an holistic development of the individual and thus serve society. It supports what is referred to in recent research “spiritual intelligence” (Zohar – Marschall 2000). It is not a simple awareness of the emotional aspect (defined as “emotional intelligence”), but a much wider approach, characterized by a) openness for transcendence, b) search for ultimate meaning of life c) opening up one’s individual comfort in practical commitment for changing the world.
4. As children and young people have often different religious experiences and sensations it might be necessary to teach spiritual understanding by means of an aesthetic and existential approach.
5. RE has to balance between supporting religious awareness as a whole (i.e. in regard to emotions or a general religiosity), as well as teaching the doctrines of Christianity and/or other religious (i.e. in regard to institutions and cultural sphere). Spiritual intelligence includes both aspects.
6. We must overcome the idea that religious education is only individual well-being and concentrate on arousing the consciousness of each student for ethical-moral reflections and social commitment in the world.

7. Because of the great diversity it is not possible, to proclaim THE model of the most effective RE. Confessionbased RE, which is the most common form in Europe, is preferred by many educators, but the actual situation in many countries asks also for alternative answers. Each of these methods should be aimed at enabling students to face the challenge of religious questions.

8. To arouse and strengthen spiritual understanding one has to bear in mind that it is the educator who plays a most important role in this process. Therefore, one has to focus on excellent education and further training of teachers, an authentic spiritual life, rooted in religious institutions that is also visible to the general public.

9. Numerous research to RE prove the high standard of this “service” and the continuous strive for improvement.

For many young people this is the last and possibly only chance to get to know Christianity outside the only cultural dimension and open themselves for a religious life.

It is – as said in Mt. 9, 29 – the “seam of the dress”, that might lead young people to spirituality and perhaps even to belief.

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