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Christian Schools in Estonia

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This article consists of three parts: first, a description of Estonian society from the perspective of a value paradigm; second, an overview of Christian schools and their role in Estonia and; third, an explanation of the concept of spiritual education, which is used as a synonym to ‘Christian values education’ in the Estonian context. The article is based on my doctoral thesis, “Christian Values Education in Christian Schools and the Role of the Christian Schools in Estonian Society in the 21st Century”.

Estonian society and values

It can be said about the Estonian state that it is a democratic society that can be characterised through several value characteristics. The World Values Survey places Estonia among secular-rational countries¹, while the local survey “Self. World. Media” confirms that Estonians prioritise physical well-being and a safe environment². Both surveys lead to the conclusion that, while the role of self-expression as an important value is slowly increasing in Estonian society, the scale is still heavily weighted towards survival values.

¹ World Values Survey „Findings and insights“, <http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSCContents.jsp> Accessed on 14 May 2019.

² Peeter Vihalemm ja Anu Masso, „‘Mina. Maailm. Meedia’ metoodikast“, *Eesti ühiskond kiirenevas ajas. Uuringu „Mina. Maailm. Meedia.“ 2002–2014 tulemused.* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli kirjastus, 2017), 96–97.





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However, democracy is not something that lends itself to an unambiguous definition. To gain a better understanding of the stance of the Estonian state towards democracy, I examined the Constitution which, while being a foundational document of statehood, is also a compromise between different and occasionally conflicting values. For instance, in his presentation “Values in the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia”³, Hent Kalmo has observed the difficulty of reducing the Constitution to individual values. If at all, it can only be done in the preamble, which states that the Estonian state is founded on liberty, justice and the rule of law, but it becomes evident in a broader perspective that the Constitution is a document promoting a number of different values, and often also a compromise that can defend multiple conflicting values. As an example, Kalmo uses the debates about the Registered Partnership Act, which seems to protect the seemingly conflicting values of the so-called ‘traditional’ family and the inviolability of everyone’s family life, irrespective of its form (referring to §§ 26 and 27 of the Constitution)⁴.

It is a clear illustration of the value paradox that is inherent in democracy, i.e., a genuine possibility to support a wide range of different values. This is also reflected in the field of education. Schools and society are very closely connected and an understanding of the values of a society can be used to form assumptions about the values promoted at schools, or it can provide grounds for individual schools to choose the values that facilitate movement in a desired direction. As the question of whether schools exert a greater influence on society or are more likely to be influenced by society can never be fully answered, it is best seen as a process of continual interaction.

³ On 28 November 2014 at the joint conference “Rahva tahe – seadustega kujundatav või väljendatav?” of the University of Tartu Centre for Ethics and the Office of the Chancellor of Justice. The presentation can be viewed on-demand at <https://www.utv.ee/naita?id=21168>.

⁴ Hent Kalmo, „Väärtustest Eesti Vabariigi põhiseaduses“ (joint conference “Rahva tahe – seadustega kujundatav või väljendatav?” of the University of Tartu Centre for Ethics and the Office of the Chancellor of Justice, Tallinn, 28 November 2014), <https://www.eetika.ee/et/28-november-2014>.



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In order to understand democracy in the 21st century in particular, I would like to highlight two further important aspects: (1) power relations between majorities and minorities, and (2) a-culture.

The question of majorities and minorities can be examined at the level of groups or individuals, with both having links to the school context. In education, there are many discussions about providing equal content in a situation where students have different individual needs, which always leads to the question about ensuring a fair approach that would cater for the development needs of each and every student. The Estonian school network is based on the principle of providing all residents of the country with equal access to education. Most schools are managed by local municipalities, but there are also some state schools (state upper secondary schools) that belong to the administrative area of the Ministry of Education. Private schools can supplement education with certain ideological or pedagogical aspects (e.g., Christian worldview, Waldorf education) and offer subjects that cannot be taught at a public school (e.g., denominational religious education)⁵. As a result, the format of a private school is the only way to establish a Christian/denominational school in Estonia. There were 58 private schools with different orientations in Estonia in the school year 2021/22, which accounted for 11% of all Estonian schools (517 general education schools)⁶.

In the context of Christian schools, it is important to note that, according to the population and housing census of 2011, self-reported Christians constitute 28% of the population⁷ and 19% of the people would describe themselves as religious according to the “Life, Religion and Religious Life 2020” survey⁸. In statistical terms, they obviously constitute a minority.

⁵ §1(7,8) of the national curriculum for basic schools; §11(5) of the Private Schools Act.

⁶ Statistics website of the Ministry of Education and Research, www.haridussilm.ee, accessed on 21 October 2020.

⁷ Statistikaamet „Rahva ja eluruumide loendus 2011“, <https://www.stat.ee/rel2011>. Accessed on 20 September 2017.

⁸ http://www.ekn.ee/doc/uudised/EUU2020_esmased_tulemused.pdf





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The term ‘a-culture’ was coined by Jo Cairns in reference to the 21st century multicultural democratic societies where diverse cultures coexist, but there is no single intrinsic culture governing the state – it cannot be said that all groups of people share the exact same values and rely on similar basic principles. There is no ‘common consciousness’⁹. Sanjay Seth takes a step further, speculating whether it would make more sense to describe a liberal society as a collection of individuals who choose their own culture in that society, but notes that such a solution would disregard the role of culture in forming an individual as a whole and, therefore, is probably inaccurate¹⁰.

The complexity of the situation has been summarised by Andrew Wright who writes that, “Given the plurality of choices and options before us, it is increasingly difficult to make sense of a diverse and complex world. This has led, perhaps inevitably, to the collapse of a single shared high culture and its fragmentation into a diverse range of popular cultures”¹¹. Without going into an assessment of high culture vs. popular culture, it is important to note that the absence of a set cultural belief leads to fragmentation of society.

Both issues are important in the context of Christian education, as Christians and Christian schools constitute a minority in Estonia and, in an a-cultural society, it is particularly relevant to ask who is responsible for establishing the values of a specific interest group. As the content of school education lays the foundation for entire society and the value spheres of school and society cannot be too different in their essence, it is important to examine the decisions made by schools in this respect, and the opportunities they have.

⁹ Cairns, Jo; *Faith Schools and Society*; Continuum International Publishing Group; New York, USA, 2009, 34

¹⁰ Sanjay Seth, „Liberalism and the Politics of (Multi)Culture: Or, Plurality Is Not Difference“, *Postcolonial Studies* 4, nr 1 (april 2001), 70–71, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790120046889>.

¹¹ Andrew Wright, *Religion, education, and post-modernity* (London ; New York: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 3.



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If we accept the argument that one of the greatest educational crises of the present is related to the fact that the school is no longer linked to a particular community and its system of values¹², we can come to a conclusion that a-culture is simultaneously a problem and an opportunity. It is a problem, because our values can be quite different from each other, and we need to learn how to live side by side with people who have different values. Conversely, a-culture can create a sense of uprootedness or lack of grip due to the absence of a shared social framework about things that need to be valued the most. However, with regard to the majority-minority question, it also creates an opportunity to give more liberty to minorities, enabling them to rely on their own worldview, which should indeed be encouraged in a liberal democracy. There is a strong link to the school network because, very generally, the school system tends to be shaped by the majority and the option of greater differentiation (more consideration for minorities) is currently provided by private education. In the context of Christian education, Christianity as a worldview can be seen as providing a kind of fulcrum and a more specific set of values, even though things are not black and white within Christianity, either, as I observed before.

The survey “Life, Religion, and Religious Life 2015” provides an important insight into the image of Christian schools and religious education in general in Estonian society. It must be admitted that Christian schools are still a rather novel phenomenon and need to become a more established part of the educational landscape. I hope that subsequent surveys will add more material for comparison to see whether there is an increase in awareness over the years. The fear of brainwashing is still present in society and, curiously, Christian schools are also seen as institutions imposing a stricter discipline.

¹² Hargreaves, *Changing teachers, changing times*, 58. „The decline of the Judaeo-Christian tradition is the prime purpose underpinning schooling and teaching in a context of greater religious, cultural and ethnic diversity penetrating questions about the moral purposes of education. One of the greatest educational crises of the postmodern age is the collapse of the common school: a school tied to the community and having a clear sense of the social and moral values it should instill.“





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However, the prevalent observation is lack of information, which is reflected both, in the answers where respondents outright admit to their ignorance and in semi-mythical opinions about brainwashing and such. This, in turn, corresponds to Estonia's placement in the secular corner that appears from the World Values Survey. It would be very important to repeat the survey after a considerable number of classes have finished their studies (for many schools, 2022 is the year when their first students complete the curriculum), which would mean that a greater portion of society will have had some kind of experience with Christian schools. In addition, a repeat survey would indicate if and to what extent Estonia has shifted from survival towards self-expression on the world values scale, and how this has affected the value content of education.

This is the general picture of values in Estonia where Christian schools with their values form a part of the whole.

Christian schools in Estonia

There are in total 12 Christian private schools in Estonia, with the majority of them offering basic education, but increasingly moving towards becoming upper secondary schools. In the school year 2021/2022, these schools have a total of 2,571 students, including 265 children going to the kindergartens at the schools¹³. Denominational Christian education is only possible in private schools; religious education as an elective subject can be taught in general education, but it is available only in some schools. Consequently, only a minor part of Estonian society has access to Christian education, and it is important to ask: What is the role of the minority Christian schools, how do Christian schools prepare children for living and coping in an a-cultural or multicultural liberal

¹³ <http://www.kristlik.edu.ee/kool/> Accessed on 04.02.2022.





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society, and whether and how development of a child's identity is connected to raising them as a citizen in a liberal society¹⁴?

The question of necessity of Christian schools in the context of liberal democracy tends to produce two diverging opinions:

- Christian schools should not exist, because such separation is not consistent with liberal values.
- Christian schools are essential, as they are the only way to ensure that people with different worldviews have an opportunity to educate their children accordingly.

This difference of opinions is largely caused by the different ways liberal values are interpreted. As we have seen before, it is difficult to provide an unambiguous definition of liberalism. I describe liberal democracy primarily as a mode of governance that is obviously based on values but at the same time does not require a fundamental philosophical solution but rather, tends to lead to an a-cultural solution. In addition, as our Constitution declares that we have freedom of religion and freedom of thought in our state¹⁵, we cannot expect everyone here to have a single, universally applicable worldview. Instead, liberal democracy should ensure the existence of several educational institutions with different worldviews and thus, the argument that Christian schools are not consistent with liberal values is contradicting itself.

For the first opinion, the issue is about separation – there is a fear that children in Christian schools are raised in a ‘bubble’, lacking contact with ‘real life’. In this context, ‘real life’ is understood as a world where people come into contact with different cultures on a daily basis and live alongside them.

¹⁴ Baker, *Swimming against the tide*, 11.

¹⁵ §40 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia.



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If all children of Christian families are brought to study in Christian schools, it means that (a) they have no opportunity to study and live alongside children who have different worldviews and, (b) others have no opportunity to learn about the Christian worldview. Furthermore, in conversations I have encountered the fear that a Christian school cultivates monocultural children who will be in a vulnerable position as adults and can potentially have a destructive impact on society.

The main argument of the proponents of the second opinion is based on the freedom of consciousness, religion and thought that stems from human rights¹⁶ and as indicated above, parents have the prerogative to make decisions about their children's education¹⁷. If a parent prefers their child to be raised in a value sphere that is similar both at home and at school, they need to have a real choice and access to schools that define themselves through worldviews. At present, this is ensured primarily through private schools in Estonia¹⁸.

In my relevant study, I examined the issue more specifically from four perspectives and tried to assemble a broader picture. I asked, "What is the role of Christian schools in the 21st century Estonia

- according to school leaders;
- in relation to the results of the survey "Life, Religion, and Religious Life 2015";
- in relation to values appreciated in Estonia;
- in comparison with other countries?"

¹⁶ §40 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia.

¹⁷ §37 of the Constitution of the Republic of Estonia.

¹⁸ For example, the principles of the Union of Estonian Christian Private Schools, <http://www.kristlik.edu.ee/new/mtu/>. Accessed on 4 October 2017. In this context, it is also important to differentiate between worldview schools and the values formulated by the schools. Estonian schools are required to have a development plan, which sets out the values of the school; consequently, all schools have drafted a statement of their values, but private schools tend to identify themselves more directly as worldview-based schools.





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According to Christian school leaders, Christian schools are important in our society to provide Christian families with an option of aligning the values at home and at school where the child spends the largest part of the day, and of filling the gap in a situation where parents would like their child to receive religious education but cannot provide it on their own due to a lack of experience. In both cases, acquiring respective vocabulary and the courage and liberty to use that vocabulary plays an important role. However, the target group is not limited to children from Christian families; alignment of values is often seen from a broader perspective. The background here is a social gap, a period when Christian values were not spoken of, which has created a deficit of basic knowledge on religion.

The results of the survey “Life, Religion, and Religious Life 2015” reveal a cautious attitude towards Christian schools. Slightly less than half of the respondents were supportive or rather supportive of Christian schools, and nearly half of them were Christians. Every fifth respondent would have been prepared to send their child to a Christian school and 2/3 of those respondents were Christians.

Spiritual education, knowledge of God, information about Christianity, the Bible and religious customs, engagement with moral and ethical topics were identified as the main strengths of Christian schools. Conversely, those who preferred to avoid Christian schools did not want religious topics to be imposed on their children, did not live in a Christian family, or simply did not consider it necessary and had limited knowledge about the schools.

How does this fit with the general value appreciation in Estonia? The first answer is given by the aforementioned survey “Life, Religion, and Religious Life 2015” (EUU 2015) where respondents were hesitant about the necessity of Christian schools. Slightly less than half of the respondents thought that they are necessary, which makes sense if we consider our position on the Inglehart-Welzel world values map. Our clear placement in the secular-rationalist and survival sector indicates that religious choices are not a priority in our society, with only 18.8% of respondents saying that



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religiosity is an important trait to be cultivated in children. This background helps to understand the slight scepticism about Christian schools or the lack of awareness of their importance that is reflected in the results of EUU 2015. Sometimes, Christian schools are regarded through a lens of vicar Christianity – the attitude towards them is positive, but people still prefer to choose a different educational institution for their own children.

In an a-cultural or multicultural society, there are two options for education: either create differentiated schools for all cultural groups or try to support mingling of cultures. The first position emphasises alignment of values at home and at school, while the second prioritises the experience of functioning in a multicultural society. This issue is currently not particularly high on the Estonian public agenda but, based on the experience of other countries, potential problems can be associated with both, segregation in Christian schools (with Christians assembling together and not encountering representatives of other worldviews) and absence of Christians from municipal schools (non-Christian children do not meet their Christian peers). This issue should be acknowledged but considering the marginal role of Christian schools at this moment, it need not be over-emphasised. It is also important to consider that, in addition to children from Christian families, Christian schools include students from a diverse range of family backgrounds. The other aspect of this question is development of a child's identity in the form of an integrated self-image, which is easier when the child acquires firm roots, supported by the alignment of values at home and at school. In an a-cultural society, this approach supports a more concrete 'rooting' of children. On the scale of poor and strong position of religious schools, developed by Johan de Jong and Ger Snik¹⁹, Estonian Christian schools can be classified as moderate religious schools. The schools are based on a particular religious

¹⁹ Jong, Johan De, ja Ger Snik. „Why Should States Fund Denominational Schools?“ *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 36, nr 4 (2002): 573–87.





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tradition, but also provide broader knowledge of other religions and different religious approaches, which supports students' future coping in a multicultural environment.

In conclusion, it can be said that Christian schools play a multi-faceted role in Estonia and different stakeholders can have diverging perspectives in this regard. In general, their existence increases the options available to parents in choosing an education path for their children. For many families, Christian schools fill a social gap, as they on their own would not be able to provide their children with religious education. Being a full and equal part of the Estonian school network according to the applicable Private Schools Act, Christian schools can also serve as a kind of lab, testing different approaches to the provision of education. According to EUU 2015, providing knowledge about religion was seen as the main strength of Christian schools but unfortunately, this question was no longer included in the new survey and there is no corresponding information for 2020. It could be argued, somewhat controversially, that Christian schools in the Estonian context can often be more multi-cultural than they are in other countries, because they emphasise questions of values education and identity and provide children in a safe environment with religious vocabulary, which they can then use to express and share their religious beliefs with their peers, whereas such opportunity is usually not available in municipal schools. In a society that can be described through the keywords of 'liberal democracy' and 'a-culture', Christian education is one possible approach among others.

Spiritual education

In the context of Christian schools, the term 'spiritual education' is sometimes used instead of or alongside the concept of 'values education'. This term is not used only in the narrow Christian



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(school) context, but it has gained a wider use²⁰. This expression cannot be found in the Estonian Thesaurus, which seems to indicate that it is a relatively recent term. At the same time, the ideas of educating and caring for one's spirit have been present for a long time, including in one of Estonian core texts, the novel "Spring" by Oskar Luts.

Christian schools use the term 'spiritual education' as an important concept related to values education, often as a synonym to Christian values education. While religious education plays an important role in spiritual education, it is not exclusively limited to this domain. For instance, the Development Plan of St. Peter's Lutheran School of Tartu states:

"Christian values education or spiritual education: St. Peter's School provides spiritual education that:

- is based on Christian ethics and human values and establishes the foundation for the development of socially responsible individuals who respect the principles of civil society;
- presents Christian culture, the Lutheran tradition, Estonian cultural heritage and the history of the historic St. Peter's school."²¹

The Development Plan of Kaarli School specifies:

"We strive towards spiritual growth – fulfilment of internal spiritual education."²²

²⁰ For instance, on the website of Petrone Print <https://petroneprint.ee/lasteraamatud/sari-mis-opetab-ajalugu-ja-annab-hingeharidust/> and in Virumaa Teataja <https://virumaateataja.postimees.ee/2266931/kultuur-reaktor-tostab-kilbile-hingehariduse>.

²¹ Tartu Luterliku Peetri Kooli arengukava 2016–2019 http://www.luterlik.edu.ee/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/TLPK-arengukava_2016-2019-1.pdf.

²² Kaarli kooli arengukava 2016–2019, <https://www.kaarlikool.ee/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/KAARLI-KOOLI-ARENGUKAVA-2016-2019.pdf>.





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Therefore, based on the perspective of Christian schools, I would propose the following definition of spiritual education: Spiritual education means everything that is additional to knowledge at school, including engagement with students' beliefs and values, and answering their questions about being human and about acting in this God-created world.

The English term 'spiritual education' is used as the closest equivalent to the Estonian term 'hingeharidus'. However, it is important to note that the concept of spirituality can be understood differently in different cultures, and it should be approached with certain reservation. For instance, Canadian researcher Joyce E. Bellous writes about inclusive spiritual education as something that helps us establish connections with each other and with the world. According to her, the purpose of spiritual education is to equip people with tools of spiritual self-expression through word, emotions, symbols and action.²³

Another issue pertains to the question whether spiritual education is necessarily linked to a religious denomination or can it be 'religiously neutral'. An important debate in this issue took place in the 1990ies in the United Kingdom, where spiritual education has been identified as an important goal of education²⁴. In this context, I would like to illustrate the diverging approaches to spiritual education by summarising the trains of thought developed by some authors, namely Nigel Blake, David Carr, and Jeff Lewis.

David Carr is primarily interested in the meaning of the word 'spiritual', which does not lend itself to a clear solution, because it is indeed a highly complex concept. In particular, he emphasises its

²³ Joyce E. Bellous, „An Inclusive Spiritual Education“, *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* 24, nr 4 (2. oktoober 2019), 389–400, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1364436X.2019.1675603>.

²⁴ Elise Nemliher, „Spirituaalsuse arengu toetamine koolis – Eesti ja Inglismaa õppekavade sisuanalüüs ja võrdlus“ (Magistritöö, Tartu, Tartu Ülikool, 2017), 11–13.





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connection with the transcendent and argues that spiritual education should be limited to specific subjects, it cannot be something universal or holistic.²⁵ Thus, Carr would permit spiritual education at schools, but only as one of the subjects among others, not as something general.

Nigel Blake draws a rather strong dividing line between spiritual education and other kinds of education, arguing that spirituality and school education can never go hand in hand, because they are based on conflicting ideas and spirituality should always be linked to specific religious beliefs. It belongs to the teaching and traditions of churches and monasteries, which are not appropriate in the context of public schools.²⁶ On the one hand, these two positions can be regarded as similar: spiritual education must be kept separate; it is comparable to a differentiation between sacred and profane. On the other hand, they are very different in terms of their views about spiritual education having a place in schools or not. Similarly, Pike argues that all problems associated with Christian education can be reduced to the question of whether the world can be divided into private and public spheres, with religion being located exclusively in the private sphere.²⁷

The third position is represented by Jeff Lewis, whose argument is based on the holistic dimension of spiritual education. According to him, spirituality should not be understood as a separate category, but rather as a characteristic or a phenomenon. He summarises his views with the idea that spiritual education should not be limited to the domain of religious education, morals or arts. Instead, it is

²⁵ David Carr, „Towards a Distinctive Conception of Spiritual Education“, *Oxford Review of Education* 21(1) (1995), 83–98.

²⁶ Nigel Blake, „Against Spiritual Education“, *Oxford Review of Education* 22(4) (1996), 443–456.

²⁷ Mark A. Pike, „The Challenge of Christian Schooling in a Secular Society“, *Journal of Research on Christian Education* 13, nr 2 (september 2004): 149–66, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10656210409484967>.





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something that encompasses every student as a whole and supports their academic and social progress and is therefore essential or even inevitable in the context of education.²⁸

Lewis' idea is quite similar to the approach of Christian schools that is also based on a holistic view of the human being. In the case of the arguments by Carr and Blake, it is important to see both the need for clarity of thought as well as the risk of getting entangled in merely one aspect of the concept. The Estonian term 'hingeharidus' has not yet undergone such a specific discussion to facilitate questions about where, by whom and how can or should the spirit be educated or whether 'education' is even the most appropriate word in this context. In my opinion, society perceives it mainly as a concept that treats the human being as a whole and provides one possible answer to the question about other purposes of education beyond the provision of theoretical knowledge. At the start of the chapter, I wrote about the interconnection between education and upbringing; similarly, spiritual education broadens the perspective on education by supplementing provision of knowledge with another dimension – engagement with beliefs and values of students. The particular fit of this concept in the Estonian cultural sphere is an interesting research question in its own right, which would deserve a broad survey and would be well suited as a topic for the next round of "Life, Religion, and Religious Life".

It could be said in conclusion that a spiritual education approach has been closely linked to the targets of basic schools and upper secondary schools²⁹ in focusing on both education and upbringing of students – both reflect a holistic view of students. In my opinion, Estonia has adopted a holistic

²⁸ Jeff Lewis, „Spiritual Education as the Cultivation of Qualities of the Heart and Mind. A Reply to Blake and Carr“, *Oxford Review of Education* 26(2) (2000), 362–383.

²⁹ §3 of the national curriculum for basic schools and §3 of the national curriculum for upper secondary schools.





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concept of spiritual education based on the Pauline idea of caring equally for the human spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23).

How is spiritual education related to Christian values education? Are they synonymous or is Christian values education a broader concept, with spiritual education being only one possible methodology?

As I observed above, from the perspective of Christian schools, spiritual education means something that is additional to knowledge at school, including engagement with children's beliefs and values, and answering their questions about being human and about acting in this God-created world. In this context, it is important to see the similarities and differences between spiritual education and character-building. On the one hand, the approaches are rather similar – there are no methods that can be applied in a uniform manner and the goal is rather a holistic view of the human being. On the other hand, the names itself highlight the differences in emphasis – spiritual education and character-building. Compared to the concept of character, the concept of spirit has a more timeless character in both the Estonian language and the Christian perspective. Therefore, the concept of spiritual education is a better fit for Christian education, but it does not mean that it cannot include aspects of character-building. Spiritual education, as I have defined it in this study, is integrating in its essence and is likely to facilitate application or combination of all the different methods of values education. Consequently, it cannot be seen as the one and only approach to practicing values education; rather, it resembles the notion of integrational ethical education suggested by Berkowitz and Bier.

It also important to define the central value of spiritual education. If obedience is the central value in inculcation, self-awareness in values clarification, fairness in the cognitive approach, and care in character-building³⁰, then what is the central value of spiritual education? Based on my definition, a

³⁰ Schihalejev ja Jung, „Erinevad väärtuskasvatustlikud lähenemised“, 20.





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propose that there are two values: **integrity and balance**. Looking at the central values of different approaches in values education and studying them in the context of Christian ethics, the conclusion seems to confirm what I wrote above, namely that values clarification is the furthest from Christian values education, inculcation is mostly based on the Old Testament paradigm of the Ten Commandments, the underlying fairness of the cognitive approach can be viewed from the perspective of the Ten Commandments as well as Pauline theology, and care as the foundational element of character-building is most visible in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Integrity and balance as the characteristic features of spiritual education bring the aforementioned values together and supplement them with a transcendental dimension (spirit, soul and body). Therefore, I believe that spiritual education is a very suitable approach for Christian values education and they are often used as synonyms in the context of Estonian Christian schools, even though, in a broader perspective, Christian values education can also include other possible approaches.

Conclusion

Estonia is a liberal democracy where religion plays a relatively marginal role in society as a whole. However, the relative importance of Christian schools is gradually increasing and they are seen as necessary for society due to a low level of general religious literacy. The concept of spiritual education is frequently used and it means everything that is additional to knowledge at school, including engagement with students' beliefs and values, and answering their questions about being human and about acting in this God-created world.



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