

# THE SCHOOL THOUGHT FROM PLURALISM IN FAVOR OF A CULTURE OF PEACE

## La escuela pensada desde el pluralismo a favor de una cultura de paz

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“... pluralist religious education is postulated contributing to education for peace, citizen education and education for democracy. Similarly, a pluralistic religious education aims to link the religious phenomenon with a series of issues that are emerging today with force such as gender and religion; social and cultural diversity and religion; terrorism and religion, bioethics and religion, etc.”  
(Magendzo, 2008, p. 16)

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### Abstract

The present research result article has the purpose to analyze the concepts of violence and peace, applied to the religious diversity and religious school education, from which the following was subtracted: first, religious diversity and interreligious dialogue, such as actual realities in religious formation, they have been addressing from an exclusivism, inclusivism and pluralism approach, according to the institutional interests of those who teach. Second, religions and churches can be promoters of violence when they encourage discriminatory, and peace acts, when places are created for open, critical, argumentative, respectful and tolerant dialogue, situation that should be taken into account during the religious education. Finally, third, religious diversity and interreligious dialogue remains a formative need and a disposition to build a fair and fraternal society, it demands to pluralize the speech in all the curricular structure.

Thus, this article is the result of research based on mixed paradigm with qualitative dominance and quantitative complementation from the case study typology, with a hermeneutic approach, from a transectional time perspective, using surveys, focus groups and bibliographic and documentary review, in order to present, as a final result, a curricular design proposal for some university programs. This led to make a detailed study in high schools and universities to teachers and students of the professorship of Religious Education, of which were worked with the three categories: religious diversity, religious education and education for peace.

### Keywords

Diversity, religious, interreligious dialogue, religious education, peace culture.

### Resumen

El presente artículo, de resultado de una investigación, tiene como propósito analizar los conceptos de violencia y de paz, aplicados a la diversidad religiosa y la educación religiosa escolar, de donde se sustrajo lo siguiente: en primer lugar, la diversidad religiosa y el diálogo interreligioso, como realidades presentes en la formación religiosa, se vienen abordando desde un enfoque exclusivista, inclusivista y pluralista, conforme los intereses institucionales de quienes la imparten. En segundo lugar, las religiones e iglesias pueden ser promotoras de violencia cuando fomenta actos discriminatorios, y de paz, cuando se crean escenarios para el diálogo abierto, crítico, argumentativo, respetuoso y tolerante, situación que debe tenerse en cuenta en toda formación religiosa. Finalmente, en tercer lugar, la diversidad religiosa y el diálogo interreligioso siguen siendo una necesidad formativa y una disposición para la configuración de una sociedad justa y fraterna, el cual exige pluralizar el discurso en toda la estructura curricular. Es así como el presente artículo resultado de investigación amparado bajo el paradigma mixto con una dominancia cualitativa y complementación cuantitativa desde la tipología de estudio de caso, con enfoque hermenéutico, desde una perspectiva temporal transeccional, se vale de encuestas, grupos focales y revisión bibliográfica y documental, con el fin de presentar, como último resultado, una propuesta de diseño curricular para algunos programas universitarios. Por lo tanto conllevó hacer un estudio detallado en los colegios y universidades a docentes y estudiantes de la cátedra de Educación Religiosa, de los cuales se trabajó con las tres categorías: diversidad religiosa, educación religiosa y educación para la paz.

### Palabras claves

Diversidad, religioso, diálogo interreligioso, educación religiosa, cultura de paz.

## Introduction

The proper scope of the research in Religious School Education has been, permanently, a scene of concern and action of different social actors who

have inquire as much about the internal dynamics as for the consequences of such a particular training space. Therefore, to make explicit what is intended by this investigative effort, it is necessary to consider some fundamental questions that are listed below:

In the first place, although it is true that the laws of many countries regulate, to a greater or lesser extent, the management of religious school education, the concern of the research team is directed to the impact of those who orient such education in the generation of environments violence or peace, to the extent that, according to Tamayo Acosta (2004), the various religious expressions have been, historically, cause or excuse for both trends in the local and global order.

Secondly, from the philosophical point of view, and according to Marco Raúl Mejía, “are times of profound changes, a change of time and not only a time of change, that upsets the composition of the human in their ways of seeing, feeling, interacting, loving, especially in the new generations” (Mejía, 2001, p. 1). A reality characterized by globalization and its form of neoliberal financing, the advent of digital, technological resources, like others, which in the future will construct the artificial replacement of each and every one of the vital human functions, including that which has made human beings the most powerful species over other species: their links; as it is supported by Vélez (2014):

The new scenarios of globalization of knowledge that have made possible the increase of democracy, together with systems that delegate the determination of norms in individuals, have led to the configuration of a post-modern anarchy, in which the struggle not only focuses in the hegemonic powers, increasingly widely questioned, but in the claim of autonomy for the political exercise that requires a more conscious citizen (p. 11)

Therefore, it is the task of education to train the human being in critical and argumentative training, able to sustain their own dissent firmly, a human being trained to follow arguments instead of following the flock is a valuable being for democracy.

Third, according to Fornet (2007), the opening and assessment towards cultural diversity is prevailing, giving rise to a new paradigm, whose influence is permeating all social spheres and aspects of culture, including, of course, religion. According to the author it is not possible to give continuity to the old inculturation (for this case the Christian), which simply made presence without sufficiently assessing the difference, but it is essential to take the step towards interculturality.

In fourth place are the demonstrations where the clamor of thousands of people who scream from the desert the evident loss of the human is evident. It would be consoling, as Parra (2007) announces that instead of all the anti-humanist manifestations, the logic of dialogue, justice and peace would arise, a situation that, according to article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should be taken into account. Present in the formative processes of all educational institutions (UNESCO, 2008). In this way, religious school education, as an area of human formation, has the obligation to take up the components of religious traditions and, from there, to train men and women who create and live peacefully.

From the above, this article is, in the first instance, inspired by a general purpose: to analyze to what extent those who assume religious education in schools, colleges and universities, in a generalized environment of cultural and religious diversity, directly affect in the formation of attitudes of violence or peace in children and adolescents. In the second instance, to question whether the training received and the curriculum that is at the base of religious formation in colleges and universities are intended to present the religious dimension, in an environment where pluralism, diversity and dialogue are lived, as a driving force of a healthy atmosphere of peace. It is necessary to mention that at the local and national level in the city of Pasto no research of this type is presented, therefore the research is presented as new and of great contribution to the Educational Institutions at the basic and higher secondary level.

Therefore, the research had a methodological rigor under the mixed paradigm with qualitative predominance and quantitative complementation, for which it was based on the hermeneutic approach in terms of interviews, documentary analysis and focal group, on the other hand, a comparative analysis was made from a temporary transectional perspective through surveys of 966 students belonging to three private Catholic schools and three official colleges and a private Catholic University of the city of Pasto.

Therefore, throughout the text you will find the development of the research results chapters, which address the most relevant aspects of the research, in terms of the dialogue between the three study variables, Religious Diversity and Religious School Education; RSE (Religious School Education) Diversity and Interreligious Dialogue; RSE, Religious Diversity, Interreligious Dialogue and Culture of Peace.

## Religious diversity and religious education at school

Religious diversity and religious and/or ecumenical dialogue is a reality that is gaining ground every day in the family, society and school at the local and possibly national level, however it is necessary to continue working on this, with the necessary seriousness and commitment, if one day dreams of achieving, from Herder's position, the *Bildung*, that is, the "Ascent to humanity" (Sánchez, 2004, p. 22).

En cuanto al tema de la diversidad religiosa y el diálogo religioso, se puede decir que es un fenómeno presente en las instituciones educativas objeto de investigación, como posiblemente en todas a nivel nacional (independientemente del grado de escolaridad). Sin embargo, como lo sostiene Basset (1996, p. 391) el tema de la diversidad y el diálogo interreligioso "constituye un desafío crucial, del que depende, en gran medida, la naturaleza y la credibilidad de la fe y del testimonio de los creyentes de todas las convicciones". This is due, according to the author, not to the typical confrontation between religion and modernity, from which the problem of secularization, atheism and nihilism emerges, but to the presence of a new reality that invades all spheres and social institutions: postmodernity (Basset, 1996, p. 9).

What has been said up to now requires considering, according to Basset (1996), two aspects of capital importance that are definitive in the obtained results. The first consists of:

Postmodernity operated in the religious field coincides with the emergence of a new model, the pluralist model, in contrast to the more usual models (which continue to persist even today in the cases of certain religious traditions), namely: the isolationist model and the expansionist model (p. 9).

The second aspect, following Basset, consists, obviously, in stating that pluralism, diversity and interreligious dialogue, as undeniable realities, bring with them the following risks and opportunities:

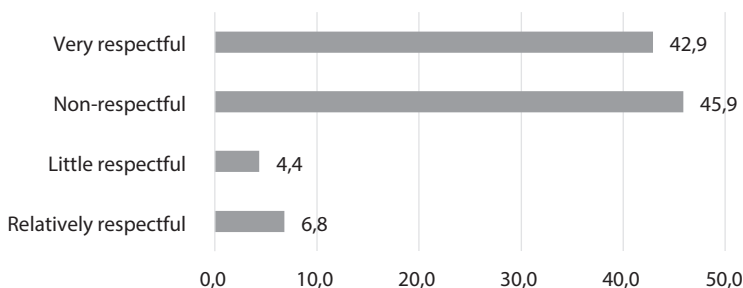
We know the risks too well and we are already beginning to experience their corrosive effects. It is, on the one hand, the danger of a general relativization of the Christian message; and, on the other hand, of the temptation to arrive, under pretext of openness and welcome, to a kind of planetary ecumenism, which would be very similar to a syncretism. However, a responsible theology, while still stammering, must accept the challenge of interreligious dialogue and transform it into an opportunity for faith. I think, in particular, in two fields of work that are still open. The conscience of an insurmountable religious pluralism invites us to re-

discover the uniqueness of Christian truth and to understand better that it may require an absolute commitment to the believer, without thereby becoming an exclusive or inclusive truth with respect to all other truths in the religious or cultural order.. On the other hand, we still have to provide, theologically and practically, the proof that an attitude of dialogue with respect to the un-evangelized does not compromise in any way the permanent duty that the mission represents for the Church. But the latter must be understood, then, as a testimony of the Kingdom of God, which never ceases to become, and not, in the first place, as a will to convert the other, at any price, to Christian truth (1996, pp. 12-13).

At present, if diversity, pluralism and interreligious dialogue, despite being an undeniable reality, does not become one of the main aspects to be cultivated in the formative processes in every community (be it local, regional and/or or national), regardless of the institution that is responsible for it, puts at risk the credibility of the testimony of faith of any religious conviction. If it is true that religiosity is a dimension that seeks, in conjunction with others, as Küng (1977) says, human fulfillment, in a world as human and healthy as possible, where no one is superior or inferior to others, it is also true that religion, as an aspect of culture, and that has as its object that end, must encourage, as Moltmann (1987) imagined, the unfolding of the world of life that is only possible if one learns to live in communion, in a network of reciprocal relationships where differences and plurality do not constitute obstacles, but, on the contrary, in wealth. To be authentically religious means to learn to live in unity in diversity, to know, not to dominate, but to participate, and, of course, to enter into the complex network of relationships in favor of the creation of possible worlds. On the contrary, when a certain religious confessional maintains still isolationist, exclusionary, expansionist and proselytizing interests, outside of corrupting its true theological-religious nature, it puts at risk the peaceful coexistence that is only possible when it is lived in a context of openness, dialogue, tolerance and respect. Similarly, Velez (2014, p. 10) states that while the identity of the self is fed in the West from the exclusion, in the East cannot be conceived from the plurality that does not allow subjugation of one over the other. Therefore pluralism is vital for there to be a horizontal relationship with the other and not vertical where power and subjugation are maintained, therefore it is necessary that in our schools through the spiritual dimension of the ERE a pluralism for the formation and relationship of all.

For this reason, the following is brought to a graphic conclusion: Do you respect the religious diversity in your country?

**Figure 1**  
**Respect for religious diversity in the country**



Source: Research "Religious Education: Violence and Peace", 2016.

Elaboration: Authors.

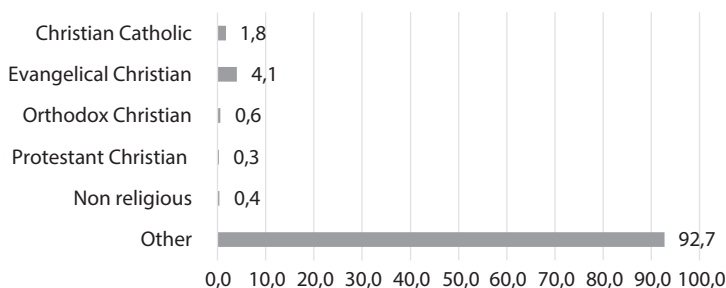
It is clearly observed that, according to the testimony of the students, respect and tolerance for religious diversity continue to be values whose promotion and/or promotion is relatively low, a situation that is scandalous in the context of the country that opted for democracy and where the values of freedom, equality, diversity and respect for difference are the guarantors of peaceful coexistence. However, despite the question, it is important to point out that those who participate in the survey share their experience in the matter starting from the regional context in which they are immersed, where, as was observed at the beginning, most of the population claims to belong to Catholicism.

Another issue that can be inferred in this regard is the low probability, given the percentage, of the origin of an unsatisfactory response on the part of those who do not belong to Catholicism. However, it cannot be deduced that, within the community of surveyed Catholics, respect for religious diversity is not encouraged, due to the following reasons: in the first instance, a question related to this aspect, but within families, shows that 96.5% of those surveyed say that this value is inculcated, moreover, 90.3% report that, within families, they are taught to live with people of different religions, followed by another question where 64.1% say that in their family values of other religions are taught. In second instance, 80.1% of the respondents affirmed that they receive training on the history of religions, 92.7% on respect towards people of different religions, 89.3% on coexistence with people of different religions, 75.4% on customs of people that confess other religions and, finally, 76% who claim to receive training on ideology of people of other religions. With all of the above, it seems, in appearance, contradictory, to say that the

people in Colombia are, for the most part, little or relatively respectful towards religious diversity and a minority affirm the opposite. Of course, in the survey there are no questions about the level of satisfaction with the training received in this matter within the family and educational institutions (ODREC, 2015).

Second, there is a question regarding the dominant belief within the educational institution, with the results:

**Figure 2**  
**Dominant religious beliefs in the educational institution**



Source: Research "Religious Education: Violence and Peace", 2016.

Elaboration: Authors.

As the chart indicates, the dominant religious denomination in all educational institutions is Catholic Christianity. This result is interesting for two things in particular: on the one hand, many of the respondents are people who study in official educational institutions; and, on the other hand, the Mariana University, as a private Catholic university, is constituted by a heterogeneous student population from the cultural (and of course religious) and socioeconomic point of view.

Susin (2007), like Tillich, Küng, Panikkar, Hick, Knitter, Morales, Soriano, Gómez, Vigil, Torres, among others, observes pluralism as a new paradigm, a sign of our time that surpasses uniqueness, universalism and the metaphysical absolutism of traditional Western thought. A model that invites the understanding of reality as a complex network in all its aspects, including social, cultural and religious, a situation that in the twentieth century began to be glimpsed with the emergence of quantum physics, the theory of complexity de Morín, the liquid reality of Bauman and the bootstrap of Capra.

According to Susin (2007):



(...) the complexity of reality in its plural condition provokes and demands discernment. It requires a new awakening, which consists in awakening from the dogmatic religious dream, a new enlightenment, of a religious nature, starting from alterity and plurality, and no longer from subjectivity and identity with pretensions of exclusive universality and of absolute uniqueness (p. 8).

In the context of our research, religious pluralism is seen and worked from the concept of religious diversity. A phenomenon that is present and insinuated within the educational institutions, but that requires a work that must go beyond a theoretical-basic approach or simple respect for the religious convictions of others. Pluralism or religious diversity is much more than a unit ascribed to the religious phenomenon that is being worked on in the tenth grade of secondary education and in the first semesters of some universities. When human and humanistic formation is approached, it overcomes the simple understanding of social phenomena from the respectable religious conviction of those who join the debate or a lapse or segment within a curriculum of religious formation addressed from a particular confession (in this case that of Catholic Christianity) or from the general discourse of ethics and values. It is about opening up a pluralist, complex, serious, critical and argued vision of reality that seeks the enrichment and fulfillment of all and not only of ones, in an atmosphere of dialogue, tolerance and respect.

Returning with Susin (2007), pluralism is a phenomenon with a lot of ground to gain, because there are still people, institutions and entire societies that insist on maintaining fundamentalist religious positions, until they reach the extreme of proselytizing, exclusion, discrimination and violence.

Religious and ecclesiastical institutions hesitate on the path of acceptance of religious pluralism as a sign of the times and of the living God, of respect for cultural and religious biodiversity, hospitality and the richness of life. The difficulty is understandable, especially in religions with universalist pretensions. We still do not know how to react positively to pluralism from the point of view of mission, of ecumenism, of the hospitality of religions, of the acceptance of cultural biodiversity in which religions express themselves as a deeper and richer human wealth. his encounter with the divine (Susin, 2007, p. 9).

Of course, it is not about drowning in pluralist discourse, based on the pretensions of globalization, because it is exclusive and totally indifferent to the poorest, minorities and even biodiversity and other forms of life on earth. A discourse that tends to a planetary vision of the market

and singular thinking, despite affirming democracies and human rights (Susin, 2007, p. 10). Neither does it mean to include and, why not, dissolve within a privileged nucleus, the rest of the religious and cultural convictions, assuming them as incomplete and complementary. Much less is to reduce everything to the simple acceptance of the divine experience of each culture, from a poorly focused tolerance and indifference between religions, a situation that goes against the complexity of the relations of our world, given that indifference, in some way and another, it is a form of violence. In these circumstances, pluralism and religious diversity are forms of resistance of the universalist and hegemonic power and of struggle for a true world of life, where the right to difference, to one's own cultural identity, to biodiversity predominates. Without this affecting the harmony, unity and peaceful coexistence.

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Our thesis emphasizes this positive aspect of the concept of religious pluralism, situating it within the framework of a creative, revealing and saving plan, a manifestation of the inexhaustible divinity in the plurality of life on earth. And it intends to deconstruct what remains of inclusivist pretension and union from a privileged nucleus. As Christians, we know that one of the great challenges of religious pluralism is to understand the universal character of revelation and salvation in Jesus, and at the same time, without half-measures, the revelation and salvific value, even universal, of religions. (Susin, 2007, pp. 9-10).

On the other hand, the recognition of religious pluralism, religious diversity and/or interreligious and/or ecumenical dialogue does not mean falling into religious relativism or syncretism, but rather constitutes the opportunity to value the characteristic aspects of one's own religious convictions, perfect them when there is the opportunity to relate them to others, welcoming what is considered convenient and that will help the fullness of the human project, and, finally, give testimony of the presence of God in life, fighting, as stated by Castillo & Estrada (1990), for the project of a new society, without this means converting others at any price.

One could take the risk by saying that the mission of every conviction or religious community, as well as of religiosity as such, is to achieve in each inhabitant of the planet the understanding of oneself as:

(...) human being, as an integrated person, that is, as a free, intelligent, rational, responsible being, and, consequently, capable of guiding his behavior, seeking the true good in the development of his own person and of the community in the midst of which he exists, trying to fill, consciously or unconsciously, the fundamental longing, his structural necessity of

transcendence, to strengthen his own life in a totally Absolute, that is to say God, although sometimes that absolute is not true, but a imitation mistakenly elevated to the quality of Absolute (Zubiri, 1982, p. 180).

The above is not possible if the problem of pluralism, diversity and interreligious and/or ecumenical dialogue, especially within educational institutions, is taken for granted or treated without the respective discipline, seriousness and care, although to establish oneself in a theological process of religions would exceed the purposes of the present discussion. In any case, what is being done is meaningless if it is not based on conceptual elements and theoretical foundations around the variables and/or categories in question, starting, of course, with a specific concept of interreligious dialogue that determines the horizon of the discussion, situation that, of all the literature found, Basset (1996, p. 30) can provide it in a meaningful way, such as: “reciprocal exchange of words and listening that compromises believers of different religious traditions on an equal footing”. According to the author, the above has two characteristics that are worth noting:

(...) it is, on the one hand, the presence of people motivated by their religious convictions, and not the issue addressed, which bases the interreligious character of a dialogue; this amounts to excluding a colloquium of historians of religions, but not a meeting of the faithful concerned about peace or justice in the world. On the other hand, the interreligious dimension implies a difference, not of personal sensitivity with respect to the religious phenomenon in general, but of belonging to certain religious traditions.

This explanation is interesting if, on the one hand, it is not about the dialogue of a specific topic on the part of people motivated by their own religious convictions, as if it were a colloquium, a forum, a symposium, a seminar, in short, a simple academic activity. What it is about, is a dialogue motivated by people who, from their own religious convictions, want to unite to make possible peace and justice in the world. On the other hand, it is a dialogue that implies, not a simple difference of positions in front of an issue related to the religious phenomenon, but a difference that must be harmonized, if we want to show that, in the midst of differences, it is possible to peaceful coexistence.

Within this order of ideas, two other clarifications should be made, in order to broaden our understanding of what is conceived as interreligious dialogue. According to Merino (2010):

(...) when we speak of “religious plurality” or “religious pluralism” we understand the recognition of religious diversity and theological re-

flection on its relationship with God's plan of salvation. On the other hand, when we speak of "pluralistic paradigm" or "pluralist theology of religions" we want to point out the epistemological perspective from which the question of the diversity of religions is addressed, that is, as an overcoming of the inclusivist paradigm that recognizes a pluralism of principle and right (p.70).

Lo anterior significa que la diversidad religiosa, pluralismo religioso y diálogo interreligioso y/o ecuménico son, en definitiva, enfoques conceptuales diferentes, pero que mantienen una relación profunda desde el punto de vista teórico y práctico. La diversidad religiosa hace referencia a una realidad siempre presente, desde los inicios de la historia, que expone la presencia de varias religiones o convicciones religiosas incluso al interior de una misma cultura. On the other hand, plurality or pluralism refers to a new paradigm that struggles, not only for a theological reflection, but mainly for recognizing this religious diversity. Of course, according to Lavine (2005, cited by Bonilla, 2011), the terms religious plurality and religious pluralism are different, circumscribing the former in the same line of religious diversity, under the following terms:

Plurality refers to the growing number of groups, activists, spokespersons, churches, chapels, among others. The concept of pluralism is different, since it points to the construction of rules of the game, which incorporate multiple actors and voices as legitimate elements of the process. Plurality is necessary, but it is not enough in itself for pluralism to take hold as a legitimate process (p.78).

Ultimately, religious diversity, on the one hand, refers to a reality that shows the presence of various religions in each and every one of the cultures and, on the other hand, religious plurality is the phenomenon that shows the growth not only of religions, but of religious manifestations. However, pluralism is a movement that ensures the recognition and theological reflection of this phenomenon, under rules and rules of the game established by all the spokespeople, who feel motivated to look for ways to create possible worlds.

A warning arises. According to Basset (1996), it is not necessary, even for an attentive reader, to fall into the confusion of the pluralist model with the syncretistic model, whose insinuation was made a few pages ago. According to this theorist, the syncretistic model pretends, as a reaction diametrically opposed to the absolutism and universalism of the isolationist or expansionist model, that religions or religious systems are not taken by themselves, but in terms of what they can contribute to give

origin, according to the needs or interests presented by its followers, to a new system. Something similar to the eclecticism that tries to receive, as a synthesis, the convenience of several systems for the creation of a new doctrine that responds to personal or group interests. While in the pluralist model each religious tradition is approached as an organic whole, whose integrity is unbreakable. It is a new paradigm that forces openness, acceptance, but also alterity and respect for the other, guaranteeing that there is harmony in it. However, the situation is not shown so simply because of the following reasons:

In the first place, religious diversity, given the context that is still lived locally, regionally and nationally, is characterized by a predominantly Catholic population and where it can be deduced that a certain percentage lives their religious experience in their own way, probably even with alternative practices such as magic, shamanism, among others. In these circumstances, in theory, diversity is left in doubt, when the population that claims to belong to other religious convictions is a minority, a situation that becomes problematic when the low educational offer at the local level, without touching the basic aspects of their Institutional Educational Projects (IEP), determines that all students, regardless of their religious confession, must receive a centralized religious formation, in this particular case, in Catholic Christianity, where, as stated above, a small space is granted, even superficial, to the problem of religious diversity and interreligious dialogue. In practice, the problem becomes even more complex due to the level of satisfaction and motivation of those who participated in the investigation because of their own religious convictions, giving rise to the phenomenon of atheism, unbelief and, most interestingly, according to the evidence, to religious syncretism, the latter without a plan of systematic, serious, argumentative and critical action on the part of those who are at the forefront of religious formation.

Secondly, when we speak of interreligious dialogue, as something that is also present and recognized by the interviewed and surveyed people, it is evident that its tendency is inclusivist, a situation that, to understand what has been insinuated in previous pages, and will continue to do so, will be deepened below, with the contributions offered by Basset (1996), Morales (1998), Duppuis (2000), Susin (2007), Vigil (2012), Escobar (2006), Torres (2000) and Bonilla (2011).

Exclusivism, a position that is also posed as that of “Christ against religions” (Escobar Soriano, 2006, p. 45) and that has remained in the Catholic Church for centuries until the Second Vatican Council, although, from the position of Basset (1996) still remains in certain sectors of the Christian com-

munity, under the title of “isolationist model” (p.38), is to admit the real and true revelation, as well as salvation, within the church or religion (Torres, 2000, p. 7), under the premise of St. Cyprian “Outside the Church there is no salvation” (Denzinger and Schömeteer, 1976, pp. 800-820, 1300-1353).

Inclusivism (situation present in this research), strongly supported by the Catholic Church since the Second Vatican Council, as well as the theologians Jean Daniélou, Henri de Lubac, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Karl Rahner, Jacques Dupuis, A. Röper, HR Schlette, R. Panikkar, G. Thils, Schillebeckx, Dulles, McBrien and Teixeira, among others, “does not exclude neither truth nor salvation in other religions, but maintains at the same time the centrality -defence and absoluteness- of one’s own, which ‘would include’ the truth of the others” (Torres, 2000, p. 7), especially with the famous Logos Spermatokoi theory of Karl Rahner, which holds that in other religions, the seed of the Incarnate Word is imprinted, in some way or another, or, on the other hand, anonymous Christianity, that is, that theory that manifests that in people belonging to other religious confessions, including atheists, the spirit of Christ is present, regardless of whether they know or accept the Gospel. Basset (1996) critically argues that this model is an effective tool in favor of the expansionist or universalist position (p 39).

Finally, pluralism, where all the discussion is concentrated, defended by Paul Tillich, Hans Küng, Raimon Panikkar, John Hick, Paul Knitter, José María Vigil, Carlos Miguel Gómez Rincon, among others, argues that “all religions are equal, equivalent manifestations in their salvific value and in their truth, because the diversity comes only from the different cultural contexts in which the experience of the divine is thematized and concretized” (Torres, 2000, p. 7). According to Basset (1996), the pluralist model leads to an encounter that gives rise to changes in attitude and even influences from one tradition to another (p.40).

After all this explanation, it is evident that the predominantly confessional discourse with which the processes of religious formation are carried out, within confessional schools and universities, is precisely the one that directs an interreligious dialogue with an inclusive approach. Advocates see it as the most rational and coherent way to free themselves from the dangerous relativism. On the other hand, its detractors argue that:

(...) becoming incapacitated both for the dialogue - it would already have the whole truth - and for an authentic understanding of the other religions - I would interpret them according to their own - constitutes their great difficulty, which touches a very sensitive point in the current climate of dialogue and tolerance and, for that reason, to many it seems insurmountable (Torres, 2000, p. 7).

Supporting the aforementioned, Susin (2007) argues that:

We are, to a large extent, on the line of unilateral “inclusivism”, in the sense, for example, there is something of the grace of Christ or of the universality of the breath of the Holy Spirit in a good Buddhist. But how do we react if a Buddhist affirms that there is something of the Buddha’s light in a good Christian? Can the inclusivism of others also be taken seriously? In other words, is it worthwhile to insist on inclusivism? (p. 10)

This reflection is not a critique of exclusivism and inclusivism or a commitment to the pluralist paradigm, but the affirmation that the presence of dialogue and religious diversity is evident, but from an inclusive and non-pluralistic approach, because most of the population openly confesses its Catholic Christianity and that regarding religious diversity there are some academic spaces, followed by an attitude of openness and respect for religious convictions that differ from the central one. However, if it is intended to continue to cultivate citizen competencies<sup>1</sup> within these educational institutions as a significant path for the achievement of peace and the eradication of violence at the local, national and international levels, beyond the simple need to improve in the results obtained by the SABER tests, a company in which religious formation should not be set aside, according to Basset (1996) the “... pluralist model is the one that is in the background of the interreligious dialogue project, insofar as raises the legitimacy of the diversity and equality of believers” (pp. 40-41).

To accept the previous thesis, it costs less to understand something that, of all the theorists studied, Tamayo (2008), based on a broad bibliographical foundation, can efficiently explain:

In this respect, I agree with Raimon Panikkar that “without dialogue, the human being suffocates and the religions become ankylosed”. An idea that is inseparable from diversity, as the Iranian philosopher Ramón Jahanbegloo affirms in his splendid work *Celebrating Diversity*: “Without dialogue, diversity is unattainable; and, without respect for diversity, dialogue is useless”. The interdependence of human beings, cultural diversity, the plurality of worldviews, and even conflicts of interest demand a culture of dialogue... (p. 5).

According to Tamayo (2008, p. 5), this dialogue must be based on “symmetrical relations between religions and the renunciation of arrogant attitudes on the part of the religion that is most rooted or majority in a given territory”, so they can, according to Knitter, maintain plurality, unity, singularity and openness.



Finally, to include the categories between religious pluralism, religious diversity and culture of peace, which will be discussed later, something that sounds better with the words of Tamayo (2008):

(...) Religions cannot be confined in their own world, in the sphere of privacy and worship, as if the problems of humanity were not with them. On the contrary, they must activate their best traditions to contribute to the construction of an intercultural, interreligious, inter-ethnic, just, fraternal and sororal society (p.5).

In the same way according to Bejarano, Chamorro and Rodríguez (2017):

Religious Education should not be managed without any foundation and conceptual nature, since many theoretical treatises from science stand out from the study of the religious phenomenon, this is how the importance that falls in this area is, from its foundation and praxis of the life of man as a pluridimensional being, in essence for the construction of peace and the creation of a better society (p.461).

Fortunately, religious diversity and interreligious dialogue in religious education, in addition to being present theoretically and practically, continues to be a formative need and a provision for the configuration of a just and fraternal society, despite the contradictory percentages of the survey carried out the students. It requires a strategic and systematic work on the part of educational institutions, especially those in charge of religious education, if we aspire for the integral formation of students, with a religious-spiritual dimension cultivated in an argumentative, critical, mystical, praxeological, open and relevant, facing the challenges and social needs at the local, regional, national and global levels.

If the religious formation offered in educational institutions wishes to give due importance to pluralism and religious diversity, through interreligious dialogue, it must take into account that this dialogue has certain indispensable conditions that, in spite of the difference of the theoreticians studied, in the end they pursue the same goal. On the one hand Dupuis (2000) argues that interreligious dialogue must be accompanied by adherence to one's own religious convictions, sincerity, honesty, personal faith, openness and experience of the other (alterity). On the other hand, Tamayo (2008) considers that the conditions of a true interreligious dialogue are: to consider ethics over dogmatism (a situation suggested especially by Hans Küng), to renounce factual language and to enhance symbolic, metaphorical, utopian and alternative language, renounce verticalism and live democ-



racy in all its forms, encourage self-criticism and welcome criticism that comes from outside, humanize discourse and recover mysticism. Finally, Escobar (2006) affirms that an interreligious dialogue must be: humble, open, loving, profound, critical and reconciling.

## RSE, diversity and interreligious dialogue

Passing at this moment to the categories of religious pluralism, religious diversity, interreligious dialogue and Religious School Education (RSE), there are many theoretical elements that help to understand the results obtained in the different instruments of applied research. Particularly in Latin America are the advances, research and intellectual productions carried out by the FIUC and the ODREC. Addressing them all would be impertinent for the moment, so we summarized they effort only one posture that of Bonilla (2012), which helps our investigative ends. For him religious plurality, the theology of religious pluralism and the theology of liberation, are considered a formative challenge in Latin America. In addition to responding to the phenomenon of religious indifference and unbelief, the teachers of the RSE, at present, must also face the challenge of religious diversity, in an environment of dialogue, openness, sensitivity, tolerance and respect.

Using the contributions of Magendzo (2008), he raises the need to promote a Pluralist Religious Education, if one wants to respond significantly to the crises and gaps that exist in all spheres of social life, a situation that was previously held with the contributions from Tamayo (2008). To that end, the pluralistic RSE must free itself or transcend the socio-cultural approach to which it tends to be reduced in Latin America, which is required to ensure respect for human rights, human dignity, tolerance, non-discrimination, solidarity, equality and respect for difference. Working for the above and contributing to peace, citizen education and democracy, is not inofficious and impertinent for the RSE. On the contrary, it is a duty (as it is for all areas of formation) that must be assumed, but the question that arises here is that such a mission must be carried out without renouncing its epistemological status.

Bonilla (2012) sees in the RSE a broad field for the approach to religious pluralism both from a conceptual and methodological point of view, which, however, lacks formative impact, if it is addressed without the necessary knowledge of religious diversity, needs of the context, the presence of real plurality inside the classroom and outside of it, or when the educational, religious institutions and the state itself do not have clear laws, relevant means and necessary structures.

It is also important to highlight, from the position of Bonilla (2012, p. 557), that Latin American Catholics, although they constitute the majority of the population, must “provide a sufficiently broad religious formation open to other religious beliefs and experiences, motivated by the co-responsibility with our continent, as well as the conviction of knowing we are children of God and brothers of humanity”, guaranteeing an atmosphere of respectful dialogue and encounter, otherwise the integral and plural education demanded by a democratic state would run a great risk.

Significant is the agreement of what the author proposes with what the respondents in the present research say who, despite being mostly in Catholic Christianity, are willing not only to dialogue, but also to coexistence and teamwork with people of other religions, especially if one wants to think about the peaceful coexistence so longed for by the Country.

Finally, two other aspects exposed by Bonilla (2012), and that have been insisted in many ways on the results and discussion of this research; they consist of the characteristic elements that should accompany the RSE with the pluralistic adjective that thinks about the configuration of a more just and humane world: the attitudes of tolerance, knowledge, dialogue, mutual understanding, acceptance of difference and humanism, on the one hand, and, on the other, highlighting the potentialities of complex thinking, applied to pluralistic religious education and liberating, against simplifying thinking.

Since religious diversity is an important component of the RSE in a practical and theoretical way, it needs to be strengthened substantially if, in order to respond to the challenges posed by a society that wanders from armed conflict to political conflict and that aspires to peaceful coexistence, feels the need to be configured as a proposal that bets on pluralism. This purpose is not achieved only with the approach of the religious phenomenon (including the theme of different religions) summarized in a learning unit within an educational cycle or, on the other hand, to establish dialogue whenever there is an opportunity, with an open and respectful attitude, in order not to generate conflicts that can harm the learning environment. It is not about implementing a Christian formation, tolerating the presence of students who profess other religious convictions, offering, in an improvised way and outside the discursive logic, anthropological answers every time they incur in questioning. Much less to implement practical activities that promote the participation of all, teamwork regardless of religious convictions, but devoided of any context and without defined purposes. It consists of pluralizing discourse throughout the curricular structure, in the purposes, competencies to be achieved, evaluation system, curricular

contents, sequence, methodology and resources, a situation that implies a complicated to assume paradigm shift in a medium that focuses its interests on a central religious conviction.

## Religious diversity and interreligious dialogue for a culture of peace

Finally, the discussion is based on the categories of religious pluralism, religious diversity, interreligious dialogue, RSE and culture of peace and then to describe the pedagogical proposal. What has been built on this in recent years, especially in the Latin American context, exceeds expectations and, of course, the synthesis capabilities to include them in the discussion. It requires another type of research to achieve it. Among the significant contributions are Gómez (2008), Vigil (2012), Moliner (2015) and Tamayo (2014), among many others.

Gómez (2008) considers in his work the difficulties that interreligious dialogue had to undergo in the past, nevertheless it remains something that should not be ignored. It raises the need for a common base on which a possible interreligious dialogue should be established. The same that can only be sustained, if one wants to think about a construction of a society designed on the basis of democracy and peaceful coexistence, in two fundamental principles: respect as a practical principle and solidarity as an integrating principle.

Vigil (2012) summarizes a whole series of writings during 20 years since 1992, focused on the Theology of Religious Pluralism (TRP) in the same line with the Latin American theology of liberation and applied to real situations from its particular methodological tendency (see, judge and act), in order to achieve the liberating praxis of a society wrapped in structures invaded by poverty, violence, corruption and injustice. Within all the thematic blocks addressed there is one that speaks of the mission of the TRP in favor of peace inspired by the work of Hans Küng (1995) "Project of a global ethics". According to Vigil (2012, p. 392), religious pluralism, as a theological paradigm, constitutes an effective way to achieve an interreligious dialogue in favor of peace, because:

There will only be liberation of the poor if the religions become liberating, and there will only be union of the poor if the religions dialogue. There will be no peace in the world without the liberation of the poor, and there will be no global liberation of the poor without dialogue between religions. Poor and religions of the world: unite!



Moliner (2015, pp. 1-8) proposed seven theses for a responsible interreligious dialogue that ensures true eco-human wellbeing: in the first, the reality facing interreligious dialogue is that of the many poor and the many religions. In the second, the interreligious, pluralistic, liberating, correlational and responsible dialogue must have at the base the universal eco-human welfare. En la tercera, el sufrimiento humano es una llamada a la responsabilidad en el momento que se dé el diálogo interreligioso. En el cuarto, el momento de equilibrar la diversidad religiosa con la responsabilidad en el diálogo interreligioso, la responsabilidad tiene la prioridad. En la cuarta, plantear un diálogo interreligioso en el que juegue un papel importante la libertad y la responsabilidad, requiere de acciones concretas y no solamente elaboraciones teóricas. In the sixth, in the interreligious dialogue, the struggle for suffering must prevail and from there elaborate the whole discourse. Finally, in the seventh affirms that all religions have, in a differentiated way, the capacity, necessity and responsibility to promote liberation and eco-human well-being.

Finally, significantly, Tamayo (2008) using an extensive bibliography, argues that: “Among the priority objectives of interreligious dialogue is the work for peace, which is inseparable from the struggle for justice, the defense of the nature of equality between human beings and respect for cultural differences” (p. 6).

According to Tamayo (2008), religious diversity should not be the cause of division and violence, on the contrary, they must guarantee respect for the convictions of others and community work for peace and life. Like Küng (1995, p. 9), he argues that the culture of peace and non-violence is the main task of interreligious dialogue, for “There can be no peace in the world without peace between religions, nor peace between them without interreligious dialogue”, which implies the respect and defense of all forms of all life, the defense of the dignity and physical integrity of the person and the free development of the personality of each human being, against the depredation of nature, physical or psychological abuse, the extermination of religious or racial minorities and the arms race.

As stated by Küng (1997):

The act wanted to be ‘the starting point to work together for peace and collaborate in the construction of an intercultural, interreligious, inter-ethnic and interracial society, without discrimination of any kind, on the basis of tolerance, respect for ideological, cultural, religious differences and the solidarity to welcome to immigrants’ (p. 9).

However, to achieve a religious formation that seriously assumes pluralism and religious diversity, as well as interreligious dialogue, with

all that this demands, as has been previously discussed, there is a long way to go, which is not possible. If one does not start by taking the next step: humbly consider the need for a paradigm shift according to the needs and challenges of today's society.

At the same time, betting on an integrating curriculum that works for religious diversity and pluralism starts by recognizing that the circumstances in schools and universities, as academic spaces, where it must be based on the change in the theological conception that lies behind its formative purposes, which leads, of course, to a change in the method to carry out this theological exercise. As stated by Loaiza, (2014, p. 119), the minimal application of didactics by teachers is a negative factor in training. Therefore, the didactic sense of the RSE must be present in the classroom from the disposition and training of the teacher; therefore, the RSE must be reconsidered to change the purpose and theological models, which implies a change in the purposes, contents, didactic strategies, resources and evaluation systems involved in any training process. The imperative of changing the concept of theology every day becomes imminent, the Lonerganian hermeneutic approach allows you to bet on a pluralistic ERE in favor of peace.



## Conclusions

After the investigative process carried out, five general conclusions, as a compendium and starting from the study categories, can be proposed:

In the first place, religious diversity and interreligious dialogue are two realities present in the religious formation of educational institutions studied in a curricular and attitudinal manner. Religious diversity is understood as the reality lived by institutions and communities made up of people who confess openly to profess different religious creeds, demanding that they be recognized and respected by others. On the other hand, interreligious dialogue is understood as the disposition of people to be interested in knowing, valuing and interacting with people who confess belonging to other religious creeds, in an atmosphere of openness, dialogue, tolerance and respect, whose most generalized approaches are the inclusivist and pluralist.

Second, religions and churches can be promoters of violence when discriminatory acts are committed; and, on the other hand, of peace when scenarios are created for dialogue (open, critical, argumentative, respectful and tolerant), coexistence and execution of actions in favor of social coexistence.

Third, religious diversity and interreligious dialogue, in addition to being theoretically and practically present, continue to be a formative need and a provision for the shaping of a just and fraternal society.

Fourth, if the religious formation offered in educational institutions wants to give due importance to pluralism and religious diversity, it should encourage a humble, loving, deep, sincere, honest, believing, open, understanding, ethical, symbolic, symmetrical democratic, critical, self-critical, humane, mystical and reconciling dialogue in the curricular structure.

Finally, in the fifth place, rejecting religious discrimination, proselytizing and imposing as manifestations of violence, and, on the other hand, promoting open, respectful and tolerant dialogue with students of diverse religious convictions, the foundations that form the basis are constructed of his pedagogical work of the RSE that dreams of peace.

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## Notes

- 1 According to ICFES (2015), citizenship competencies are three: cognitive, socio - affective and communicative. In the SABER tests the cognitive competences are evaluated (four in total) and within them there are three that demand of the educational institutions a change of pedagogical and educational paradigm required by the current democratic societies: elaboration of arguments, multiperspectivism and systemic approach. The elaboration of argument, according to Zubiría Samper (2006), when citing Habermas, is usually the best way to resolve conflicts, because, in addition to its arboreal and complex structure, its main characteristic is the presence of discrepancy and conflict. Multiperspectivism aims to look at a reality from various perspectives, including a serious study of the political, social and cultural (religious) implications that lie behind them. The student in this case should look at common and different aspects in order to draw comprehensive conclusions. Finally, the systemic approach, in the hand of multiperspectivism, seeks to analyze the multiple factors and causes of a problem, as well as the different lines of solution, but from the multiple perspectives, analyzing, as is obvious, the common and different aspects in order to reach relevant conclusions.

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