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**RAILI KERÄNEN-PANTSU**

# Stories that shape our world

Cultural narratives in Finnish worldview education

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## ABSTRACT

The study examines cultural narratives provided by religions and worldviews as a part of the Finnish school education. Worldview education refers to teaching of different religions, worldviews and ethics, which in the Finnish system is mainly present in two subjects: religious education and (secular) Ethics. The main research question is**:** *What kind of meaning-making and pedagogical processes are related to cultural narratives in worldview education*? The question is investigated under two sub-questions which emphasise the perspectives of students and teachers: *(1) How do students interpret and give meanings to cultural narratives in worldview education? (2) How do teachers interpret and use cultural narratives in worldview education?*

Methodologically, the study was implemented in a qualitative case study. The research data consist of nine stimulated recall student interviews, two observed lessons and semi-structured theme teacher interviews (N=9 in Article II and N=6 in Article III). In data analysis, deductive and inductive qualitative content analysis methods were employed. Results were published in three original, scientific articles (Keränen-Pantsu and Ubani, 2018; Keränen-Pantsu and Rissanen, 2018; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2019).

This study wishes to broaden the understanding of narrativity as a way to conceptualise learning and to understand processes relating to the interplay

between identity work and cultural stock of narratives. The results indicate that cultural narratives provided by religions and worldviews relate to various meaning-making processes of students and teachers and promote several aims in education : (1) content learning, such as knowledge about religious and worldview traditions, religious and cultural competence as well as multiliteracy, (2) promotion of social and emotional skills and critical thinking and (3) construction of identity and worldview, including the ability to reflect on ethical and existential questions. Therefore, cultural narratives, especially those of different religious traditions, have significant transformative potential in school education. However, pedagogical use of religious narratives is challenging in the context of liberal education as teachers have to negotiate between ideals of liberal education and the religious communities self-understanding and its narrative tradition.

According to the teachers involved in this study, it seems that teachers intuitively know that narratives work well as a content and method for learning but cannot theoretically explain the learning process. This highlights the importance of elaboration of theoretical aspects of narrative learning as it conceptualises the learning process: how people organise and give meaning to new information in interaction with cultural stock of narratives. Theoretical perspectives of narrative learning could have an important role in teacher education, when we are trying to understand how learners build their relationship to cultural heritage and prevailing society.

Since narratives are of great importance in the formation of worldviews, this study calls for narrative-reflectivity of the educators and considers it as a key part of teacher's professionalism. This means raising awareness of the cultural stock of narratives underlying their own worldviews, defining their pedagogical decision-making, and on a more fundamental level, the values and assumptions one affiliates with the aim of education and good teaching.

**Keywords:** narrative, cultural narrative, narrative learning, worldview education

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## TIIVISTELMÄ

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan uskontoihin ja katsomuksiin liittyviä kulttuurisia kertomuksia osana suomalaista kouluopetusta. Katsomusopetus viittaa erilaisten kulttuurien, uskontojen, katsomusten ja etiikan opetukseen, jota suomalaisessa koulujärjestelmässä opetetaan pääasiallisesti kahdessa oppiaineessa, uskonnossa ja elämänkatsomustiedossa. Päätutkimuskysymys on: *Millaisia merkityksenantoon ja pedagogiikkaan liittyviä prosesseja yhdistetään kulttuurisiin kertomuksiin katsomusopetuksessa?* Tätä kysymystä tutkitaan kahden alakysymyksen avulla, joissa korostuu opettajan ja oppilaan näkökulmat: *(1) Kuinka oppilaat tulkitsevat ja antavat merkityksiä kulttuurisille kertomuksille katsomusopetuksessa? (2) Kuinka opettajat tulkitsevat ja käyttävät kulttuurisia kertomuksia katsomusopetuksessa?*

Metodologisesti tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena tapaustutkimuksena. Tutkimusaineisto koostui yhdeksästä oppilaiden stimulated recall-haastattelusta, kahdesta observoidusta, videoidusta oppitunnista ja yhdeksästä opettajien teemahaastattelusta (N=9 artikkelissa II, N=6 artikkelissa III). Aineisto analysoitiin käyttäen teoria- ja sisältölähtöistä laadullista sisällönanalyysia. Tulokset julkaistiin kolmessa tieteellisessä artikkelissa (Keränen-Pantsu ja Ubani, 2018; Keränen-Pantsu ja Rissanen, 2018; Keränen-Pantsu ja Heikkinen, 2019).

Tutkimus laajentaa ymmärrystä kertomusten merkityksestä tietojen ja taitojen oppimisessa sekä identiteetin rakentumisesta vuorovaikutuksessa

kulttuurisen kertomusvarannon kanssa. Tulosten mukaan uskontoihin ja katsomuksiin liitetyt kulttuuriset kertomukset liittyvät opettajien ja oppilaiden moninaisiin merkityksenantoprosesseihin ja voivat edistää useita opetuksen tavoitteita: Kertomukset edistävät (1) sisältöoppimista, kuten uskonnollisia ja katsomuksellisia perinteitä koskevaa tietoa, kulttuurista ja uskonnollista osaamista sekä monilukutaitoa, (2) sosiaalisten ja tunnetaitojen oppimista sekä kriittisen ajattelun kehittymistä ja (3) oman identiteetin ja katsomuksen kehittymistä ja rakentumista, johon sisältyy kyky reflektoida eettisiä ja eksistentiaalisia, perimmäisiä kysymyksiä. Tämän vuoksi kulttuurisilla kertomuksilla, erityisesti uskontojen ja katsomusten kulttuurisilla kertomuksilla on merkittävää, ajattelua uudistavaa potentiaalia osana kouluopetusta. On kuitenkin huomattava, että liberaalin kasvatuksen kontekstissa kertomusten pedagoginen käyttö vaatii opettajilta taitoa neuvotella liberaalin kasvatuksen ihanteiden ja uskonnollisten yhdyskuntien itseymmärryksen ja siihen liittyvän kerrontatradition välillä.

Tutkimukseen osallistuneilla opettajilla oli implisiittistä tietoa kertomusten merkityksestä oppimisessa niin sisältönä kuin opetusmenetelmänä, mutta he eivät osanneet selittää prosessia tarkemmin. Tämä korostaa narratiiviseen oppimiseen liittyvien teoreettisten näkökulmien tärkeyttä, kun käsitteellistetään oppimisprosessia: kuinka ihmiset organisoivat ja antavat merkityksiä uudelle tiedolle vuorovaikutuksessa kulttuurisen kertomusvarannon kanssa. Narratiivisen oppimisen teoreettisilla näkökulmilla voisikin olla tärkeä rooli opettajankoulutuksessa, kun pyritään ymmärtämään miten oppijat rakentavat suhdettaan kulttuuriperintöön ja vallitsevaan yhteiskuntaan.

Kertomuksilla on erityinen rooli katsomusten muotoutumisessa. Tämä tutkimus osoittaa, että katsomus- ja kertomusreflektiivisyys onkin keskeinen osa opettajan ammattitaitoa. Tämä tarkoittaa tietoisuutta niistä kulttuurista kertomuksista, jotka ovat heidän oman katsomuksensa taustalla, määrittävät heidän pedagogista päätöksentekoaan ja perustavaa laatua olevalla tavalla ovat niiden arvojen ja oletusten taustalla, jotka yksilö yhdistää kasvatuksen ja koulutuksen tarkoitukseen sekä hyvään opetukseen.

**Avainsanat*:*** kertomus, narratiivi, kulttuurinen kertomus, narratiivinen oppiminen, katsomusopetus

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16.3.2023 on a clear and sunny spring day in Tuusula,
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[In the article, Keränen-Pantsu was the first author and had the main responsibility for the study, analysis and the writing.]

Article II

Keränen-Pantsu, R. and Rissanen, I (2018). What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives? Perspectives from Finnish Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education, Journal of Beliefs & Values, DOI: 10.1080/13617672.2018.1450804]

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Article III

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[In the article, Keränen-Pantsu was the first author and had the main responsibility for the study, analysis and the writing.]

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background

We live in a storied world. Narrative is seen to have a fundamental role in understand cultures, societies, and individuals (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1991). To be able to better understand the events of the world around you and the interpretations made of them, you must understand the cultural narratives and meaning-making processes that are related to them. In this study, cultural narratives are seen as model stories which represent social roles and historical-cultural 'niches' (Singer, 2004) where personal narratives should be situated. Cultural narratives offer a model and structure to organise and live meaningful life, something that is culturally expected and shared (Haste and Abrahams, 2008). They are also some of the fundamental ways of becoming socialised in the prevailing society and culture. In other words, they are stories that shape our world.

In this research, interest lies in the cultural narratives provided by religions and worldviews. Those narrative have been under scrutiny in the contexts of Finnish culture and the Finnish school since the presence of these narratives can be found in wider structures of society, including cultural identity, national identity, cultural heritage, formation of Finnish school systems as well as in the value base of Finnish society (Niemi and Sinnemäki, 2019; Saukkonen, 2013).

People create their identity and worldview within the cultural and societal context, using culturally shared narratives present in society (Hänninen, 2004; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021). In Finland, this has meant a transition from an ancient, pre-Christian worldview with animistic features to a Christian and modern Enlightenment era transitioning into postmodern society (Pulkkinen, 2017; Malkavaara, 2017, Saukkonen, 2013). Earlier, these narratives where limited to family, relatives and geographically located religion and culture and a least to some extent, people were socialised into a 'grand narrative' (Lyotard, 1979), a framework which tries to give a totalising, comprehensive account of various historical events and experiences such as Christianity. Nowadays the

cultural sources are global and diverse, since besides local-level connections, almost everyone has access to global cultures via the Internet. Social media offers endless possibilities for individual- and social identity work and has also major impacts on education (Conrads et al., 2017).

This kind of rapid increase of available cultural narratives may indicate the change Lyotard (1979) conceptualised as the postmodern condition, as increasing scepticism towards the totalising nature of "metanarratives" or "grand narratives". In the Finnish context, this goes hand-in-hand with the rise of secularisation and decline of religiosity as well as fragmentation and pluralisation of the field of cultures and worldviews, for example (Illman et al., 2017). As part of global and historical development in Europe, the position of religions has been challenged on the one hand from a secularistic point of view and on the other hand the increasing plurality of ideologies, values and ways of life (Casanova, 2009). However, as researchers from the network of Protestant Roots of Finnish National Identities (ProFini2017, Sinnemäki et al., 2019) pinpoint, Christian, namely Protestant views, are deeply rooted in social structures. Thus, for example, social democracy, educational thinking, language, ideas about work and of ministry are still culturally important. In the Finnish context, egalitarianism, honesty and education-related values seem to be very highly valued indicating that respect for school and education are important factors defining the Finnish welfare state (Helkama and Portman, 2019). Niemi and Sinnemäki (2019) see a strong connection between the Lutheran roots of Finland and the prevailing values of education, such as offering of equal learning opportunities to all.

Individuals are demanded to work and act in Finnish society, where social and institutional structures are not stable but constantly moving. This challenges communities and individuals at various levels, including education (Illman et al., 2017, Ubani et al., 2019). In a multicultural and diverse society, one of the fundamental needs is to learn how to confront people with different views and values and learn how to be in dialogue with different groups and individuals (Ubani et al, 2019). Understanding cultures and societies requires also understanding of different religions and worldviews. Many implicit values and ideals have their roots in cultural and religious traditions and in order to understand how society and culture have been formed, it is important

to understand and critically reflect on the basis and often unquestioned presuppositions of prevailing culture and society (Gadamer, 2004; Davie, 2000).

Constant changes in our environment and life seem to be 'the new normal', and changes are unpredictable, as the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic in the beginning of 2020s has shown us. Also, the exponential growth of knowledge, the rise of digital databases and easy access to information challenges learners. Our understanding about learning must also develop to adapt to changing environments. It should engage those who would otherwise be excluded and support all leaners to generate knowledge and learn to deal with insecurity and uncertain environments (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999, 16). Narrative theory (Ricoeur, 1992; Mc Adams, 1985; Meretoja, 2018) and narrative learning (Goodson and Gill, 2011; Clark and Rossiter, 2008) have great potential to meet this challenge.

A school is said to be a version of society in miniature and education as a process of growth and acquisition of culture (Dewey, 1922). The school is an environment for the socialisation of children and it should be understood as a part of wider societal structures, not only as an institution that promotes certain knowledge and skills to students (Egan, 2017). In school, children also adopt cultural norms and values as well as position themselves in different groups and communities related to, for example, gender, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. In addition, learning situations and classroom practices give us insight into how social and cultural structures and evaluations are created, given visibility and approval or disapproval (Haste and Abrahams, 2008; Helkama and Portman, 2019).

The school deals with development of young persons and should foster the development of "humanity and ethically responsible citizenship in society" (Law Regarding Basic Education 422/2012, 2§). Thus, there is a strong emphasis on nurturing moral development and ethical citizenship in the prevailing culture and society. This is an intriguing task since the range of narratives in the cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021) has grown tremendously, causing endless possibilities but also disorder and confusion. School in general as an educational institution, as well as different subjects taught at school, are aimed to foster and educate children to meet the projected needs of future society. The complexity and diversity of modern

life have caused an urgent need for worldview education, that is, education that offers knowledge about different religions and worldviews, as well as face pupils' varietal life worlds and existential questions. In Finnish schools these themes are explicitly present in the subjects of religious education (in Finnish, uskonnonopetus) and (secular) Ethics (in Finnish elämänkatsomustieto) where one of the aims of instruction is to give space for wonder societal and cultural reality, as well as personal meaning-making and identity with a safe and competent teacher (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education NCCBE, 2014; Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016).

According to several scholars, narrativity is characteristic of worldviews and religions (Smart, 1989; 1996; 2008; Geertz and Jensen, 2014). Smart (1989, 1996, 2008) sees narrative way of knowing as one of the seven dimensions of religions and worldviews and narrative is perhaps one of the single most important interfaces between intrapersonal and interpersonal meaning-making which is also present in worldviews and religions (Geertz and Jensen, 2014). Despite the obvious interfaces, there seems to be relatively little research on cultural narratives and narrative learning as a part of worldview education, with a few exceptions (e.g., Erricker and Erricker, 2000; Reed et al., 2013). In general, the body of research on narratives in education is also relatively small, with some exceptions (e.g., Egan, 1989; Goodson and Gill, 2011; Clark and Rossiter, 2008), compared to that of general research literature. This is extended to the rapidly increasing interest in narrativity in different disciplines of research as well as society.

## 1.2 The aim and scope of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate cultural narratives in educational settings. In this study, the focus is especially on the cultural stock of narratives provided by religions and worldviews in the context of school education. Religious narratives, despite the secularisation of society, are still an important part of the cultural stock of narratives in our societies, and as stated Gadamer (2004), have had fundamental impacts on European culture and way of life. The term cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021)

refers to the repertoire of narratives that is fundamentally present in our history and tradition and thus form the basis of our understanding of the world, providing fundamental elements for the identity work for individuals and communities and the construction of worldviews. Therefore, in order to bring out this phenomenon on a more general conceptual level, the term cultural narrative is later systematically used as a more general concept, including also religious narratives. This enables studying the phenomenon using the theoretical apparatus of the general narrative theory.

Meaning-making and interpretive processes related to cultural stock of narratives are investigated in Finnish worldview education, which refers to the teaching and studying of different cultures, religions, worldviews, and ethics in Finnish basic education. In Finland, teaching of these topics is mostly present in two subjects, religious education and (secular) Ethics (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education NCCBE, 2014; Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016). However, is worth noting that worldviews and education related to them is also part of whole school culture and society and because of that, worldview education is related to wider processes of learning, social structures and identity work.

Worldview education is understood here as a meaning-making subject where students and teachers jointly wonder ethical and existential questions in various perspectives which support identity work, critical thinking and reflectivity. Worldview education include knowledge about different worldviews and cultural narratives related to them, readiness to dialogue, and ability to reflect on one's own perceptions and their impact on one's own thinking and actions (Keränen-Pantsu, 2021). In other words, worldview education should promote awareness of worldviews (Keränen-Pantsu, 2021; see also Holm et al., 2021; Kavonius and Putkonen, 2020). In this study, narrativity is comprehend as a core element to understand these meaning-making processes.

Meaning-making and interpretive processes related to cultural narratives are examined in the student's and the teacher's perspectives in the context of worldview education under the following question:

**What kind of meaning-making and pedagogical processes are related to cultural narratives in Finnish worldview education?**

The main question is explored in the perspectives of students and teachers and is thus divided into the following sub-questions:

1) How do students interpret and give meanings to cultural narratives in worldview education?
2) How do teachers interpret and use cultural narratives in worldview education?

In educational sciences (e.g., Uljens, 1997; Jyrhämä et al., 2016; Hellström, 2018) one of the prevalent models of the teaching-studying-learning process is *the didactic triangle* according to Johann Friedrich Herbart (Kansanen and Meri, 1999). In the triangle, there are three components usually drawn on each separate point: teacher, student and content. Although the didactic triangle should be treated as a whole, in practice relations are usually analysed in pairs (Kansanen and Meri, 1999). Kansanen and Meri (1999, 112-114) named these relations pedagogical (teacher's relation to student) and didactical (teacher's relation to the student–content relation). There are also other conceptualisations, such as seeing the teacher–student relation as a personal relation, teacher–content as pedagogical content relation and student–content as a didactical relationship (see Hellsröm, 2018). Critics have said the didactic triangle does not give enough attention to the context and culture of learning (for example Uljens, 1997, 84).

Also, this study comprehends the teaching-studying-learning process as a whole. As this study sees pedagogy as a broad term which covers general and subject didactics in line with Uljens (1997), the didactic triangle is only loosely applied to show how research questions take place. In this study, the content is cultural narratives offered by religions and worldviews and relations under study are a student's relation to cultural narratives (research question 1) and teacher's pedagogical relation to cultural narratives (research question 2). However, also the personal relationship between teacher and student is evidently present in all the learning situations and pedagogical processes.

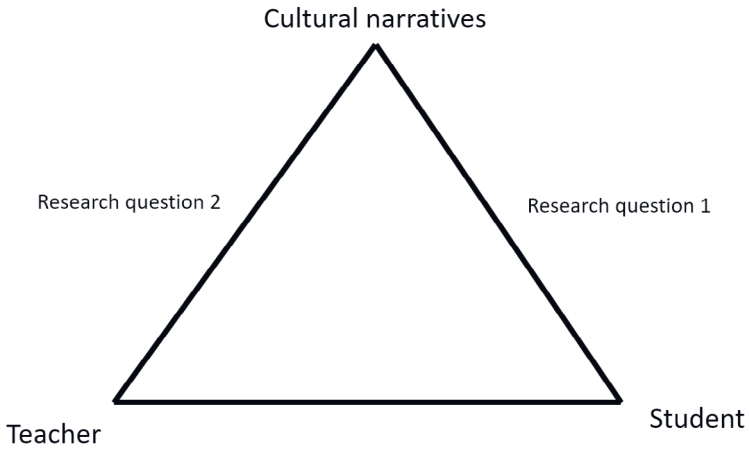


**Figure 1.** Research questions in relation to components of learning situation

In this study, the main ontological and epistemological assumptions lean on the narrative theory and follow the socio-constructivist idea (Bruner, 1986; 1996; Vygotsky, 1978; Wenger, 1998) that knowledge about ourselves and our world is actively construed, affected by social communities and relationships and take the form of a narrative especially when we give meanings to our experiences and construct identity. The main interest of the study takes place in narrative interaction and sense-making processes (Bruner, 1986) in teaching and learning situations and meaning-making processes studied in the articles. Sense-making and interpretive processes are understood to happen in interaction with the culturally shared narratives (Haste and Abrahams, 2008; Loseke, 2007; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021) which gives us structures and guidance to create socially shared meanings. Important elements of this cultural stock of narratives (Polkinghorne, 1991, Hänninen, 2004; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021) are narratives provided by religious traditions and worldviews systems which are evidently present in worldview education and thus, offer an obvious choice for the context of this study.

The research questions are investigated in the original three research articles: the first article focuses on student perspectives and the second and third on teacher perspectives (see also Chapter 4.1). The themes rising

from the original publications are developed further considering narrative theory presented in Chapter 2. The first article approaches the research topic holistically and offers the basis for the whole study since it draws a comprehensive picture of the narrative learning situations and relations in the school context. It also offers a pupil's viewpoint to meaning-making processes and relevant aspects related to cultural narratives and thus provides insight into socialisation, identity work and learning (see Egan, 2008; Biesta, 2020). The second article offers new insights on the tensions related to pedagogical use of special kinds of culturally shared stories, those of regarded 'holy narratives' in religious communities. Teachers are obligated to negotiate the situations where pedagogical purposes and tradition's self-understanding are in contrast. In the third article, teachers' perspectives regarding the pedagogical use of narratives were widened and deepened. In addition, the concept of narrative learning was a subject of review under scrutiny in order to comprehend the learning processes related to cultural narratives in the pedagogical context. Thus, the third article offers an overview of the theoretical development which has occurred during the research process, as narratives present in worldview education are seen to more strongly impact culture and vice versa.

This study represents educational research with a particular focus on the development of thinking, meaning-making, and narrative cognition, which is why some connections to educational psychology can also be seen in this study (Bruner, 1886; 1987; 1990; 1996). This dissertation also has a clear focus on narrative learning (Goodson and Gill, 2011; Goodson, 2013; Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Clark, 2010), for which theoretical perspectives are provided by general narrative theory (Meretoja, 2018; Ricoeur, 1992; Mc Adams, 1985, 2001, 2013) as well as cultural studies (Haste and Abrahams, 2008; Loseke, 2007; Pulkkinen, 2017). Worldview education can also promote transformative learning (Mezirow, 2000; Simsek, 2012): the expansion of consciousness through analysing underlying premises and presupposition and which brings about the transformation of worldviews and specific capacities of the self.

This study is also attached to pedagogical and didactical research (Kansanen and Meri, 1999; Uljens, 1997; Jyrhämä et al., 2016; Hellström, 2018) and didactics of worldview education, especially religious education (Kallioniemi

and Salmenkivi, 2007; Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016; Kallioniemi et al., 2017). Pedagogy is understood to justify goals, values and practices of education, as well as choices of methods (Hellström, 2018). Pedagogy includes general and subject didactics and when didactics is seen to focus on teaching, pedagogy includes both teaching and learning (Uljens, 1997) and is better suited to this study when perspectives of teacher and learners are viewed. It is also worth noting that the relations between pedagogy and didactics is context-bound and both terms, especially didactics, is loaded with different connotations in Anglo-America and mainland Europe (see for example Hamilton, 1999).

Narrativity and narrative form of knowing have always had a central role in religious education (e.g., Ahava et al., 1970; Tamminen and Vesa, 1982) even if the use of the term 'narrativity' was not common at the time. In the didactical materials of religious education, the presence of narrative has been strong at least in the early years of Finnish comprehensive education in the 1970s (Ahava et al., 1970). The approach towards narratives was beyond subject-specific knowledge: the connections between holistic learning outcomes such as social and emotional skills as well as personal development was connected to narratives, namely biblical narratives (Ahava et al., 1970; Tamminen and Vesa, 1982).

Also, other didactical material where the main focus was on narrativity such as "Teacher tells about Old Testament" by Finnish educational influencer Martti Haavio, have had a strong and long-lasting impact on the general and subject didactics in Finland (see Ubani, 2017). Later, the work of Pertti Luumi (1987, 2006) and his German symbolic-didactic approach has had a major influence on Finnish and Baltic religious education (Valk and Schihalejev, 2007). This research continues in line with this narrative tradition but also wishes to widen the understanding of narrativity from formal storytelling to narrative cognition and narrative learning (Keränen-Pantsu, 2017; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021; Keränen-Pantsu, 2022) as a holistic perspective to human existence in the world. This kind of narrative understanding offers new perspectives to meaning-making processes related to one's identity, worldviews and cultural stock of narratives.

The research is implemented in a qualitative case study methodology (Mason, 2002; Flyvbjerg, 2006). This offers a possibility to investigate cases in

their natural context and choose the most information-rich cases (Flyvbjerg, 2006). This offers the possibility to explore different perspectives and gives new understanding of the social phenomena under study.

## 1.3 The structure of the thesis

The study will begin by introducing the narrative theory as the theoretical basis for the study in Chapter 2. Firstly, the key concepts of the study are elaborated and narrativity is explored in theoretical and philosophical perspectives to draw an overall picture of the narrative understanding about human existence and ways of knowing. Secondly, narratives are viewed in educational perspectives and the concept of narrative learning is introduced, displayed and also applied to worldview education.

Finnish school in general and worldview education, especially as an empirical context of this study, is explored next in Chapter 3. Finnish school education is viewed as the combination of holistic Bildung and knowledge-related Curriculum -traditions and in order to see how and in what contexts narratives are presented in the National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, an overview is presented. As cultural narratives and interpretations connected to them form a main interest in this study, special attention is given to narratives in worldview education in which the transfer of cultural heritage as well as a certain type of cultural narratives, those provided by religious traditions, is explicitly presented.

Paradigmatic starting points, methodology, ethics, and an overview of the research process are outlined in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 summarises each independent research articles. The section begins with a short presentation about the relations between the articles and after that, each of the articles are introduced in their own chapters and details about the research, i.e., theoretical framework, methodology, results and main implications, is offered. After that, Chapter 6 pulls together the results of independent research articles and discusses the findings with the theoretical framework offering also some possible practical implications and possibilities for further research.

# 2 NARRATIVITY AS A THEORETICAL APPROACH

The basic theoretical understanding of this research is based on narrative theory and narrative as one of the fundamental aspects to create cultural, societal and personal meaning (Bruner, 1986; 1987; 1990; Ricoeur, 1992; Mc Adams, 1985). The concept of narrative has swept across a wide range of disciplines, stressing the multiple implicit and explicit views on what narratives are about and what is their significance to humans (Meretoja, 2014, Hyvärinen, 2004; Hänninen, 2004; Heikkinen, 2018). Humans can be seen as storytelling creatures – *Homo narrans* – as Fisher (1984) has famously put it. This means that there is something in narratives that are essential to humans (Ricoeur, 1992; Meretoja, 2014). If we want to understand how humans make meaning and interpret their experiences or happenings around them, we naturally turn to a narrative. Narratives help us to understand and organise the choices humans make, get information about the world and form knowledge into a structure available to others as well. As Bruner (1991, 4) stated "we organise our experience and our memory of human happenings mainly in the form of narrative—stories, excuses, myths, reasons for doing and not doing". In short, narratives have a crucial role in human cognition and understanding about the world and social reality surrounded by us, is structured via narrative.

## 2.1 Narrative theory as the basis of the study

In the following section, the key concepts related to narrative theory in the context of this study are formed. Secondly, there is a short overview of the basics of narrative theory and critiques towards it. After that, narrative mode of thought is presented and connected to development of thinking, meaning-making and identity work. Next, narratives are looked into in educational settings, where narrative learning is conceptualised and viewed in the perspective of worldview education.

In the Finnish context, there are no commonly shared Finnish terms for narrativity (tarinallisuus, kerronnallisuus) and the terms *story* (tarina) and

*narrative* (kertomus) are used as loose synonyms. This is also the case in this research, where in line with Riessman (2008, 3), the terms are used interchangeably. However, in order to understand the concept of cultural stock of narratives, it is worth the effort to look at the terms more closely. Distinction between the story and narrative comes from literature studies and narratology (Abbot, 2008) and in the field educational studies, this understanding about the difference between the terms is not well established. In short, the concept of *story* refers to a sequence of events (the plot) which can be told in many ways and different forms (Abbot, 2008; Heikkinen, 2018). *Narrative* is the presentation of the story in a way that is perceptible and accessible to the listener (Hänninen, 2018). The culturally developed means of presenting the story in different ways, including the customs and practices to tell the story, form the repertoire of *narrative discourse* (Abbot, 2008; Heikkinen, 2018, Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021).

Culture is here understood from a sociological-anthropological point of view which refers to the values, norms, and ideals as well as the customs and traditions that embody these. Instead of seeing culture as a structure, culture is seen as a process (Haste and Abrahams, 2018). To combine anthropological and narrative views, cultural narratives are understood to carry cultural universals, those related to human survival and shared human experiences such as birth and death, or illness and healing (Murdock, 1949). Thus, *cultural narratives* are understood as model stories, as 'canonical scripts' (Bruner, 1990) which offer a model and structure to organise and live a meaningful life. Haste and Abrahams (2018) continue that cultural narratives refer to narratives which describe typicality, something that is culturally expected, proper and normal.

Even if cultural narratives can carry cultural universals (Murdock, 1949), they are not universal in the sense that certain narratives reproduce certain meanings regardless of the environment in which they are told. Cultural narratives are understood as available resources, which contain explanatory value, moral value, cultural fashion, and identity salience (Haste and Abrahams, 2008; Loseke, 2007). Thus, identity work is closely connected to cultural narratives. Haste and Abrahams (2008) point out that cultural narratives reflect collective memory and cultural norms providing material

for several purposes, like to support group or individual identities, for social control or to justify the status quo. However, while cultural narratives could be used to justify the prevailing circumstances, they are also flexible and in constant change to be able to meet the current, changing demands.

The totality of these culturally available narratives can be understood as a 'social stock of stories' (Hänninen, 1999) or 'cultural stock of stories' (Hänninen, 2004), which refers to the 'totality of narrative representations that the person hears or reads in the course of his or her life, ranging from pieces of gossip and TV advertisements to novels and sacred texts, and from fairytales to real-life stories' (Hänninen, 2004, 73). This concept is widened in Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen's work (2021) to *cultural stock of narratives,* shifting the focus from the stories as such to the ways in which stories are told; to conventions and ways of presenting the story, i.e., towards the narrative discourse. Thus, we argue that it is certainly not appropriate to pay attention only to (a stock of) stories themselves, but a stock of the stories as they are *narrated* in culturally recognisable ways (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021). To elucidate, the concept of cultural stock of narratives does not directly refer to the 'grand narrative' (Lyotard, 1979) or 'master narrative' (Stephens and McCallum, 1998), as commonly understood in cultural theory, offering 'a global or totalising cultural narrative schema which orders and explains knowledge and experience' (Stephens and McCallum, 1998), even if this kind of conceptualisation can be applied in some regard to religions and worldview systems whose narratives form a special area of interest in this research.

One special type of cultural narrative is *religious narrative.* In religious studies, it can be seen as a narrative that expresses and confirms a social group's deepest values and norms, provides patterns of behaviour to be imitated, and establishes, confirms and defends order (Jensen, 2009, 9). Religious narratives have also a capacity to create a meaningful cosmos, orient identity and to establish and maintain institutions (Jensen, 2009, 8; McCutcheon, 2000). They form an important part of the tradition's self-understanding. Religious narratives contain, for example, sacred or holy narratives presented in holy scriptures such as the Bible and Quran; narratives from the origins and history of the tradition and persons related to it, like

the life story of Martin Luther in Lutheranism, ethical guidance and practices such as Hadith in Islam and so on. Narrativity is also seen as one of the seven dimensions of religion (Smart, 1989, 1996, 2008).

### 2.1.1 Narrative philosophy as the undercurrent of the study

In narrative theory, there seems to be agreement that instead of just describing happenings, narratives bring out and create meanings and connections between experiences and events, making them more understandable and accessible (Meretoja, 2014). Yet there is no common understanding about the exact nature of this process. Narrative philosophy elevates narrativity as one of the core processes of human cognition, or even the basis of human essence and existence, seeing narrativity as one of the key elements of being in the world in a fundamental, essential sense. Such position, which sees narratives as ontological, that is, structures that fundamentally define human existence, can be called *a strong assumption of narrative*. Proponents of a strong view in the field of narrative philosophy include Paul Ricoeur, Charles Taylor, and Alasdair McIntyre (Meretoja, 2014).

A weak view, in turn, is represented by theorists who do not see narratives as such fundamental categories of being human, instead they understand narratives as a way of forming information about the world. Thus, *a weak assumption of narrative* does not suggest that man is essentially a narrative being, but is confined to looking at how knowledge of self and the world is formed. Therefore, a weak assumption can also be called an epistemological, i.e., cognitive, relationship with narratives, whereas a strong view is more of an ontological, i.e., a view of human nature. Proponents of weak assumption include Hayden White, Luis Mink and Daniel Dennet, to whom narrative appears, above all, as a cognitive element to seek order in the world and human knowledge of the world (Meretoja, 2014). It is also worth noting that the ontological and epistemological assumptions also intertwine and are not always distinguishable. As for this study, the interest lies in the processes of narrative interpretation that takes shape in a dialogical relation to socially and culturally mediated models of sense-making, cultural narratives.

A critique of narrative approach in social sciences arises from the claim that narrative inquiry presumes that life is built into narrative form, even if the experience of participants does not always back up that claim (Hänninen, 2018). Also, the multifaceted features of narratives seem to be left unattended in order to create a coherent whole, and the small stories in general are left out from the big picture. Narrative inquiry seems to promote structures familiar from folk tales and fiction novels instead of an unstructured, overlapping, and contradictory description of life (From these themes, see e.g., Hyvärinen, et al., 2010). Galen Stawson (2004) is one of the most fundamental critics of narrative theorisation. He claims that the narrative outline of life is strongly exaggerated and the idea that in order to have a 'good life', life should be coherent, suitable to a narrative form, marginalises people who experience their life differently. According to Strawson, there are people who simply do not form their life into meaningful stories and still are able to find meaning and are capable of living a good, morally valuable life. However, Strawson's views have also been contested and it has been claimed that his principal terms are not clearly defined, or concepts deeply explored (Battersby, 2006, see also Eakin, 2006).

### 2.1.2 Narrative as a cultural tool and a form of identity work

According to the American psychologist and educational theorist Jerome Bruner (1986, 12), there are two modes of cognitive functioning; two modes of thought which provide distinctive ways of arranging experiences and in a wider sense, constructing reality. They are presented in Figure 2.

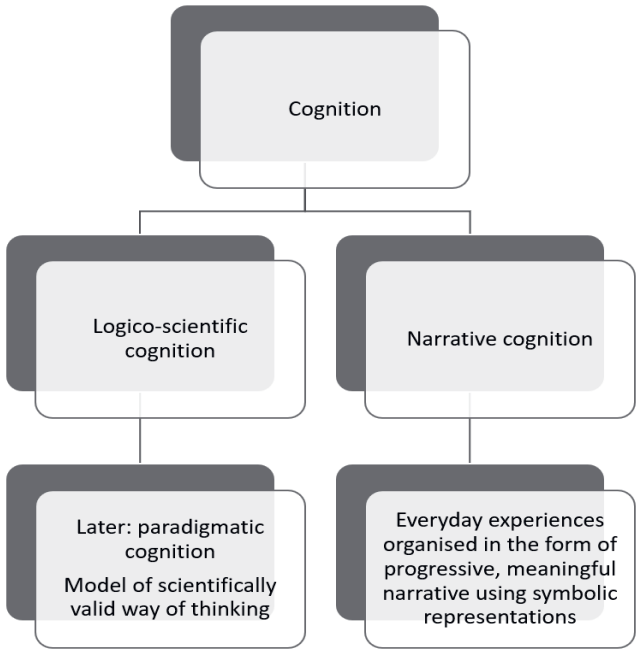


**Figure 2.** Two modes of thought

These two modes complement each other and all efforts to reduce one mode to another or to ignore one at the expense of other leads to failure of understanding the rich diversity of thought. No culture is without both of them, though different cultures value them differently (Bruner, 1996, 39). The two ways of knowing differ from each other based on their operating principles, criteria for well-formedness and their procedures for verification.

*Logico-scientific mode of thought* is based on categorisation of things; it is systematic and aims to find generalities. It is an interest in the causalities and organisation of things using well-defined conceptions. Knowledge is built and is often represented as logical propositions, based on logical proofs and arguments. The ideal of this mode of thought could be seen in a formal, mathematical explanation system. This mode of thought is typical to natural sciences and can be seen as dominant in modern Western societies, even globally. That is why Bruner uses the term *paradigmatic mode of thought* since the logico-scientific mode of thought has accomplished an unquestioned position in science, the obvious and dominant paradigm of knowledge.

In modern societies, the paradigmatic mode of thought has overshadowed the other mode, *narrative mode of thought*. In the field of science, it has not been considered a valid or reliable way to construct knowledge and thus, it has not been widely recognised. However, according to Bruner, it is a natural and intuitive mode of thought for humans, which naturally occurs with children (Bruner, 1986, Tolska, 2002). Narrative mode of thought is focused on human experience and the meanings which are given to experiences. Instead of generalisations, narrative mode is interested in the specialities and meanings given to them (Bruner, 1986, 11-13). Meanings are given through stories and these stories describe "human or humanlike intention and action and the vicissitudes and consequences that mark their course" (Bruner, 1986, 13). They capture people's own interpretations and explanations about what they have experienced and how this directs their future. To conclude, paradigmatic mode of thought seeks to explain the underlying relationships between observable variables while narrative mode of thought seeks to explain the storied meaning people make of these relationships. The two modes of thought, though complementary, are not reducible to one another.

Both of these modes of thought have significant but differing strengths. The paradigmatic mode offers the opportunity to predict and tests hypotheses about the nature of reality and different natural phenomena. In contrast, the narrative mode organises the complex and often ambiguous world of human intention and behaviour into a meaningful structure and understandable whole. As a result, the aids of paradigmatic arguments and narrative stories cannot be fairly judged by the same criteria. Bruner (1986) stresses that a good story and well-formed argumentation are different in nature, although both can be used by means to convince another, even if he way of convincing differs fundamentally. Plausible and convincing paradigmatic explanations should accurately predict and explain phenomena under observation. In contrast, good narratives should meaningfully capture the shifting and variable features of lived experience.

Also, what different modes of thought are convincing of is fundamentally different: arguments convince one of their truth, stories of their *verisimilitude*. Paradigmatic mode of thought is verified by eventual appeal to procedures for establishing formal and empirical proof. Narrative mode of thought

establishes not truth but *verisimilitude*, the quality of seeming to be true or real (Merriam-Webster, 2021) from Latin root *verus* (true), *veritas* (truth) and *similis* (like). Thus, narrative that is credible and plausible (but need not to be 'true' in light of correspondence truth theory) represent' truth likeness', or verisimilitude. *Verisimilitude* thus refers to something truth-likeness that may not necessarily be true in the literal meaning of the word, but the listener can trust the story based on his or her general life experience and identification with the lifeworld of the teller.

Bruner's ideas related to narrative thinking could be seen in same line with Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978; 1987) since both see language and narrative as having a special meaning in child development. Vygotsky's sociocultural theory understands child development as a socially and culturally meditated process where children adopt cultural values, beliefs and strategies to solve problems during collaborations with other, more knowledgeable members of a community. Vygotsky also underlines the importance of culture in learning, seeing language as the main tool for cognitive development and highlights the community's role in an individual's learning and development. Development of narrative thinking can be seen as one important part of cognitive development and a way to adopt the cultural tools present in child's lifeworld. As Bruner states, it is *culture*, and not biology, that shapes human life and the human mind (Bruner, 1990).

There are various scholars (Haste and Abrahams, 2008, Loseke, 2007; Egan, 1997) who agree and see narrative understanding as an important cognitive tool to organise experience which seems universal to humans and different cultures. The power of narrative is obvious since stories, myths, fairy tales, and legends exists in all cultures (Bettelheim, 1976, Bruner, 1990, Egan, 1991). To participate, a culture requires an understanding of narrative meaning. Through narrative human beings render actions and events as meaningful. For Bruner (1990, 1996) human intelligence is for the most part an internalisation of the tools provided by the prevailing culture, such as narratives. The task of intelligence is to build models that can explain and organise experiences. Thus, narrative thinking can be developed through the mental tools provided by culture, such as narration. Narrative thinking is not so much used to explain the phenomena of the physical world, but to answer

our attempts to understand the complex nature of people and social relations. According to Bruner, we give most of our immediate experience as well past events the form of narrative. Experiences become comprehensible through narratives, and those narratives reflect the narratives within a culture, varying creatively according to the situation and need. We need both narrative and logico-scientific thinking to understand ourselves and the surrounding reality (Keränen-Pantsu, 2022).

For a child's development it is important that they learn to understand the world through narratives and to form narratives about themself. Bruner (1996) argues that the child should be familiar with the myths, history, folk tales, and most common stories of their own culture. Warnock (1994) follows the idea saying that the child should be taught the religious narratives of culture, among other things, as these narratives form a central part of cultural history. She continues that religious narratives also work as metaphors for values and those values can be understood and shared through narrative.

According to Bruner (1996) cultural narratives frame and reinforce a person's perception of themselves. Warnock (1994) also emphasises that the child should learn to tell the story of his or her own life because this gives structure and shape to one's life. The perception of oneself is thus based on the narratives present in culture, the cultural stock of narratives, which still form a significant part of the narratives of different religions and worldviews. The more comprehensive and wider this narrative stock is, the more opportunities there are for individuals to give meaning to themselves, their experiences, and their community (Keränen-Pantsu, 2022).

Social reality can be understood through narrative, when cultural narratives form a frame that reproduces meaning within a specific cultural context (Haste and Abrahams, 2008; Loseke, 2007). Individuals use their interpretations of cultural narratives as resources in many ways to craft their own life stories and thus, these personal identity narratives also shape the cultural stock of narratives, which is not stable but developing and changing (Bruner, 1987; Hänninen, 2004). As stated Bruner: "In the end, we become the autobiographical narratives by which we "tell about" our lives. And given the cultural shaping . . . we also become variants of the culture's canonical form" (Bruner, 1987, 15). One's life story is situated in a given historical

and social context (Goodson, 2013) so every human life story is enmeshed within "a community of life stories" (Bruner, 1987, 699). Thus, sense-making takes place in the interaction with a cultural stock of narratives as figure 3 presents. (Hänninen, 2004; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021). In short, this means that our own life stories and interpretations are always affected by the social reality and cultural narratives, so the narrative meaning-making, and reflection of our life happens in a certain time and place. However, also this cultural stock of narratives is fluid and developing as life stories of others are shaping it.

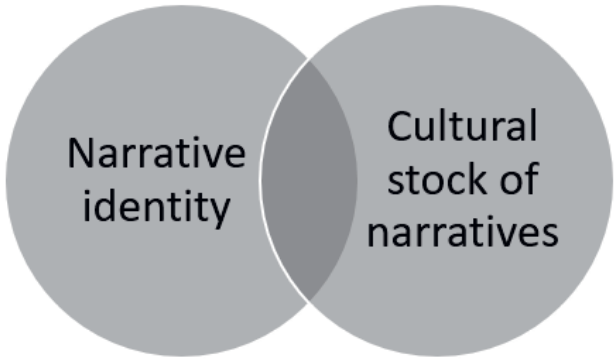


**Figure 3.** Interplay between narrative identity and cultural stock of narratives

The interplay between the personal self-narrative and social reality defined by cultural narratives is highly contextual and also limited as Goodson et al. (2010) point out: narratives are not entirely optional so that you can choose what stories to tell. When a child is born, s/he is born to a world full of stories, stories of his or her family and relatives, stories of his or her generation, surrounding culture, nation, and civilisation. Stories are constructed, narrated, heard, and evaluated within particular historical, societal, and interactional contexts, which include the background assumptions of narrators and listeners as well as the prevailing norms and structures of storytelling (Ewick and Silbey, 1995; Holstein and Gubrium, 2000). These contexts influence what kind of stories and characters gain visibility and are interpreted as meaningful and valued and what kind of ethical considerations might be attached to those stories and social actors.

Narratives are created to meet the demands of social roles and historical-cultural 'niches' (Singer, 2004) and personal narratives should situate one meaningfully in their culture, providing unity to one's past, present, and anticipated future (Singer, 2004, Polkinghorne, 1991). This is also pointed out by McAdams (1996, 301) according to whom, personal narratives should at least "partially reflect the kinds of stories that prevail in . . . culture", if you want them to be credible. What follows from this idea is that people shaping their identity narratives must use these cultural stories (Polkinghorne, 1991) or canonical life stories (Bruner, 1987) as model stories in order to adapt the social environment and understand themselves as a part of that community. McAdams et al. (2001) have described the process as follows: "individuals' ongoing sense of self in contemporary Western society coheres around a narrative structure, which casts the individual as a protagonist in a lifelong journey, marked by the mutual challenges of intimacy and autonomy, and expressed through archetypal characters, turning points, and varying outcomes of redemption or contamination" (McAdams, Reynolds, Lewis, Patten, and Bowman, 2001, referred Singer, 2004; see also McAdams, 1985).

## 2.2 Cultural narratives from an educational perspective

Cultural studies emphasise the social construction of meaning within a cultural context. Attention is paid to how human work in different social institutions, formal and informal norm-based systems, as these constitute cultural, social and psychological processes (Haste and Abrahams, 2008). Related to this study, school is this kind of formal social institution, including also informal norm systems such as classroom culture and rules that guide peer-relations. Cultural studies see the individual as an active agent in these processes where the relation between culture and the individual is conceived in a dialogical manner, not as a one-way influence (see Bruner, 1987). Haste and Abrahams (2008) also point out that if one wishes to understand a culture, one must understand how people's view of their world is mediated by the tools of that culture, in this case, which narratives are available.

For example, the Western world is difficult to understand if there is lack of knowledge about the religious, namely Christian, narratives which have had a significant role in developing Western culture (Gadamer, 2004).

Narratives are always told for a reason: as Riessman (2008, 8) points out, narratives are strategic, functional, and purposeful. Narrative form is selected over non-narrative forms of communication to accomplish something, heading for certain goals. This also changes the way a story is told, how the audience defines it, how the story is presented, and what kind of appearance the storyteller is hoping to achieve. This idea is well-suited for education, where stories are always told for a reason and are to endorse certain purposes, for example learning.

In the following, the concept of narrative learning is developed and presented. The aim is not to give an overall picture of education related to narrativity. Instead, the aim is to open some perspectives relevant to themes of this study at hand and hopefully to get a more comprehensive understanding also for empirical results represented later.

In narrative learning, the ideas of John Dewey (1897; 1902) are emphasised: instead of acquisition of pre-determined skills, the purpose of education is to support one's full potential and ability to use one's skills for greater good (Dewey, 1897; see also Goodson et al., 2010; Goodson and Gill, 2011). Dewey (1902) also promoted educational structures which pay respect to the interests and experiences of the students. This way, the cultivation of autonomy and critical thinking for both student and teacher is advocated. In line with the ideas of Dewey, I also understand narrative learning as a wider and holistic process than just knowledge transmission.

Yet, if we take these ideas of narrativity as a basis for human existence and meaning-making (see e.g., Bruner, 1986; Clark, 2010; Meretoja, 2014; Ricoeur, 1992) truly into account, it is surprising why there is not more discussion about narrative and learning. Goodson (2013; 2014) suggests that the answer for the underuse of stories might be that they are 'too egalitarian, too inclusive' if the school is merely to reproduce the social order and the school system seeks to select and foster certain groups, while neglecting others (Goodson, 2014, 4). One of the main reasons why the narrativity does not achieve wide visibility in the educational context might not even be this

kind of maintenance of social order since it would demand understanding narrativity as one of the core components of social reality. Instead, the obstacle for wider development of narrative learning might have more to do with the narrow and old-fashioned way to understand narratives in the school context (see Cazden and Hymes, 1978). It has maybe been seen as equal to storytelling and fairy tales and because of that, labelled as naïve and focused on kindergarten, unsuitable for older students, not to mention adults. The short overview of Finnish core curriculum in Section 3 in this study would support this idea since narratives in different subjects where mainly present in primary school (students aged 7-12) (NCCBE, 2014).

Against this background it is interesting that narrative learning has been developed in the field of adult and continuing education (Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Clark, 2010). It seems that the interest in narrative learning especially related to adult student relies on the idea of narrative identity (Mc Adams and McLean, 2013, Ricoeur, 1992), which is seen as mostly suitable for adults, who also have a longer life experience and ability to remember, articulate and re-tell their autobiographical narrative. However, this kind of contextualising is not fair for adolescents and children, whose ability to wonder about deep questions and understand their own identity is seen as inadequate or deficient.

Bruner (1986; see also Tolska, 2002; Huttunen, 2013) underlines the children's ability to story their lives and experiences very intuitively at a very early age. This also connects the understanding identity as an ongoing, never-finished process which is shaped and re-shaped all over again during a lifetime. Children do not see themselves as half of adults or as an unfinished story; the narrative identity is always a whole, complete, and ready for today – just to be ready to re-shape, re-evaluate and re-tell tomorrow. In this idea of developing children's narrative learning and narrative identity, there's a lot potential and unused opportunities in the context of school.

### 2.2.1 Narrative learning as a process for meaning-making

There are some scholars (e.g., Egan, 1989; Goodson et al., 2010, Goodson and Gill, 2010; Clark and Rossiter, 2008, Clark, 2010) who have theorised the concept of narrative learning. From the adult education field, Clark and Rossiter (2008) have positioned the roots of narrative learning in experimental

learning, based on the work of Dewey (1987; 1902). Fenwick (2000) stated that experimental learning has been influenced by the constructivist ideas about the importance of reflection, emphasis on interrelationship and contextuality of situated learning (see Lave and Wenger, 1991) and critical cultural viewpoints which highlight how ideological and cultural structures form our way of thinking and seeing ourselves (see also Bruner, 1990; Goodson, 2013). According to Clark and Rossiter (2008), narrative learning is grounded in these ideas but aims for also developing these viewpoints further. Other theorists who have theorised narrative learning are Goodson and Gill (2011), to whom the learning process goes beyond the conventional perception of learning as the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Instead, they emphasise the flourishment of an individual human being and the realisation of their fullest capacities, combining them with ethical and social perspectives.

Narrative provides a representational model to conceptualise the learning process and a tool to promote learning. Narrative learning process have conceptualised researchers from different fields of study, such as adult and lifelong learning (Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Clark, 2010) and educational studies and teacher education (Goodson and Gill, 2010, Goodson, 2013; Yrjänäinen and Ropo, 2013; Heikkinen, 2002). Thus, narrative learning can refer to the learning and meaning-making process, according to which people discover or create meaning in the process of narrating. Information and experiences from various sources are processed to combine a meaningful whole, meaningful narrative. This conscious structuring process of meaningful narrative can be called narrative learning (Goodson et al., 2010; Goodson and Gill, 2011; Clark and Rossiter, 2008).

Clark and Rossiter (2008) argue that narrative learning could be seen as a part of larger category of constructivist learning theory, in which learning is a construction of meaning from experience and in narrative learning theory, this construction is done narratively. They also pinpoint the close connections of experience and learner, since the experience is the object of meaning-making. The nature of an experience is always prelinguistic: to 'language' it (e.g., process of narrating) is to give meaning to it and the construction of this narrative is necessary to make the experience accessible. The way the narrative is constructed determines what kind of meaning an experience has for an individual.

### 2.2.2 Learning through narrative: modes of narrative learning

In the following, different *modes of narrative learning,* i.e., how narratives are understood and used to promote certain types of development and pedagogical aims, are combined. Focus has mainly been on the theorists who have been intensively developing the concept of narrative learning; from adult education and continuous learning, Clark and Rossiter (2008), Clark (2010); teacher education, curriculum theory and life history research, Goodson and Gill (2011), (Goodson et al., 2010). Their conceptualisations can be viewed in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Conceptualisations of narrative learning

| Mode of learning through narratives | Theorists |
|---|---|
| **Listening narratives** | Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Clark, 2010<br>Goodson and Gill, 2010 |
| **Telling narratives** | Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Clark, 2010<br>Goodson and Gill, 2010 |
| **Recognising narratives** | Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Clark, 2010 |
| **Contextualising life story into life history** | Goodson and Gill, 2011; Goodson,2013 |

Clark and Rossiter (2008) distinguish three different ways narratives can promote learning, through (1) stories heard, (2) stories told and (3) stories recognised. Goodson and Gill (2011) emphasise three different manners of narrative learning: (1) learning from stories, (2) learning in the process of narrating and (3) learning by contextualising one's life story, i.e., constructing life history. These are combined to four modes of learning through narrative: *(1) listening narratives, (2) telling narratives, (3) recognising narratives and (4) contextualising narratives.* Next, each of the modes are presented in general and especially related to worldview education.

**Table 2.** Learning through narratives

| Mode of learning through narratives | In education | In worldview education |
|---|---|---|
| **Listening narratives** | Getting familiar with cultural narratives and model stories<br><br>Getting familiar with 'cultural tools' | Getting familiar with narratives of different religions and worldviews<br><br>Getting familiar with 'cultural tools' provided by religions and worldviews<br><br>Develop narrative capital, ethical abilities and cultural and religious literacy |
| **Telling narratives** | Interpreting experiences, identity and society via cultural and personal narratives<br><br>Using 'cultural tools' | Interpreting experiences, identity and society via personal and cultural narratives, especially those offered by different religions and worldviews<br><br>Using 'cultural tools' provided by religions and worldviews |
| **Recognising narratives** | Recognising that people, communities, societies and cultures are narratively constituted and positioned | Recognising that people, religious and other communities, societies and cultures are narratively constituted and positioned and understanding the influence of religious stock of narratives in it |
| **Contextualising narratives** | Understanding personal and cultural narratives as situated in a certain time and culture | Understanding personal and cultural and religious traditions in their historical and societal context. |

**Listening narratives**

Stories that a learner *listens* to invites her/him to receive and respond. Those stories come from outside the learner – from the culture and social reality, i.e., cultural stock of narratives, surrounding the individual. Examples could be religious parables, myth and other moral tales as well as personal experiences (Clark, 2010). The process is two-fold: on the one hand, the learner has to receive the story in some form and on the other hand, the learner has to make sense of the story somehow. It is this sense-making process that reveals our deeply rooted nature of storying our experiments and construct them into a meaningful whole, combining our new and previous experiences and giving them new meanings. This is obviously present in school, where learning is one of the main goals.

Many scholars claim that stories draw learners into an experience that goes beyond the cognitive level and engages in a more holistic and multifaceted way than logic-rational thinking can (Bruner, 1996; Egan, 1997). Thus, this approach is well-suited for learning situations where the aims go beyond certain subject-specific contents. Stories are powerful and intriguing because they engage learners at a 'deeply human level' (Clark and Rossiter, 2008, 65). In this they mean an experience that goes beyond the cognitive level: 'they engage our spirit, our imagination, our heart, and this engagement is complex and hostility' (Clark and Rossiter, 2008, 65).

In worldview education, cultural narratives, especially those of religious traditions and worldviews, have a special role in learning because of their ability reach this 'deeply human level' and this might be one of the explanations for why these cultural narratives have lasted over time so well: still, humans in different life situations hoping for child can reach the hope and desperation of Sarah (The Bible, Gen. 18:12) or understand the tearing contradiction and competition between siblings (The Bible, Gen. 27:5-7). Thus, the stories and themes are universal, reaching for the deep humanity within us. This is what Bruner (1986; 1987), in line with literacy studies and Russian formalists (see for example Propp, 1929/2010) calls *fabula*, the universal and timeless theme of narrative which can have different forms of *sjuzet,* the context and plot that gives a theme structure.

The ethical dimension is seen as an important part of religious narratives and narratives in general (Meretoja, 2018). The ethical dimension of narratives has been promoted by Bettelheim (1976), according to whom fairy tales reflect universal fears and desires, and that the apparently cruel and arbitrary nature of many fairy tales is actually connected to children's development and necessary instructive reflection. Intention, blame, responsibility, duty and virtues, to mention just a few, can capture important aspects of humanity. The repertoire of these universal themes is also voluminous in religious narratives (see also Sutcliffe, 2005) and the presence of values is seen as an important part of teaching religious narratives (Iversen, 2006).

Narratives can encourage both pupils and teachers to participate in a common existential discussion. Narratives of religions and worldviews naturally have elements that invite people to wonder about perennial questions like the ultimate life questions; questions about the boundaries of life such as birth and death as well as searching for answers to questions about the meaning of life (Keränen-Pantsu, 2017, 159). Narratives also promote religious and cultural literacy (Moore, 2016; Heimbrock, 2001; Hirsch, 1983; Hirsch et al., 2002) which enables the understanding of the religious aspects of the prevailing culture.

Listening to different kinds of narratives provided by religions and worldview systems increase the ways of perceiving the world, thus enrichening the cultural stock of narratives and narrative capital understood as a repertoire of cultural narratives available (Haste and Abrahams, 2008). The wide range of cultural narratives opens up more possibilities to organise one's own life and also to understand different worldviews when a person is exposed to other kinds of conceptualisations that one is familiar with. According to Bruner (1996, 41), The child should know the myths, histories, folktales and conventional stories of his or her culture because they frame and nourish identity and give tools for understanding the surrounding culture. A rich cultural stock of narratives can also enhance the narrative capital definition used by Goodson (2013). For him, narrative capital refers to the ability to adopt new life situations into one's personal life story and re-interpret a life course when needed (Goodson, 2013). This kind of flexibility is evident in unexpected life situations and changing circumstances.

Cultural narratives such as religious narratives have a good possibility to support something that Nussbaum (2002, 299) calls narrative imagination; the ability to 'think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself' and to 'understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have' (Nussbaum, 2002, 299). When pupils are reflecting on someone else's story, they develop their empathy skills and ability take someone else's perspective, important for values and civic education.

**Telling narratives**

In the second mode of narrative learning, the *telling* of narratives, the learner is an active agent of processing and narrating rather than the receiver of an outside narrative. The learner moves from cognitive understanding of an idea, term, or concept and connects it to his or her own experience and this connection and meaning-making between the experience and new concept is where learning occurs, making learning content more personal and more involved than pure cognitive understanding (Clark and Rossiter, 2008). The act of telling is what puts it all together, so the everyday experiences and details together make experiences coherent for us and others (Clark, 2010). This also applies in a larger scale events of our lives, where certain events are interpreted in the act of telling when sharing our experiences and life events. This narrating process makes those experiences live again and allows also new interoperations, different than those given in the original situation.

In worldview education, one's own life questions and the ability to reflect one's own worldview, values and tradition is seen as fundamental (Miedema, 2014). Bruner thinks that schools should not take the development of narrative thinking for granted but strive for its active development (Bruner, 1996, 42). Thus, the ability to tell stories about your life and see them as part of a wider cultural structures, is evident. Forming narratives is based on shared symbols of a community, its traditions and tool-kit, passed on from generation to generation and constituting the larger culture (Bruner, 1996). Telling stories and reflecting cultural narratives makes students aware of these culturally shared conventions, ways of telling and sharing experiences. Narratives can also promote participation, when people have a chance to participate in the shared narrative and conversations within.

Narrative can promote agency since there is a possibility to tell many kinds of narratives about yourself and your life. There is always a possibility to re-interpret events and experiences and thus, create new understanding about one's future (Polkinghorne, 1991). Telling stories about one's life and one's worldview invite also others to share their views and thus, enable encounters and dialogue. This increases the awareness of different worldviews and belief systems, making it possible to evaluate and create one's own relationship to those systems and also use them as building material for one's worldview and identity work. This kind of reflection is very important since it could promote the ability to find meaning and coherence in a world more fractured and plural than ever before.

**Recognising narratives**

The third mode of learning through narratives is *recognising* narratives. This means a holistic and more philosophical understanding about the narrative nature of our self-understanding and our understanding about our social environment. Clark and Rossiter (2008, 65) describe that we are 'narratively constituted and narratively positioned', which applies learner personally as well as groups, societies and cultures. 'Narratively constituted' seems to refer to the concept of narrative identity (McAdams, 1985; Ricoeur, 1992) even if the authors do not use the term explicitly. Also, 'narratively positioned' leans to understanding societies as narratively constructed, as a part of wider cultural narratives (Haste and Abrahams, 2007; Loseke, 2008) or metanarratives (Lyotard, 1979), on the one hand giving 'scripts' (Bruner, 1996) for individual life stories and on other hand, constantly developing and changing the cultural stock of narratives enriched by individuals' life stories.

In worldview education, this puts the focus on one's own worldview and identity and the groups, communities and traditions one is part of. This highlights that our life story can be understood as an evolving and dynamic narrative which is in ab active relationship with culturally shared narratives, such as narratives from religions and worldviews. Also, communities and traditions like different religions are seen the same way, evolving and always re-interpreted by their members even if there is also an effort to keep the tradition 'original' and convey it to the future generations as authentic

as possible. Paying attention to those narratives that communities have cherished and conveyed through generations also reveals a lot of tradition's self-understanding, values, and ideals they nurture.

**Contextualising narratives**

The fourth mode of narrative learning could be seen as *contextualising narratives.* For Goodson and Gill (2011) this means constant construction of autobiographical narrative in a historical context. In education, through collaboration with educators and peer groups, the learner locates one's own narrative in historical, cultural and social spaces. This provides an understanding of why one's story is told in this way and at this moment. These narratives are personal elaborations and constructions but the way of telling, e.g., 'building blocks' or narrative scripts, are culturally and socially located (Goodson and Gill, 2011). This kind of location of historical and societal context is seen as important in order to understand one's own life narrative and structures used. Goodson (2013) also distinguishes between life story and life history. Life story is what one tells about him/herself, life history is when the life story is connected to historical and cultural contexts. In worldview education, this means that pupils are aware of the cultural-historical narratives of his/her time and also the major impacts religion has had and still has on forming societies and cultures. However, the rise of secularisation (Casanova, 2009), as well as diversification of the religious field (Illman et al., 2017), are changing the cultural and societal context and should be taken into account. Multicultural and diverse societies require that this kind of cultural-historical analysis is more extensive than before, when local and national narratives were limited and had more value in constructing one's life story. Even if some of the religious narratives, like the Bible as a whole, are considered to have so much impact on history in Europe that knowing the basics of it is crucial to understanding the culture of Europe (Gadamer, 2004), globalisation and immigration is making societies plural and fragmented and thus, requires widening of the societal and cultural context in which one's life story can be situated.

In summary, in narrative theory, knowledge about us, i.e., our narrative identity (McAdamas, 1985; Ricoeur, 1992) and the world around us is actively constructed in social and cultural communities and relationships, i.e., cultural stock of narratives (Hänninen, 2004; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021). These processes are also present in educational settings, especially in worldview education. When theories about narrative circulation (Bruner, 1990; Hänninen, 2004) are viewed together with the theory of narrative learning, i.e., learning through narratives (Goodson and Gill, 2011; Clark and Rossiter, 2008), ideas can be simplified to those presented in Figure 4, which combines the main aspects of these theories.

In the centre is narrative meaning-making, which is understood in a personal manner referring to narrative identity and as a meaning-making of the cultural and societal environment, represented in the form of cultural stock of narratives. These are in continuous interaction, when cultural stock of narratives offers model stories to interpret life experiences and one's personal identity narratives are continuously enriching the cultural stock of narratives (Bruner, 1990; Hänninen, 2004; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021). This means that both narrative identity and cultural stock of narratives are not static, instead they are in constant process, and because of that they never reach a point of being fixed and ready. Learning to me be is a lifelong journey.

Interaction between narrative identity and cultural stock of narratives can be conceptualised as narrative circulation, which happens through telling personal and cultural narratives as well as listening to personal and cultural narratives. This kind of process of listening and telling also applies to learning processes and assimilation of knowledge. People are learning when they listen to narratives or reflect their experiences and tell them to others. A conscious learner is also able to recognise that individuals and communities are narratively constructed and positioned. In addition, contextualising narratives in the certain time, place and culture helps to understand why stories are told in certain ways and manners. Thus, learning is not only assimilation of certain contents, but rather their reflection, modification, contextualization and becoming aware of the narratives that define us and that can be found in our cultural stock of narratives.

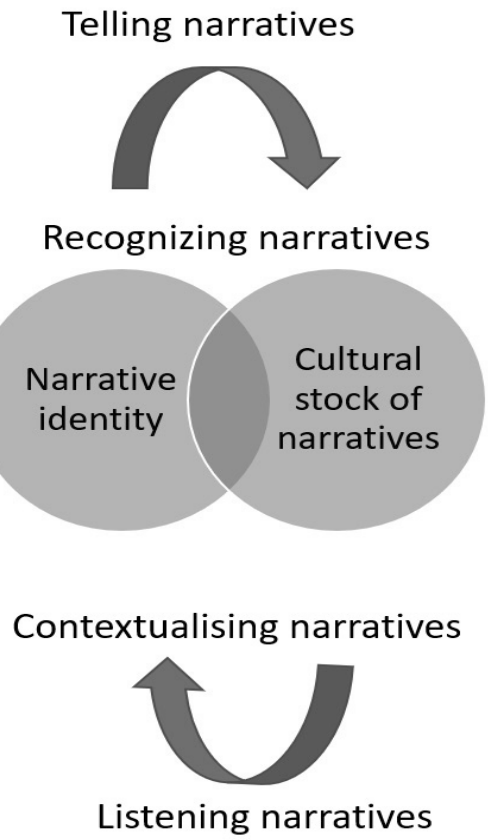


**Figure 4.** Narratives in learning

Learning through narratives has long historical roots. Humans have always constructed themselves, their physical and social environment and also a world which continues beyond the borders of their sensory world, through a narrative. Booker (2004, 2) has described stories as "one of the most familiar of all forms of human activity" which should be taken into account also in educational fields. Thus, narrative learning has a lot of potential for further developments in education in general and worldview education especially, since the presence of narrative is fundamental in the human condition. Theorization of narrative learning is revisited in the Discussion section (Chapter 6) in the light of empirical results of this study. Ideas for model development are also discussed.

# 3 NARRATIVES, FINNISH SCHOOL AND WORLDVIEW EDUCATION

Finnish educational thinking is based on the Western value basis and humanistic ideals about educability and continuous learning of a human. The Finnish educational system aims to support students to develop them into ethical, critical and responsible individuals and citizens of local and global communities (Haaparanta and Niiniluoto, 2016). The fundamental values of human rights such as respect for human diversity and mutual understanding, social justice and promoting educational equality, has been a long-term ideal in the Finnish school system (Kumpulainen and Lankinen, 2016; Niemi, Toom and Kallioniemi, 2016). This study claims that narrativity and narrative way of knowing can promote these goals and offer fresh viewpoints to education. In order to clarify these ideas, it is important to understand underlying educational ideals in Finnish school and see how narratives are presented in the current national core curriculum.

Skills, values and goals considered important in the present and future society are presented in the curriculum (Schiro, 2013). They are related to the time and context they are created: new visions and openings are bounded to the historical and cultural environments in which they are developed (Goodson, 2014; Schiro, 2013). The aims of education, such as developing personality holistically, lifelong learning and global citizenship are often presented on a quite abstract level in the curriculum, allowing adapting different values and norms present in society (Saari et al., 2017). This study suggest that these aims can also be viewed in the light of narrativity which might open new kinds of understanding on how to support skills and knowledge as well as holistic personal development in the school context.

## 3.1 Finnish school at the crossroads of two educational ideals

There have been two basic modes of thought in conceptualising Western education, including its interrelated notions of teaching and learning, that is, German-Scandinavian Bildung and Anglo-American Curriculum (Hakala and Kujala, 2021). This kind of conceptualisation is just a rough overview of the institutional, theoretical, and practical underpinnings of education in different European countries since national characteristics may shape and highlight one tradition over another or countries may draw elements from both traditions, as is the case in Finland (Hakala and Kujala, 2021; Saari et al., 2017).

The Bildung tradition, having its roots in German philosophy, refers to the deep understanding of the human in a holistic, existential, and philosophical way. Bildung is often translated as "formation" or "cultivation" (Hakala and Kujala, 2021) and it is foremost a theory of becoming human where the aim is an autonomous and self-reflected person. There are also aims which go beyond the individual: besides inner cultivation, Bildung aims to promote a better and more just society where collective truths are critically reflected, and people are capable of social action (Autio, 2014; Horlacher, 2017). To pursue these goals, educational institutions and professionals working in the institutions should have a relatively autonomous position related to the rest of the society (Autio, 2014). Bildung traditions also emphasise students and educational processes as not subject to societal requirements nor preserved without questioning certain traditions.

In Anglo-American Curriculum, traditionally the emphasis is on useful knowledge and skills in order to promote agency in the current and future society. In the history of Curriculum tradition at the turn of the 19$^{th}$ and 20$^{th}$ century, in the United States education was expected to meet the challenges of a new industrialised society: "So democracy is about organising individuals for the benefit of society, and education is about readying individuals to assume their proper place in that society" (Labaree, 2010, 174). Thus, maintaining social order and advancing economic growth was seen as the main tasks of education and administrative focus was on practical issues of education (Pinar at al., 1995). Experimental psychology, empirical scientific management, and close connection to working life formed the basis of education based on

social efficiency (Labaree, 2010). This led to a utilitarian and rational view of education which still dominates Anglo-American curriculum. This also brought standardisation and accountability to education, which has raised questions and critique in America as well as in Finland because it has been seen as narrowing education (Pinar et al., 1995; Autio, 2017).

The role of the teacher is delineated differently in Bildung and Curriculum approaches. In the former, there is an ideal of an autonomous and trusted educational professional and instead of just following and implementing the curriculum, the teacher's task is to interpret and explore the curriculum's educative possibilities, which means that the content taught should promote broad significance for the life of the students, in the present and future (Westbury, 1998; Hakala and Kujala, 2021). This also means that if a teacher's freedom to teach is accentuated, the curriculum cannot be totally predetermined, nor is the knowledge addressed to learners static and something that can be just brought to students with testing and accountability in mind. There should be a possibility to reflect on the worthwhileness of the subject and knowledge related to it (Autio, 2014). In the Curriculum approach, the teacher's task is more limited – to implement the curriculum (Westbury, 1998) and follow the several learning programmes to reach the state standards. Recourses are also allocated differently: in the Curriculum tradition attention is paid to teaching materials, while in the Bildung tradition more emphasis is placed on teacher education (Erss, 2017).

The Finnish curriculum has had influences from both traditions. Bildung was strong before World War II, after which the Curriculum approach, in line with cognitive psychology, entered the field of education. However, teacher autonomy which had a solid foundation, was kept but given a new, scientific basis and teacher as a researcher was introduced. The research-based teacher education still forms a basis for teacher autonomy in Finland and explains the high level of trust in teachers' work at different levels of policies (Hakala and Kujala, 2021). An autonomous, critical and ethically committed teacher is one of the key figures to influential education.

## 3.2 National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014

Depending on the historical time and development in society, there has been underpinnings leading to both Curriculum and Bildung approaches, and this has continued in the current National Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCCBE, 2014). When curriculum reform in Finland was implemented in 2012-2014, there were discussions about whether the core curriculum should be subject-oriented or represent a more integrated view on teaching and learning. This debate and attempt to seek balance between two different traditions is also at the centre of curriculum design internationally and the result is always a compromise between subject sciences and student needs (Vitikka et al., 2012). In the curriculum reform the result was to change from subject content to general objectives. Unlike the previous National Core Curriculum (2004) which still emphasised subject content, the NCCBE 2014 introduces general objectives in terms of key competences, called transversal competences. To underline the connections between competences and subject content, they are linked in the definition of the subjects' objectives and key content areas (NCCBE, 2014, 21).

When viewing the structure of the Finnish curriculum for basic education, the document contains two parts: firstly a general introduction describing the fundamental values, overall goals and guidelines for the education; and secondly the syllabi outlining the teaching objectives and core content for each school subject. The reliance on the Bildung tradition and more holistic approach can be found in the document's general part, value basis and the multifaceted aim of education. The objective of basic education is to "support pupils' growth towards humanity and ethically responsible membership to society and to provide them with the knowledge and skills needed in life" (NCCBE, 2014, 16). Personal development, in addition to active citizenship, is also nurtured as "Each pupil has the right to grow into his or her full potential as a human being and a member of society"; "Basic education promotes well-being, democracy and active agency in civil society" (NCCBE, 2014, 15–16). This is in line with educational scholars who have used the same kind of distinction to conceptualise the multifaceted nature of educational purposes,

namely socialisation, acquisition of academic knowledge and skills, and the promotion of individual development (e.g. Egan, 2008).

In recent years a growing trend has been to focus on the different skills global citizenship requires. In Anglo-American countries basic skills, such as reading, writing and mathematics have been objects of discussion since the 1970s, but lately this thinking has been developed further (Vitikka et al., 2012). Numeracy and literacy have been widened to practical skills and higher skills, such as the skills of thinking and learning. This kind of development, in line with the Curriculum tradition, has been crystallised into the so-called 21st century skills, on which education systems around the world base their future prospects (Martin, 2018).

Finland has been no exception in this trend to move from content-based curriculum into a more skills-based direction. In the Finnish Core Curriculum these generic skills (Martin, 2018; OECD 2015) are called transversal competences, which refers to a combination of attributes that consists of knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and will (NCCBE, 2014). Halinen et al. (2015) points out that the Finnish way of adding *will* to the definition of competences, meaning both willingness and willpower to use knowledge and skills for promoting good, gives competences also an ethical aspect (NCCBE, 2014; OECD, 2015). The idea of competences also includes the ability to use knowledge and skills in a context-specific way.

Value base, the concept of learning and the school culture lay the foundation for the development of competence and thus, seems to connect the competence-based thinking to the Bildung tradition. Each subject builds the pupil's competence through the contents and pedagogical approaches typical of its field of knowledge and methods. Competence development is influenced not only by the learning contents on which pupils work but also, and especially, by the way they work and the environment in which the interaction between the learner, content and takes place (Halinen et al., 2015). Transversal competences listed in the Finnish National Core Curriculum are: (1) Thinking skills and learning to learn; (2) Cultural competence, interaction and expression; (3) Managing daily life, taking care of oneself and others; (4) Multiliteracy; (5) ICT (IT)-competence; (6) Working life and entrepreneurial competence; (7) Participation, influence and building a sustainable future.

Hakala and Kujala (2021) point out that transversal competencies reflect, in part, a Europeanisation process, as they correspond to the eight key competencies that the European Union advanced. When exploring the Finnish education system, this kind of change toward general objectives instead of subject-matter teaching is a fairly dramatic shift (Hardy and Uljens, 2018). Emphasising multidisciplinary skills at the curriculum level seems to include also the idea that subjects' contents are not enough to provide students with future skills (Halinen and Jääskeläinen, 2015, 27, referred Kujala and Hakala, 2021). According to Kujala and Hakala (2021) this view of subject content ignores the personal growth highlighted in the Bildung approach as well as the moral, intellectual, and cognitive resources one is able to reach with profound familiarisation with the subjects. Some scholars claim that these qualities cannot be reached through an instrumental skill- and competence-based curriculum (Autio, 2019). Another critique about competence-based education is rising from claims that this ideology is narrowing education and the theory-basis to this approach is insufficient (Willberg, 2015). Also, influence of the economy and labour markets have raised questions (Goodson, 2014).

This study suggests that narrativity has a potential to promote goals emphasised by both of the traditions, holistic personal and societal development of the Bildung approach as well as proper skills and knowledge needed in society highlighted by the Curriculum tradition. Descriptions of competencies seem broader than just supporting certain knowledge and skills, reflecting ideas also from a more holistic approach in line with the Bildung tradition. Education aims to support students' growth as human beings, enhance competences needed for participating in a democratic society, and support the development of a sustainable way of living. It is also stated that it is essential to support students' ability to recognise their own strengths and developmental possibilities and appreciate themselves (NCCBE, 2014, 20-24). These goals could be understood as part of holistic learning and identity work which seems to connect knowledge and skills into a broader perspective of individual and social development. This study suggests that cultural narratives and narrativity can offer various approaches to promote these goals.

## 3.3 Narratives in the Finnish curriculum 2014 – perspectives on culture, language and identity

In this study, cultural narratives are investigated in educational settings. In order to see how and in what contexts narratives are present in the current Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2014, an overview with inductive content analysis (Kyngäs and Elo, 2018) was outlined. First, all the relevant words (story, narrative) were searched in the document. The word 'narrative' (kertomus) was mentioned 22 times and the word 'story' (tarina) 3 times. To complete a wider review, also the word body narrati* (kertomu*) was included in the analysis, with 54 mentions. The term narrative (kertomus) is mentioned in the context of a student's welfare plan (plan is replaced with the term narrative) nine times (NCCBE, 2014, 80, 84) and thus, does not have a pedagogic value and is left out of analysis. This leaves 45 mentions, which are viewed more closely.

Finnish Core Curriculum for Basic Education is formed in two parts: one is general, identifying the ultimate aims and goals as well as value basis of education and the other part describes the objectives, core contents, and forms of assessment for each school subject. It seems that narratives are mostly present in the subject-specific part, especially in the language education and worldview education, referring to school subjects of religious education and (secular) Ethics. Narratives form an interesting area in the curriculum since they seem to have a double meaning: first, they refer to teaching method, i.e., a certain way of teaching some content. That is the case, for example, in history. Second, narratives are seen as learning content, i.e., certain narratives are worthy of knowing and transfer appreciated knowledge. Thus, instead of instrumental value, certain narratives have a value on their own. There are also two emphases on this content-orientation: narrative as structure and narrative as a whole, as a part of culture. Both aspects are present in language education, the latter especially in worldview education. Of course, the line between narrative as content and narrative as a method sometimes overlaps.

In the following tables, story and narrative are presented in their context and are viewed in order to see if they are used mainly as learning content or a learning method. The word story (tarina) can be found in the transition phase

from pre-school to basic education, where games, imagination and *stories* are emphasised as working methods (NCCBE, 2014, 98). Another context where story (tarina) is present is in Swedish language instruction (NCCBE, 2014, 340, 343). In both mentions, stories refer to learning methods instead of learning content.

**Table 3.** Story (tarina) in the curriculum 2014

| Term and occurrence | Context | Content / method |
|---|---|---|
| story (tarina) 3 times | Transition from pre-school to basic education (1)<br><br>Swedish language (2) | learning method:<br>playfulness, games, imagination and narrativity<br><br>learning method:<br>tell and interpret stories |

Narratives are mostly present in the lower classes of basic education (grades 1-6, students aged 7 – 12) leaving only a few mentions in secondary school (grades 7-9, students aged 13-16). It appears that for some reason, narratives are seen as more appropriate for smaller children which may indicate a narrow understanding about narrativity, i.e., formal storytelling instead of seeing narrativity as a holistic way of understanding life and give meaning to one's experiences.

In Table 4, the presence of the term narrative (45 mentions) can be viewed in primary and secondary school. The term is mostly present in primary school, namely in language education and worldview education. History is the only subject besides these that has one mention. In secondary school (pupils age of 13-16) there are three mentions from religious education and language education.

**Table 4.** Narrative (kertomus) in primary and secondary school in the curriculum 2014

| Term and occurrence | Level of basic education | Content / method |
|---|---|---|
| Narrative (kertomus)<br>Kertomu* 45 times in total | Primary school (42)<br>Secondary school (3) | Language education (23)<br>Worldview education (19)<br>History (1) |

**Table 5.** Narrative (kertomus) in secondary school in the curriculum 2014

| Term and occurrence | Context | Content / method |
|---|---|---|
| Secondary school (3) | Orthodox religious education (1) | Learning content: Bible stories as a basis of Orthodox ethics |
| | Sami language (1) | Learning content: Sami literature, culture and narrative tradition |
| | Pupil's own language (1) | Learning content: one's own language, literacy, narrative tradition and cultural heritage |

When viewing narratives in the light of Bildung and Curriculum traditions, both traditions are present. When narratives are seen as a method, most of the references are to social skills and interaction, an ability to form and tell stories about phenomena and about yourself. This kind of skill-orientation refers to Curriculum traditions stressing proper knowledge and skills. However, references to the ability to tell stories about yourself can be viewed as part of conscious identity work and thus, as a part of a holistic Bildung tradition. Sometimes these large educational traditions also overlap. For example, in language education, narratives related to a certain language group or culture can be seen as a part of cultural knowledge, that is, knowledge about the

narrative tradition central in a certain culture. At the same time, culture and narrative are combined, certain narrative tradition is forming and defining culture, that is, stories about who we are as a language, ethnical or cultural group. This kind of perspective where students are familiarised with their 'own culture' relates to a more holistic view than just offering knowledge.

**Table 6.** Narrative in language education and history in the curriculum 2014

| Term and occurrence | Context | Content / method |
|---|---|---|
| Narrative (kertomus)<br><br>Kertomu*<br>45 times in total<br><br>23 times in language education | Finnish language (2) | Learning content: basic structure of narrative /<br>Learning method: narratives in interaction situations |
| | Sami language (9) | Learning content: narrative tradition in Sami culture<br>Learning method: narratives as a way to promote interaction |
| | Sign language (6) | Learning content: children's literacy and cultural and narrative tradition<br>Learning method: to promote interaction and create own stories |
| | Romani language (1) | Learning content: Romani culture and narrative tradition |
| | Finnish as a second language (2) | Learning content: getting familiar with narratives from different cultures; structure of narrative |
| | Pupil's own language (3) | Learning content: interpreting different text types, like fairy tales and narratives |
| | History (1) | Learning method: student can tell a story of the phenomenon from different perspectives |

In Finnish language, interaction and basic structure of narrative is stressed. In Sami and Romani language, narratives related to cultural tradition and narratives as a method of interaction are emphasised. The sing language (in Finnish viittomakieli) refers also to traditional narratives, but it does not specify which tradition is emphasised. Later, children's narratives and narrative tradition are mentioned as well as basic structures of narratives and understanding narratives in different cultures (NCBBE, 2014, 107, 110,112, 114-117, 120). Here, the emphasis is more on the context of learning, where both structure of the narrative and getting familiar with the certain traditional narratives (such as Sami narratives or children's narratives) are emphasised.

In history, in the context of using historical knowledge, the term narrative is mentioned in the evaluation (grades 3-6) when students have to explain human actions. Students should be able to tell a story about the phenomenon under study, where s/he can explain the situation or phenomenon from the perspectives of different actors (NCCBE, 2014, 259). The second most common area where narratives are present, worldview education, is discussed more closely in Chapter 3.4. To summarise, narratives in the curriculum can be seen as a teaching method, as content for language education related to, on the one hand structure of text, and on the other hand the wider perspective of cultural literacy related to certain languages and cultural traditions.

Narratives are closely related to culture and at the curriculum level, it seems that when language and culture are present, so is narrative. Since in this research narratives can be used as conceptualisations of culture and identity work (Ricoeur, 1992; Bruner, 1986; 1987) and cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021) are understood as a framework for collective and individual identity development, a quick overview of these terms in the curriculum is justified. However, it is worth noting that the word 'culture' is presented 1116 times in the curriculum while the term 'identity' is presented 75 times and thus, only a rough overview is possible. In the general part of curriculum, the construction of one's identity within cultural contexts in an ongoing process of 'building their personal cultural identity' (NCCBE, 2014, 19). Students form their identities by 'creating a relation to themselves, other people, society, nature and different cultures' (NCCBE, 2014, 13) emphasising the active interplay between the individual and the cultural context.

Education is built on the diverse Finnish cultural heritage which is formed and shaped by the interaction of different cultures (NCCBE, 2014, 16). Thus, Finnish cultural heritage is not seen as a monolith built in the national romantic era in the 1900s (Saukkonen, 2013). Instead, it is seen as diverse and built upon different sources. Besides supporting students' own cultural identity, teaching supports interest in other cultures, as well as respect for cultural diversity. School is seen as a meeting point for people with various cultural backgrounds, and in school different languages, habits, traditions, and worldviews are in interaction. Learning together over language, cultural or religious categories create the conditions for genuine interaction and a community where pupils learn to encounter differences and empathy skills. According to the NCCBE, this builds a foundation for a world citizenship that respects human rights and encourages action for positive change (NCCBE, 2014, 16).

In the legislation, the Government Decree on the National Objectives for Education, section 2 emphasises the school's educational task. The central aim is to support students' growth into humane and an ethically responsible members of society. Teaching and education should also support growth for a balanced and healthy self-esteem. According to the regulation, education promotes the knowing and understanding of cultural, ideological, worldview and religious traditions, such as Christianity, and Western humanism (NCCBE, 2014, 19). Besides un-specified Finnish cultural heritage, this is where certain traditions, such as Christianity and Western humanism, are mentioned. According to Zilliacus et al. (2017), when compared to the previous curriculum in 2004, there is less reference to Finnish national identity and heritage and instead, global identity through world citizenship is increasingly present (Zilliacus et al., 2017).

In addition to general parts of curriculum, the interplay between culture and identity is present in language education where the aim is to recognise, support and reflect cultural identities. This is in line with the occurrence of narrative, which was mainly present in language and worldview education. In narrative terms, this could be understood as an interplay between narrative identity and cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021) where personal identity work is in constant interaction with narrative reorientations of culture.

In religious education during primary school, the subject promotes an understanding of the relationship between religion and culture as well as guides students to get acquainted with Finnish, European and world cultural heritage and to perceive cultural diversity (NCCBE, 2014, 134, 254). In grades 7-9, teaching introduces religion as a cultural and social phenomenon in order to identify the interaction between religion and culture and to recognise cultural diversity (NCBBE, 2014, 404, 408). Specific reference is made to the Bible, when students study the history and origins of the Bible as well as its main content and methods of interpretation, and the cultural implications.

Also, Christianity in Finland and its cultural implications are under study in addition to one's own relationship with Lutheranism, Finnishness and Europeanness. In secular Ethics, people are understood as actors who reproduce and create their culture, who experience and produce meanings in their interactions and interactions with the world around them. Views, human practices, and their meanings are considered as a result of the interaction between individuals, communities and cultural heritage (NCCBE, 2014, 139). According to Zilliacus et al. (2017) the present Finnish curriculum creates an imaginary of 'culture' as dynamic and in which all the students are understood as multicultural, referring to the diverse and developing understanding about culture. Consequently, cultural identities are seen as complex, not fixed, and global, human rights and ethical perspectives on identity are emphasised instead of static and nation-bound views of culture.

## 3.3 Finnish worldview education and its narrative tradition

In this study, cultural narratives are investigated in the context of worldview education, which refers to an education which aims to offer knowledge about different religions or belief systems and also provide tools for reflection of one's personal worldview (Miedema, 2014). In Finland, teaching of cultures, religions, worldviews and ethics is most significantly covered in two subjects: Religious education (uskonnonopetus) and (secular) Ethics (elämankatsomustieto) (NCCBE, 2014; Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016). Worldview education as school subjects is compulsory in basic education and

the religious affiliation or lack of it determines which subject students study. The subjects start from the first grade (age of 7) and continue throughout basic education until the 9th grade (age of 16). Before primary school, in early childhood education (age 0-5) and pre-primary education (age of 6), there is common worldview education without separation into groups for religious or non-religious participants.

In Finland, the worldview education model is rather unique compared to the other Nordic countries and to Europe as well. The current non-denominational and segregative model was redefined in the reform of the *Freedom of Religion Act* in 2003. Religious education is organised "according to one's own religion" (NCCBE, 2014) which means that while (secular) Ethics is one subject and has one curriculum, religious education is divided into 13 different curricula. Concerning this study, this means that the cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021) that students are familiarised with differs depending on what curricula they are studying: for example, in Islamic religious education and Jewish religious education the sources of central narratives are different from the Quran to the Hebrew Bible. In the secular Ethics, theistic worldviews such as Christianity are not mentioned in the curriculum explicitly (NCCBE, 2014, 412) until in the upper secondary classes (grades 7-9) and thus, cultural stock of narratives in primary school might not contain anything about religions. This means that also the knowledge related to cultural narratives and understanding the cultural impacts of religions is different between the curricula of religious education and between the two subjects of worldview education.

Religious affiliation or lack of it is a justification to choose the subject (Salmenkivi et al., 2007). Legislation is rather complicated, but according to the Basic Education Act (Amendment 2003/454, 13§), the most common religious education of the municipal area is open to all (currently in all the municipal areas in Finland, that is Lutheran religious education). For others, there must be a minimum of three students in the municipal area to participate in the lessons and then the municipality is obligated to organise the teaching. (Secular) Ethics and Orthodox religious education are organised automatically if there are three students to participate; for other religious groups the guardians of the pupils must officially apply for the teaching. The legislative grounds are

found in the Freedom of Religion Act (2003) and Basic Education Act (1998, Amendment 2003/454, 13§) (see also Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016, 180-181).

In 2017, approximately 90% of students in basic education (7-16 years old) participated in Lutheran Religious education. The biggest minority religions in schools were Islamic and Orthodox religions and about 2% of the primary school students participated in lessons on each subject. Islamic religious education is so-called 'general Islam'; there is no separation between Sunni or Shia Muslims in educational settings. The quota for other religions is 2% and 6% of students participate in secular Ethics (Educational statistics in Finland 2017). There are major differences between the areas inside Finland, and in the northern and western parts of Finland, the rate of Lutheran religious education is higher than in other parts. In addition, because of historical reasons, there is more participants in Orthodox religion in the eastern part of Finland. In the metropolitan areas, there is more diversity, and the popularity of secular Ethics is higher than in other parts of the country. The big cities outside of Helsinki metropolitan follow this trend.

Worldview education in Finland is denominationally organised, but it is non-confessional in nature and religious practices such as praying in the classroom are prohibited. The teaching contents also cover other religions and secular worldviews. In Finland, a teaching qualification requires a master's degree from a university, including subject studies and pedagogical studies. Teachers are hired by the municipal government, not by religious communities, and teachers are not required to belong to the religion or denomination they teach (Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016). The Finnish national core curricula for basic education emphasises liberal educational ideals related to students' agency and autonomy (e.g. developing into one's full potential as a human being, support understanding of oneself as an active citizen in society), ideals related to tolerance and respect for differences (e.g. the ability to engage in intercultural dialogue, ability to view issues from others' perspectives) and ideals related to rationality (e.g. critical thinking and dialogue) as the underlying values of basic education. These values are present also in the curricula for religions, which also emphasise the development of critical thinking, autonomous identity and worldview as well as intercultural skills (Keränen-Pantsu and Rissanen, 2018).

In the literature (Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016), the Finnish RE has been characterised as being based on integrative practice which means including diverse pedagogical methods and sources, intimate interaction with relatively small groups, promoting critical reflection and argumentation skills as well as holistic knowledge where various sources and means for the outlook on life are recognised. Finnish basic education aims to promote the development of the whole child (NCCBE, 2014). In the current Finnish curriculum of RE (2014), the aim of RE is *to provide the pupils with an extensive general knowledge and ability regarding religion and worldviews* (NCCBE, 2014, 264), and in secular Ethics *to promote the pupils' ability to pursue a good life* (NCCBE, 2014, 272).

One of the main goals in worldview education, especially in religious education is to emphasise the development of a pupil's religious literacy (NCCBE, 2014, 264). For Moore (2016), religious literacy is as an ability to separate and analyse intersections of religion and social political, and cultural life in various perspectives. Heimbrock (2001) understands religious literacy as acting in an ethical way, an ability to be tolerant, and active dialogue on religious and worldview issues. It also includes an ability to understand and manage pluralism and diversity in a constructive manner (see Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2019).

In religious education, there are common objectives as well as criteria for student assessment in different religious education curricula (i.e., Orthodox religious education, Islamic religious education etc.). Also, content areas, which are (1*) Pupil's relation to own religion,* (2) *World of religions* and (3) *Good life* are the same for all throughout basic education from grades 1 to 9. This brings continuity and coherence to the subject. The contents included familiarise pupils with the religion they are studying and on a general level orientate students to the religions and worldviews in Finland and the global world. In addition, ethical thinking related to religious and secular worldviews is present and pupils are encouraged to ponder ethical questions also on a personal level. Human rights is an overlapping theme throughout basic education and is explicitly present in the curriculum of religious education and secular Ethics, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) in primary school and UN Declaration of Human Rights in secondary school (Mikkola, 2017, 21-22).

### 3.3.1 Narrative tradition in worldview education

Narrativity has long been part of the subject tradition in Finnish worldview education. In the 1970s when the current basic education system and legislation related to it was implemented, the aim of education was to promote a common Christian ethos based on the Bible. The ideal citizen was a culturally equipped person who feels responsibility for one's neighbour (Saine, 2000; Ubani, 2017). In the 1980s the emphasis was on value education and value systems, such as the UN Declaration of Human Rights, emphasised as an ethical dimension. Biblical themes were used to develop one's own personal conviction. Developing general knowledge related to religions as a main objective was emphasised in the 1990s and the vein has continued in the 2000s and 2010s (Saine, 2000; Ubani, 2017). This has meant that religion and different worldviews have been investigated as phenomena and perspectives have been widened to religions other than Christianity. Also, secular worldviews, diversity between and within religions and worldviews as well as global aspects related to religion are features of worldview education in the 2010s. The student-centred approach has also strengthened (Kallioniemi et al., 2017).

Narrativity, mainly understood as education about the Bible, has formed the basics of the school education in the very beginning when education of the Finnish people was moved from the church to the Finnish State in the1870s. Bible stories were seen to convey Christian ethos and values and their position has remained important although the emphasis and perspectives have changed (Poulter, 2013). In current worldview education, narrativity is still strongly connected to holy books and sacred texts of religions in the perspectives of ethical thinking and cultural knowledge. Especially the interplay between culture and religion is stressed (NCCBE, 2014). In the Western world, the cultural historical significance of the Bible is undeniable (Gadamer, 2004).

In the Finnish story-telling tradition in worldview education, especially in religious education, the focus has been on Bible stories. Didactical materials included lot of material for storytelling, mainly because of pedagogical material produced by Martti Haavio, whose books "Teacher tells about Old Testament" and "Teacher tells about the Savior" have had major impacts on RE pedagogy of religious education but also teaching of other subjects. Haavio also published schoolbooks for Religious Education and they were

used almost 20 years until the 1970s and thus, Haavio's work in general has influenced a lot of school didactics (Ubani, 2017).

In 1980s the appearance of German symbol didactical approaches shaped the narrative pedagogy in religious education. The main idea in symbol didactical approaches is to connect everyday language to the language of symbols, which helps in understanding the deeper aspects of religion and life. Using senses such as touching concrete things, as well as movement, is part of the symbol didactic, for example in the Bible story about Jesus in the storm, children can play storm together (Luodeslampi and Nevalainen, 2005, 212, 215). Narrativity and the story binds different aspects together and creates the possibility to make a connection between the story world and the pupil's life world. Especially Pertti Luumi's work (1987; 2006) has been influential in promoting symbolic didactical story-telling in religious education in Finland and also in Estonia (Valk and Schihalejev, 2007).

Another contribution to narrativity in religious and worldview education has come from the pedagogy developed by Italian Maria Montessori (1870-1952). In her approach, the child is seen as an active agent, where the role of educator is to provide a learning environment which motivates the child. The utterance "help me do myself" has been used to describe the attitude behind Montessori pedagogy. In Finland, there have been methodological applications related to Montessori pedagogy in religious education (Luodeslampi and Nevalainen, 2005, 373-374). Godly play, developed by American educator Jerome Berryman (2002) is one of those methods and highlights children's ability to understand deeper meanings in religions via play and imagination. Especially the process after storytelling is important because then children can give personal meanings to the story's themes via creative, self-chosen workings such as playing or drawing (Keränen-Pantsu, 2017, 169-170). Godly play has also been seen to promote a child's spirituality, ability to understand and experience sacredness.

The symbol didactical approach as well as Montessori pedagogy can be seen in the background of Religious Pedagogy Praxis (Kett, 2015; Aitlahti et al., 2017), a holistic approach to storytelling. In Finland, the approach is named "Floor pictures" since during the storytelling, participants jointly create a picture on the floor using cotton cloths and fabrics as well as

different symbolic materials, like rocks, pearls, and feathers. Symbolic level is strongly present, when participants create personal meaning to materials, e.g., a feather can represent things that bring joy to the participant as well as remind them about beliefs related to eternal life (Keränen-Pantsu, 2017, 168-169). There have been also new openings to understand narrativity as a wider conceptualisation of personal and organised worldviews in education (Keränen-Pantsu, 2017) as well as early childhood education (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021).

### 3.3.2 Narratives in the curriculum of worldview education

As viewed in section 3.2., narratives in the Finnish National Core Curriculum were mostly present in language and worldview education. Since the empirical research was conducted in the context of worldview education, narratives in the current 2014 curriculum of worldview education are viewed more closely. In worldview education, narratives are mostly seen as learning content even though narratives as a method are also mentioned. This indicated that narratives of religious traditions are still an evident part of worldview education, consisting of cultural and religious aspects and knowledge as well as aims related to personal identity and worldview. In this sense, both, Curriculum- and Bildung traditions can be found behind the educational aims related to narratives. It is also worth noting that narrative tradition in the worldview tradition has lately been focused on personal meaning of cultural narratives instead of just transferring cultural or religious knowledge through narrative (Luumi, 2006; Keränen-Pantsu, 2017; Aitlahti et al., 2017). However, personal meaning and cultural and religious knowledge are many times combined.

**Table 7.** Narratives in worldview education in the curriculum 2014

| Term and occurrence | Context | Content / method |
|---|---|---|
| Narrative (kertomus)<br><br>Kertomu*<br>45 times in total<br><br>19 times in worldview education | Worldview education:<br><br>Religious education (RE):<br><br>general (6) | General: learning content: getting familiar with narratives from own religion, sacred books and narratives, central narratives in religion and their interaction with culture, art and science<br><br>Learning method: narratives as way to support activating work methods and joy of learning |
| | Lutheran RE (5) | Learning content: Christmas and Easter and Bible stories related to festivals; pupils' life questions and Bible stories, Bible stories and their interaction with art, culture and science; joint narratives in Jewish, Islamic and Christian tradition; life questions, emotions and values via Biblical narratives |
| | Orthodox RE (2) | Learning content: life, death and ethical questions via Bible stories, Bible stories as a basis of Orthodox ethics |
| | Catholic RE (1) | Learning content: Themes of good and bad via Bible stories, responsibility of nature in creation story |
| | Islamic RE (1) | Learning content: narratives of Islamic tradition appropriate for pupil's age |
| | Jewish RE (1) | Learning content: narratives of Jewish tradition appropriate for pupil's age |
| | Secular Ethics (3) | Learning content: stories of the origins of the world; learning method: teacher's research discussion is enrichened with narratives |

In religious education for 1-2 graders (7-8 years old) (NCCBE, 2014, 134) one of the general aims is to guide the student to become familiar from the concepts, narratives (stories) and symbols of the religion being studied. As there is no listing of narratives which should be taught in RE, teachers choose the material, also the stories used in teaching. This is in line with high respect of teacher's pedagogical autonomy stressed in Finnish education (Sahlberg, 2007). Stories are also emphasised as a pedagogical method to promote versatile learning approaches and joy of learning (NCCBE, 2014, 135, see also Chapter 3 in this study). In Lutheran RE, the Bible stories are present in two different content areas, namely 'Relationship to own religion' and ethical approach, named 'Good life' (NCCBE, 2014, 136). In the Orthodox RE, life, death and ethical thinking is promoted by the use of Old and New Testament, e.g., stressing that both 'part' of Bible should be used. In addition, student own life is connected to biblical stories (NCCBE, 2014, 137). In Catholic RE the aim is to recognise good and bad in help of stories of Old and New Testament (NCCBE, 2014, 138). Stories are also connected to the responsibility of the nature and world.

In grades 3-6 (9-12 years old) in religious education sacred books and stories are investigated in relation to art, science and culture (NCCBE, 2014, 246-247). In Lutheran RE, this is widened to explore Christianity in popular culture, to become familiar with common stories in Christianity, Judaism and Islam and to reflect life questions, emotions and values with chosen stories from the Old- and New Testament (NCCBE, 2014, 250). In Islamic and Jewish RE, age-group-appropriate stories and teaching are stressed (NCCBE, 2014, 252). All in all, the ethical dimension of narratives is strongly present.

In secular Ethics, an optional subject to religious education, there is the same text concerning grades 1-6 in primary school, i.e., research discussions are enrichened with different actives, such as stories and fairy tales (NCCBE, 2014, 55). The term 'research discussions' is interesting here and the verb 'enrich' could refer to both narratives as a teaching method or narratives as content. In secondary school, (grades 7-9, students aged from 13 to 16) the word narrative (kertomus) is mentioned only a few times in Orthodox religious education and in the complementing language education, where the aim is to deepen the students' relationship to their own language's literature (NCCBE, 2014, 469). This seems to indicate that narrative as a term is mostly present in primary school.

In religious education curricula special cultural narratives are still widely present, namely narratives from the religious traditions such as Christianity or Islam and refer to holy books, such as Bible or Quran. Narratives are presented as tools to promote knowledge about religious and ethical thinking (NCCBE, 2014, 265-266), as one of the objectives is: 'to guide the pupil to get acquainted with the holy books and legends of the religion he or she studies and its key dogmas' (NCCBE, 2014, 265). In Lutheran RE, the contents related to the Bible are to some extent distributed in all the content areas of the curriculum (C1-C3). In *Relationship to one's own religion* (C1), pupils are familiarised with the religion they are studying. Bible stories in this content area serve as a religious common knowledge (yleissivistys), e.g., the connection of Jesus' life and Christian celebrations and cultural and societal significance of the Bible. In the *World of religions* (C2), the pupils are familiarised with different religions and worldviews. The purpose of stories in this content area is to develop generic religious literacy and to understand, for example, the Biblical rhetoric used in politics. Topics related to ethical thinking and life questions are part of the content area *Good life* (C3). In that content area, Bible stories are connected to a child's everyday life and ethical thinking, emotional skills and empathy (NCCBE, 2014; Keränen-Pantsu and Ubani, 2018).

Related to narratives in worldview education, learning *from* (Grimmit, 1987) religious narratives where personal meaning-making is emphasised, is a significant part of teaching especially in primary school. In secondary school, the focus shifts towards teaching *about* holy scriptures emphasising knowledge from the perspective of religious studies and, for instance, different interpretative traditions of holy scriptures are covered. Objectives related to working methods and learning environments of religion continue to transmit socio-constructive learning and liberal educational values since they guide the teacher to use creative, functional and experimental methods, projects and discussions that support pupils' agency and participation. This student-centred approach requires teachers to promote teaching where pupils actively construct knowledge in various ways and the use of stories, music, visual arts, play and drama are mentioned as examples of such teaching in the curriculum.

# 4 METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The following chapter will outline the research at hand as a whole, starting from research presuppositions, research setting and research questions and then moving into paradigmatic starting points and methodology. After that, research data and research participants are presented as well as data analysis. These sections are followed by ethical considerations and discussion related to trustworthiness of the research.

## 4.1 Research questions and settings

When starting the research process, I had a so-called 'everyday understanding' about narratives in learning situations. As a teacher and afterwards as a teacher trainer, I had been using stories in multiple ways with different groups and had always been surprised how deeply they can affect and engage. Somehow, more than cognitive learning occurred; somehow people find themselves reflecting on their own life choices and their self-understanding. This also happened to me whenever I was in touch with narratives. Somehow, there was always something new to discover, something that made me more visible to myself. This convinced me of the power of narrative in educational settings, but in order to understand what was actually happening in the meaning-making processes, further research was needed.

The task of this this dissertation was to find out what kind of pedagogical possibilities narratives can offer and to understand the processes that occurs between an individual and cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021) understood here as culturally shared narratives on a societal level and whose special part are narratives related to religions and worldviews. These narratives were investigated in the formal school context, trying to understand the multifaceted dimensions they have in educational settings. Narratives were investigated in educational settings, especially in worldview education and from the perspectives of the major stakeholders in

school, the pupils (Article I) and teachers (Articles II and III), in order to have a thorough picture of the learning process. Although this is an empirical study, also theoretical implications are made since narrative theory has not been widely recognised in educational settings despite its widely spread influence in social sciences in the large scale (Hyvärinen, 2004).

The main research question of this research is:

**What kind of meaning-making and pedagogical processes are related to cultural narratives in Finnish worldview education?**

The main question is explored from the perspectives of students and teachers and is thus divided into the following sub-questions:

1) How do students interpret and give meanings to cultural narratives in worldview education?
2) How do teachers interpret and use cultural narratives in worldview education?

Cultural narratives are investigated through the perspectives of pupils' relevance and teachers' pedagogical relevance. First, pupil relevance is approached from the meanings given by pupils to cultural narratives. Second, the pedagogical relevance of cultural narratives is presented from a teacher's perspective. These viewpoints are specified in the three articles as follows:

Article I: Pupil's perspective on cultural narratives is viewed under the question: *What kind of relevance do the Biblical stories have for the 10-year-old pupils?*

Article II: Teacher's perspectives on cultural narratives is viewed using the questions:

1) *How are religious traditions' narratives used in Lutheran Religious education and Islamic religious education?*
2) *What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of sacred religious narratives and how do the teachers negotiate these tensions?*

3) *What kinds of differences are there in the practices, tensions, and negotiations between Lutheran religious education and Islamic religious education?*

Article III:
*For what purpose do teachers use narratives in worldview education?*

## 4.2 Paradigmatic starting points

In this study, the main starting points rely on the hermeneutic framework in which human action is seen as intentional. Thus, actions and outcomes, in this case teaching and learning, are also seen to have different meanings to different agents, such as teacher and students. According to the hermeneutic approach, information is produced by outlining the connections between phenomena and their context as they intertwine. This kind of understanding of the importance of context is also in line with the chosen case study methodology (Flyvbjerg, 2006). In hermeneutics, knowledge production is understood as a continuous process in which interpretations and knowledge are re-evaluated and can thus reach a new kind of understanding (Gadamer, 2004). The hermeneutic circle is a metaphor for describing the analytic movement and interaction between the whole and the parts and how the whole and the parts give meaning to each other (Heidegger, 1962). The process of knowledge formation is often described in a hermeneutic circle, where the interpretation of details and particularities influence the interpretation of the whole, and the reinterpretation of interpretations of the phenomena produces an ever-expanding understanding of the subject. To be more concrete, our understanding of the whole is based on our understanding of each individual part as well as understanding how individual parts refer to the whole.

Broadly spoken, the concept of the hermeneutical circle signifies that, in interpretive experience, a new understanding is achieved through renewed interpretive attention to further possible meanings; presuppositions which, sometimes tacitly, inform the understanding that we already have (Dowling, 2004; Bleicher, 2017). In contemporary hermeneutics, the concept of the hermeneutical circle stresses to the circularity of interpretive experience. This

could be understood as an interpretive movement back and forth through possible meanings of our presuppositions, enabling a matter to come into view. The pursuit of understanding does not build 'higher and higher;' it goes 'deeper', gets 'fuller' or could be seen as 'richer' (George, 2021; Dowling, 2004)

Besides hermeneutics, this study affiliates socio-constructivist theory as an epistemological approach. This approach pinpoints that knowledge and its structures are socially and culturally produced in a certain culture or community (Wenger, 1998). According to Bruner (1986; 1987) it is impossible for people to access or come into direct contact with the world, because there are always symbolic structures of meaning people need to interpret in the world (Bruner, 1986, 1991; Vygotsky, 1978) In this sense, all knowledge is human knowledge (Egan, 1997) which means that there is no knowledge that a human has not interpreted, translated, or processed. Thus, we gain knowledge from the world and its phenomena through our own interpretation process which, according to Bruner (1986; 1987), takes naturally the form of narrative. In other words, narrativity is a core element of human knowing, an epistemologically fundamental element forming the third approach in this study.

Other researchers, such as Heikkinen (2002, 14), have also used Bruner's ideas and combined socio-constructivism and narrative understanding. Our knowledge is a composition of narratives, which is perpetually being constructed in the process of social interaction. In this process, individual and social are intertwined when people organise their experience, knowledge about and transactions with the social world via narrative, both telling and listening to others' stories (Bruner, 1990). In this study, the interaction under scrutiny happens between the teacher, student, and cultural narratives. Narrative is understood as a fundamental means of people's meaning-making and as way to construct self-understanding, e.g., narrative identity (McAdams, 1985; Ricoeur, 1992) and as one way to understand learning (Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Goodson and Gill, 2011).

The study emphasises a wider perspective of social sciences, where the role of social science is understood as a way of discovering how different people interpret their social environment, how the world is understood, experienced, produced or constituted (Mason, 2002, 3) and the interest lies in the subjective meanings which individuals (in this study, teachers and

pupils) give to their actions and also in their meaningful relationships and consequences of action. To conclude, the aim is to discover how individuals, groups and communities give meanings to their actions and experiences and how they create, modify, and interpret the world in which they find themselves (Hatch, 2002; Lincoln and Cuba, 2000; Bruner, 1986). Humans are understood in this study as dynamic constructors of knowledge and active meaning makers of their experiences in certain social and cultural contexts and thus, are attracted to socio-constructivism (Wenger, 1998).

## 4.3 Qualitative case study as a methodological frame

This study is attached to the qualitative research setting, which is understood here as context-based, situated to time and place, not looking for a universal and permanent truths. According to Mason (2002, 1) we can investigate various aspects of social life through qualitative research including the understandings, experiences and imaginings of our research participants; the ways that social processes, institutions, discourses or relationships work, and the significance of the meanings that they generate. One of the characteristics of qualitative research is investigation of people and phenomena in their natural settings, as is done in this study with classroom observations and student and teacher interviews. The researcher is attempting to make sense of the interpretations given to phenomena, to give voice to a certain group of stakeholders and give space for their interpretations and understanding (Mason, 2002).

Narrativity in qualitative research can be seen at least in two ways. Firstly, it could be seen an analysing method providing a special perspective to data and their use. Secondly, narrativity can be understood as a general feature of qualitative research, which tells the story of the researcher and the data s/he is using and interpreting. In this perspective qualitative research is investigating the multi-layered and multidimensional social world shaped by narrativity (Bold, 2012; Eskola and Suoranta, 2014, Heikkinen, 2018), and this kind of perspective also shapes this study. Theme-interviews, stimulated recall-interviews, observation, and deductive and inductive content analysis combined with case study methodology were used to get

an overall picture of the pedagogical possibilities cultural narratives have to offer for learning and identity work.

According to Atkins and Wallace (2012, 12), research into education aims to give a better understanding of what constitutes *effective* teaching and learning (emphasis added), which in my opinion has a kind of neoliberal emphasis (see Goodson, 2014) towards diminishing education to simply appropriate knowledge and skill for the future labour market. In this study, the main focus has been oriented more towards a holistic approach and to better understand the role of cultural narratives as a source and model for learning and identity work instead of to mechanically improve certain measurable learning outcomes. Atkins and Wallace (2012, 12) continue that the research results are used to improve the effectiveness of our professional practice and the systems within which we operate to support learners in their learning. Here, emphasis towards professional practices and supporting learners is also well-suited to this research, but the stressing for effectiveness does not fit well within the nature of this study nor the context in the worldview education, which is more focused on personal growth of the pupil (NCCBE, 2014; Goodson and Gill, 2011; Miedema, 2014) and understanding the multifaceted phenomena and meaning-making process in the world.

This study is also part of the interpretative tradition in line with the hermeneutic paradigm. Atkins and Wallace (2012) give some features that are typical of interpretative research, like focusing on case studies and people as individuals and groups, their personal accounts, and interactions, which is all well-suited to the present research. The purpose of the study is to develop understanding of particular cases and situations and the researcher role is crucial; it is indispensable to reflect a researcher's positions, values, preconceptions, and structures that affect the interpretations made by the researcher. Also, during the analysis-phase, is very important try to clarify how the analysis was done and how the researcher has built their claims based on the analysis.

Case study is understood here as "in-depth, intensive analysis of the single (or multiple) case within its naturalistic contexts, valuing its particularity, multiple methods and perspectives to look at the case holistically" (Nind, Curtin and Hall, 2016, xii). In Merriam-Webster's Dictionary (Grove, 2008), case

study is defined as: "An intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment". To Creswell (1998, 61) a case study is a 'bounded system' or a case or multiple cases where a system is bound by time and place. A case study is typically qualitatively oriented, as it is in this study, but it also may have different approaches (Lancy, 1993, 139-155).

The 'bounded system' (Creswell, 1998, 61) was located in the Finnish comprehensive school and the cases being studied are narrative learning situations and interpretations from the perspective of pupils (Article I) and narratives in pedagogical perspectives described by teachers (Article II and III). Using multiple cases in the research process might indicate a strategy of comparison and more external view of the research (Stake, 2005). However, in this research multiple cases were used to gain a more comprehensive understanding about the cultural narratives as a source for a different kind of pedagogical approach with the most urgent stakeholders, students and teachers, and thus, to ensure in-depth knowledge instead of comparison or other research strategies.

The target of a case study can be chosen based on many criteria. It can be a typical and representative case, or it could be unique and exceptional (Eskola and Suoranta, 2014, 65). Flyvbjerg (2006, 229) points out that when the aim of research is to get the greatest possible amount of information, a representative case or random sample may not be the best and proper strategy because 'the typical or average case is often not the richest in information.' From an understanding-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe symptoms and their occurrence, which has also been emphasised in this study.

This study can be seen as understanding-oriented, and the case selection is seen as information-oriented (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 230), in order to maximise the utility of information from small samples and single cases. The selection criteria focus on the expectations about their information content. That is why the target group for the interviews was experienced teachers, who presumably can articulate their pedagogical thinking and decision-making (see Kansanen et al., 2000) and thus, provide 'extreme/deviant cases' which

can be especially good in the context of study (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 230). This information-orientation was also present in the pupil interviews, where stimulated recall interviews (Nguyen and Tangen, 2016) were conducted in order to give pupils more material to support their recollection and to ensure the richness in information.

Case study seeks to understand and interpret the world in terms of its actors and may be described as interpretative and subjective (Cohen et al., 2000, 181). Case study is intended to interpret and examine the uniqueness of individual actors and situations through accessible accounts and to present and represent reality (Cohen et al., 2000, 79). Harding (2019, 36) notes that while many other research settings seek to eliminate the effect of context, context is central to case studies because boundaries between the phenomena and context are often unclear. The importance of the context is also stressed by Yin (1984) and Cohen et al. (2000, 181), underpinning that case studies observe effects in real contexts, recognising that context is a powerful determinant of both cause and effects. This has also been emphasised in this study since the data were gathered in actual learning situations and after them. Flyvbjerg (2006) goes even further when he claims that predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. For him, concrete, context-dependent knowledge is, therefore, more valuable than the vain search for predictive theories and universals.

Yin sees that case study has been one of the seminal research methodologies in the category of empirical inquiry (Yin, 1984, 23). However, it is often claimed that one of the limitations of case study is that it does not produce generable knowledge, valued in the natural sciences. Flyvbjerg (2006) pinpoints that formal generalisation is only one of many ways by which people gain and accumulate knowledge. He continues that if knowledge cannot be formally generalised, it does not mean that it cannot enter into the collective process of knowledge accumulation in a given field or in a society. Flyvbjerg (2006, 228) proclaims "the force of example" is what case study can offer instead of 'overvalued' formal generalisation. This study relies on this 'force of example' and wishes to introduce cases in their own terms, which also explains the different theoretical approaches in the articles. This is also highlighted by Stake (1995, 4) who underscores describing target cases properly, and thus

strengthening the reliability of the study to secure the maximum we can learn about the cases selected. Consequently, instead of wide generalisations, this study provides more in-depth understanding about the narrative approaches in the school context.

## 4.4 Data and the participants of the study

Data gathering had two main phases: first with the pupils and second with the teachers. Both phases were conducted to gain knowledge about the pedagogical possibilities of cultural narratives in educational settings. The first phase focused on getting an overall picture of the narrative learning situations and pupil conceptions related to it. Classroom observations, in addition to in-depth scrutiny of theoretical literature, was a basis for this study. To get more detailed perspectives of major stakeholders, pupils (phase I) and teachers (phase II), interviews were conducted. The overview of the data collection phases can be found in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Data gathering phases

| Phase and theme and article data used | Data | Method | Time and location |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Phase 1**<br><br>Pupils' perspectives on cultural narratives<br><br>Article I | 2 observed, videotaped and photographed lessons<br><br>9 pupil interviews (age of 10) | Non-participatory observation<br><br>Stimulated recall interviews<br><br>4) own relation to narratives<br>5) content of the narratives<br>6) meaning of the narratives | 12/2016 and 1/2016<br><br>Metropolitan area of Helsinki, Finland |
| **Phase 2**<br><br>Teacher's perspectives on cultural narratives and narrative pedagogy<br><br>Article II and III | 6 teacher interviews | semi-structured theme interviews<br><br>- teacher's own relationship to narratives<br>- use of narratives,<br>- content of narratives<br>- meaning of narratives | 2-4/2016<br>Province of Uusimaa, Finland |

### 4.4.1 Phase one: pupils' interviews and classroom observations

The first step of the data gathering process in phase 1 was to contact the school and find out official policies for conducting research. After the research permit procedures were reviewed with the headmaster of the school, the teacher and the pupils' guardians, the student interviews (data) and classroom observations were conducted in December 2015 and January 2016. This data gathering was targeted to pupils' perspectives for relevance of cultural narratives.

The study was conducted in the metropolitan area of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, in a local comprehensive school. The pupils were in the fourth grade in the Finnish school system, and they were 10 years old. Lessons where the

data gathering was done were Lutheran religious education lessons where cultural narratives are seen as learning content and lessons were held by the classroom teacher who teaches most of the pupils' subjects. Pupils with a religious affiliation other than Lutheran and pupils without religious affiliation participated in their own lessons during the observation since Finland has a separative model of worldview education (see Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016).

Both lessons observed contained narratives as a main pedagogical method and content. The topics and methods were chosen by the classroom teacher in line with local curriculum. The first lesson was from the Christian tradition, the parable of the prodigal son (The Bible, Luke 15: 11–31). The narrative is about a father and two sons who made different choices in life. The teacher used, and to some extent applied, a special story-telling method called Godly play, developed by American religious educator Jerome Berryman (Berryman, 2002). According to him, Godly play promotes children's' participation, imagination, and the sense of belonging. In the method, the story and especially the wondering phase after the story is at the centre of the process.

**Table 9.** Observed lessons and their content

| Theme | Topic | Content | Pedagogical method |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cultural narratives | Lesson 1: Christian Bible, the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15: 11–31) | Story about father and two sons, where older brother stayed home with his family and younger brother left the family and spent his inheritance. In the end younger brother returns home. | Special story-telling method: Godly play (Berryman, 2002) |
| Cultural narratives | Lesson 2: Christian Easter (The Bible, Matthew 26–28; Luke 22–24; John 18–20; Mark 14–16) | Events related to Jesus and his life from the last supper to arrest, conviction, crucifixion, and Resurrection. | Special story-telling method: Floor pictures (Lattiakuvat) (Originally in German RPP, Die Religionspädagogische Praxis) (Kett, 2015, Aitlahti et al., 2017) |

The topic of the second lesson was Christian Easter (The Bible, Matthew 26–28; Luke 22–24; John 18–20; Mark 14–16) and the teacher used a special story-centred, symbol didactical method 'Die Religionspädagogische Praxis RPP', religious pedagogic praxis RPP, also called 'floor pictures', developed by German educators sister Esther Kaufman and Franz Kett (Kett, 2015, Aitlahti et al., 2017). In this method, pupils are part of the story and share their thoughts, emotions, and ideas during the process of storytelling.

The lessons were observed, photographed, and videotaped. The researcher also made field notes but did not participate in the lessons, so observation could be called non-participative observation (Creswell, 1998, 125). First the pupils were a little disturbed about the camera, but since it stayed still and the researcher also tried not to distract the children's concentration, the classroom situation was quite natural. Both lessons lasted 45 minutes in total. The children answered a short questionnaire after both lessons where they reflected on the themes of the lessons and also their personal relationship to the narratives in general. Thus, it was possible to get a more complete picture of the class and their relation to the narratives.

The main focus of classroom observation was to form an overall picture of a narrative lesson, teaching method and pupils' response to the teaching activity, and later to hopefully comprehend and appreciate the interpretations and connections pupils made during the stimulated recall interviews, go a little deeper into understanding how they felt during the learning situation, what was meaningful for them and how the story worked as a reflecting platform for their own life. To get a more comprehensive understanding of the lessons, the teacher was also interviewed before and after the Easter lesson.

**Table 10.** Pupil participants

| Article I | Participants | Gender | Age | Grade | Themes of stimulated recall interviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 9 pupils | 4 girls and 5 boys | 10 | 4th | 1) own relation to narratives<br>2) content of the narratives<br>3) meaning of the narratives |

Nine pupils in total (5 boys, 4 girls) participated in stimulated-recall interviews (Nguyen and Tangen, 2016). The basic idea of the stimulated recall is to give authentic stimuli and cues to participants of the research to help them articulate thoughts and experiences related to the original situation. Stimuli can be, for example video, audiotape or photographs (Vesterinen et al., 2010). Calderhead (1981) combines stimulated recall with the interpretative, hermeneutic research tradition, which highlights the intention of the researcher to produce an interpretation of the phenomenon as the informants conceive and understand it.

Several researchers utilising the stimulated recall method recommend that interviews should be done as soon as possible after the videotaped situation, for example, after the lesson. Bloom (1953), who is considered a founder and pioneer of stimulated recall, noted that almost all the events of a lesson are possible to recall with the help of stimuli within two days. This 48-hour 'rule' was also followed in this study. However, Vesterinen et al. (2010) pinpoint that this 'rule of remembering' is related only to external events, not one's own private conscious thoughts.

In concrete, pupils watched excerpt of the video and saw photos from their lessons. They told the researcher what they remembered about the lesson and what were they thinking during the moments from the video and photos. After that, pupils answered some thematic interview questions on a more general level. The themes of the interviews were (1) their own relation to narratives, (2) content of the narratives and (3) meaning of the narratives. The interviewer also tried to deepen and get more information about the things pupils spoke about spontaneously. However, it is worth noting, as pointed Mason (2002, 64), that the interview method is heavily dependent on people's capacities to verbalise, interact, conceptualise, and remember. Even though conceptualisation and remembering was stimulated via video and photo material, the capacity of the produced reflection varied to some extent.

As stated earlier, this study relies on the interpretive approach, in which people, and their interpretations, perceptions, meanings and understandings constitute the primary data sources (Mason, 2002, 56). The interest lies in the social world people have produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities. This everyday reality consists of the meanings and interpretations given by the social actors to their actions, other people's

actions, social situations, and natural and humanly created objects (Blaikie, 2000, referred Mason, 2002, 56). This was especially present in classroom observations, where the social reality in the class was jointly produced by the teacher and students, influenced also by the cultural narratives which could be understood as 'humanly created objects' and function as a source for narrative learning. Cooperatively built meanings for social activities, embedded in language, form a main focus in the data.

### 4.4.2. Phase II: teachers' interviews

In the teacher interviews the main aim was to give voice to teachers, hear their interpretations and intensions. Interviews work well when the aim is to explore people's individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes and social norms (Mason, 2002, 56). When relying on case study methodology, knowledge and evidence are seen as contextual, situational, and interactional and because of that, also interviews should be as contextual as possible in the sense that they draw upon or 'conjure up', as fully as possible, the social experiences or processes for which there is interest in exploring (Mason, 2002, 64).

**Table 11.** Teacher participants

| Articles II and III | Participants | Gender | Working years | Grade | Themes of stimulated recall interviews |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 6 teachers | 5 females 1 male | 7-39 | Primary school (grade 1-6, pupils aged 7-12) | 4) teacher's own relationship to narratives,<br>5) use of narratives,<br>6) content of narratives<br>7) meaning of narratives. |
| Article II completing data | 3 teachers | - | - | Lower and upper secondary school (pupils aged 13-19) | Teacher's pedagogical thinking and decision-making |

There were six teachers who were interviewed in order to answer the research question, *How do teachers interpret and use cultural narratives in worldview education?* There were five female and one male teachers, all from the primary school level, so classroom teachers teaching children from 7 to 12 years old. In addition to other subjects, all of the participants taught also worldview education, that is, in the Finnish educational system (see NCCBE, 2014, Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016) religious education or (secular) Ethics. A common qualitative sampling strategy emphasises the special cases that are successful at something and therefore offer a good source to learn from (Patton, 2002, 7). To get the most informative answers, participants selected for interviews had to have more than five years of teaching experience. That was to ensure that their pedagogical thinking (Kansanen et al., 2000) had developed to the level where they can critically reflect on their own teaching.

The sampling was snowball sampling which could be also called chain sampling where cases of interest are identified from 'people who know people who know what cases are information-rich' (Creswell, 1998, 119). Sampling was also seen as theoretical or strategic (Mason, 2002, 123-124), which means selecting groups or categories on the basis of their relevance to research questions, theoretical and analytical framework, and most importantly the argument or explanation a researcher aims to develop. Theoretical sampling is concerned with constructing a sample (also called a study group) which is meaningful theoretically and empirically, because it builds on certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop and test theory or argument. This characteristic here was experienced, professional teachers. Saturation point, i.e., when interviews start to replicate and new themes or perspectives stop emerging, was reached in the fifth interview. However, also the sixth interview was done to ensure the saturation point was achieved.

The interviews were conducted in spring 2016, from February to April. The interview locations varied from the library's study room to a teacher's home or classroom. The interviews were thematic semi-structured interviews (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2015). Open-ended and flexible questions, as used in the theme interview, are likely to get a more comprehensive response and thus provide better access to interviewees' views, interpretations of events, understanding, experiences and opinions (Byrne, 2004, referred Silverman,

2011, 167). The focus of the interviews was teachers' pedagogical thinking and decision-making, especially related to narratives in educational settings. Themes in the interviews were (1) the teacher's own relationship to narratives, (2) use of narratives, (3) content of narratives and (4) meaning of narratives. The first theme was rather wide and worked also as warm-up theme. Teachers could define by themselves how much they talked about their personal relationship with narratives and how much they shared about their professional relationship as a teacher and narratives in the teaching context. However, the next themes, i.e., the use of narratives and the content of narratives as well as meaning of narratives were mainly focused on educational settings. In the last theme teachers also conducted meanings wider than the educational context, for example they ponder the role of narratives on the societal level.

The interviews lasted from 59 minutes to 1 hour and 11 minutes and could be describe as in-depth interviews (Mason, 2002, 65) since the teachers also shared personal experiences and life events in addition to school and professional perspectives. All the interviews were conducted by the first author of the articles. Interviews were fully recorded and transcribed also by the first author. Interviews were conducted in Finnish language. Since all the articles are written in English, the first author had to translate data samples referred to in the articles. The interviews could be seen as the main data of all the articles. Observations can be seen as complementary data which deepen and broaden the understanding. The second article about the tensions between the Lutheran and Islamic religious education practises related to pedagogical use of religious narratives, was also complemented from the interview data from lower and upper secondary school teachers (n=3). In the table about teacher participants, their working years and gender is anonymised due to the small number of professional teachers of Islamic religious education at the time of data gathering.

## 4.5 The process of analysis

Qualitative research aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings on the basis of rich, nuanced and detailed data. The aim of the analysis is to clarify to the audience what the data are all about and thus bring new

information and knowledge about the phenomena under research (Eskola and Suoranta, 2014). According to Mason (2002, 3) in qualitative research there is more emphasis on 'holistic' forms of analysis. This was also emphasised in this study, as both, deductive and inductive content analysis were used to clarify the different meanings produced by study participants. Content analysis could be widely understood as a process in which (Weber, 1990, 15, referred Cohen et al., 2013, 559) "many words of text are classified into much fewer categories". Qualitative content analysis aims to give both a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon. The purpose is usually to build a model, a conceptual system, a conceptual map or categories which describe the features of the phenomenon (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). According to Cohen et al. (2013, 563) it defines a strict and systematic set of procedures for the rigorous analysis, semination and verification of the contents of written data.

**Table 12.** Method and analysis of the study

| **Topic of the study** | **Method and participants** | **Analysis** | **Theory of analysis** |
|---|---|---|---|
| Article I:<br>The holistic and spiritual relevance of Bible stories among Finnish 10-year-old pupils: a classroom case study | Observation, Stimulated recall interviews (N=9 pupils) | Deductive content analysis | - Hull's (2002) model of holistic education<br>- Elo's and Kyngäs's (2008) work related to process of content analyses |
| Article II:<br>What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives? Perspectives from Finnish Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education | Theme interviews (N=9 teachers) | Deductive and inductive content analysis | - Grimmit (1987)'s model of learning into, about and from religion<br>- Elo and Kyngäs (2008) |
| Article III:<br>Pedagogical Purposes of Narratives in Worldview Education: Teachers' Conceptions | Theme interviews (N=6 teachers) | Inductive content analysis | - Elo and Kyngäs (2008) |

All research questions in the articles were analysed separately. In case studies it is important for events and situations and participants to be allowed to speak for themselves, rather than to be largely interpreted, evaluated, or judged by the researcher. First, the transcriptions were read throughout several times in order to get the full picture of the data. The emphasis was to capture different aspects the data were revealing regarding the research question at hand.

The purpose of qualitative content analysis in this study was to identify categories that summarise the main content found in the data and highlight key aspects of the content (see Cohen et al., 2013, 566-568). The analysis of the first sub-study was theory-oriented content analysis. Theory-oriented, i.e., deductive approach, is applied in testing pre-existing theories based on categorisation matrixes that were derived from previous research (see Elo and Kyngäs, 2008). Content analysis involved establishing categories and then counting the number of instances when those categories are used in a particular item of text, in this case interview data (Silverman, 2011, 64). Categories were developed beforehand based on the ideas from holistic education (Hull, 2002) and features of that according to which the categories of analysis were formulated. In the second sub-study, both theory- and data-oriented content analysis were used to find answers to research questions concerning the use of narratives in Lutheran and Islamic religious education. The theoretical approach behind the deductive analyse categorisations was widely used from Michael Grimmit's (1987) model of different types of learning in the context of worldview education. The second question focused on the tensions of using sacred narratives and was analysed inductively. The last sub-study was based on the categories rising from the data, i.e., inductive, data-oriented content analysis seeking answers to teachers' concepts of pedagogical use of narratives in the context of worldview education.

In all the sub-studies the units of analysis varied from phrase and sentence to paragraph (Cohen et al., 2013, 565). Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) propose that the first step is to make the data familiar to the researcher. They also stress paying attention to interesting patterns, any surprising, puzzling, or expected features, any apparent inconsistencies, or contradictions (see also Cohen et al., 2013, 566). After a careful and throughout reading, some interesting and also unexpected themes occurred as pointed out by Hammersley and Atkinson

(1983) and that also led to a new formulation of the research questions related to teachers and their pedagogical use of narratives. For example, an interesting tension related to liberal educational values like agency and autonomy (see Halstead and Taylor, 1996) manifested in the national core curriculum (NCCBE, 2014) and the self-understanding of religious traditions, manifested mostly by parents of the pupils and communities, was found during the throughout reading process of the data and thus, affected the focus of Article II. In Article III the analysis also revealed something surprising elated to a narratives' chance to work as an indicator of the atmosphere, revealing challenges in peer-relations and safe space (Jackson, 2014).

The meaning units were coded and divided into categories and sub-categories formulated during the analysis phase (Articles II and III) or divide into categories formulated according to theoretical literature (Articles I and II). During the analysis, categories were revisited and formulated after returning to the coded meaning units. In the last phase, the validity of both analysis process and categories formulated were reviewed and double-checked with the second researcher of each of the articles, thus promoting triangulation. The transparency of the analysis was also promoted during the reporting and writing phase: a piece of analysis was included in Article III and all the articles contain as many citations from the original data as possible under the limitations of the articles' word count.

## 4.6 Ethical considerations

Ethical issues should be an essential part of the whole research process, from planning to the final stage of reporting the study (Creswell, 2014, 92). During this research, the ethical guidelines of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (2009; 2019) were carefully followed, especially because research was partly conducted with primary school pupils and there was always further concern to ensure the safe and secured position of the participant when dealing with minor students.

Cohen et al. (2013, 78) uses the term *informed consent*, which Diener and Crandall has defined as the "procedures in which individuals choose whether

to participate in an investigation after being informed of the facts that would be likely to influence their decisions" (Diener and Crandall, 1978, 57). This was stressed throughout this study. In data gathering phase I (pupils' interviews and classroom observation) all the participants were told beforehand the topic and meaning of the research. The permission to conduct research in the class was asked from the school principal, the classroom teacher and pupils and their guardian. Also, the decisions to participate in interviews were made jointly with pupils and their caretakers and pupils' willingness to participate was also ensured with each of the pupils before leaving the classroom so they had a chance to refuse participation also during the interview day.

During the interviews the researcher tried to make pupils feel comfortable and safe. Also, Karlsson (2012) points out the importance of children's sense of acceptance and reverence of their autonomy. This meant, for example, to clarify what was going to happen and explain that it would be possible to stop anytime at a pupil's request. The interest area of the researcher was explained to pupils and it was stressed that pupils can freely share their thoughts and there would be no right or wrong answers. This seemed to appease some students, who might have thought that a stimulated recall interview (Nguyen and Tangen, 2016) was some sort of 'test' of how well they can remember the lesson. This idea might have had support due to the fact that interviews take place in schools and as the method chosen stressed, within 48 hours after the lesson. The method chosen seemed to support the children as reflective participants who reflected upon their experiences and practices and evaluated the importance of the research theme, stressed by Christensen and Alison (2017, 6). Pupils seemed interested in the method since they had a chance to see themselves on the video and hear their own voice, which also brought humour and playfulness to the interviews, features highlighted by Karlsson (2010, 132) exemplifying how children act and communicate in the world. Stimulated recall also offered a unique chance to see how the learning situation and class look in the eyes of the outsider.

Thus, the interview situation also offered pupils new learning experience and a possibility to reflect on the learning situation on more general level (Karlsson, 2010, 134). All in all, the research procedures aim to "treat children as social actors in their own right" (Christensen and Allison, 2017, 3) and

provide them a chance to bring their own view to the research topic. In the last interview question, children were asked their opinions and feelings about the interview and all of them gave positive responses. None of the interviews needed to stop prematurely either.

Teachers who participated in the interviews saw the topic and research plan beforehand. However, to support an authentic interview situation and dialogue, the theme interview form was not sent beforehand. This also gave the researcher freedom to pursue interesting topics teachers brought up spontaneously. Nevertheless, themes from the interview mentioned before ((1) teacher's own relationship to narratives, (2) use of narratives, (3) content of narratives and (4) meaning of narratives) were always the same to ensure data cohesion. However, even if an interviewee would know the main topic of the theme interview, how the interview goes, whether there is a trustful and safe atmosphere and what themes are actually discussed during the situation are always unpredictable. In this study, there were no indications that the atmosphere was not trusting and open and all the teachers expressed their willingness to cooperate in future, too.

When all the participants, pupils and teachers talked about the themes of the narratives in worldview education, they also revealed something about their own life and made connections between the themes of the interview and their own experiences. The narrative theory highlights the importance and vulnerability of themes related to life story and hence, the researcher was aware of the sensitivity of the issues concerning worldview, identity, life story and personal interpretation (Bold, 2012). Since the main focus of this research was not to study personal identity narratives, the data examples chosen for the articles did not reveal any recognisable personal life events. To further guarantee this, all the names where anonymised and only details important to understanding the professional status of the teacher participants remain, such as their teaching experience as a group, not individually.

Confidentiality and anonymity were pursued throughout the researcher process. The school where the observations were made was not identified other than locating it in the Helsinki metropolitan area. To ensure the privacy of all the participants, code names were used during the reporting phase as mentioned in a previous chapter. For teachers, also the gender was not

revealed in the articles, rather they are discussed as Teacher 1, Teacher 2, etc. In pupil data, the alias names reveal gender. Also, the age group of the pupils is given to ensure enough information is also provided to the reader so that they are able to understand and critically evaluate the research process and results. In the direct quotations, no personal or sensitive issues were included that could reveal the interviewees' identity.

Finally, there were no financial commitments between the researcher, the school, or participants. This highlights the independent position of the researcher and integrity of the study since there was no pressure to produce a certain type of research nor unethical guidance toward certain kinds of research results.

## 4.7 Trustworthiness of the study

The concepts of reliability and validity are concepts used to evaluate the quality of research. Validity refers to how accurately a method measures what it is intended to measure. Research with high validity means it produces results that correspond to real properties, characteristics, and variations in the physical or social world (Mason, 2002, 39). Reliability refers to how consistently methods and techniques measure something, and the measurement is considered reliable if the same result can be achieved by using the same methods under the same circumstances. Qualitative researchers are highly sceptical of the value or feasibility of such standardisation (Mason, 2002, 40) and also in this study, this kind of definition seems only partly suitable since the learning situations are always complex and include various agents and actions and thus, all the 'variables' are impossible to control in the positivistic sense. No wonder it is often argued that quantitative-oriented concepts such as validity and reliability could be hard to combine into a qualitative-oriented inquiry (Golafshani, 2003) and concepts such as credibility, confirmability and transferability are generally argued to represent trustworthiness, which could be understood to include both validity and reliability of research (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000, 22).

This study relies on Mason's approach, which highlights critical and reflective practice rather than the de-contextual application of 'universal' methodological rules, for example, in relation to measuring validity, generalisability or reliability

(Mason, 2002, 40). However, this does not mean either leaning toward the 'take-it-or-leave-it' relativism, nor to positivist criteriology, not at least uncritically. To secure credibility, Patton (2002) argues for three issues to be addressed: the credibility of the research paradigm, the research methods and the researcher. The paradigm and methods are discussed in greater detail in the previous chapters 4.2 and 4.3, where socio-constructivism combined with narrative theory provide the basis of epistemology in this study and hermeneutics and its interpretative nature is seen as the backbone of the whole research process from emergence of understanding about the research topic as well as chosen methods and analyses.

Tierney and Lincoln (1997, vii) question if it is possible, desirable and ethical to 'leave no footmarks' when we are studying group of people. Research is always affected by different aspects from the culture, society and personal commitments and researcher prejudices and personal experiences have influence throughout the research process beginning from choosing the topic of the research to theoretical and methodological approaches (Creswell, 2014, 20). Thus, the transparency of the researcher's understanding and preconceptions should be stressed (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2009, 96).

Some aspects relating to trustworthiness and credibility of the study are discussed next. Credibility of the research was increased in terms of triangulation and continuous observation to act as transparently as possible (Lincoln and Guba, 2000). Triangulation, understood as combinations of different methods, researchers, data sources, or theories in research (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2002, 141-142), was conducted in several phases: the theoretical approach utilises theories from different fields of study, such as narrative approach, psychology, hermeneutics, educational sciences, and cultural studies to get a more thorough understanding of the research topic. Different data sources like pupils and teachers and different methods such as observations and interviews were used in this study in order to achieve a broad understanding of the research topic from multiple perspectives and to avoid unilateral research results (Tuomi and Sarajärvi, 2009, Mason, 2002, 190). In the data analysis, coding and categorisations were negotiated and peer-evaluated in the last phase of category formation with the second

writers of the articles and reflection was highly stressed and opened in all the phases of investigation.

The use of different methods motivated and emphasised the investigation of the research topic from various perspectives to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The use of different methods also offers a potential to increase the trustworthiness of the study (Mason, 2002, 189-190). Related to different research methods, a test-interview was conducted to ensure the accuracy of the themes and questions (Gubrium and Holstein, 2001) and afterwards minor corrections were made. However, the main themes of interview did not change. All the interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Also, the recording of interviews could be considered as a factor increasing the trustworthiness of the study because it allows researchers to go back to the data source in the different phases of the research process. It also allows other researchers to access the data and do analyses jointly (Hirsjärvi and Hurme, 2015). This was implemented in the content analysis phase when some of the categories and placing certain units under a category were negotiated. However, the first author had the main responsibility for the empirical data and analysis in all of the sub-studies.

The fact that all data were first-hand data and the researcher was a part of all the data gathering phases, could be seen as an aspect increasing trustworthiness. The researcher was able to observe nuances present in the classroom, could critically examine the interviewer effect in the interviews and also evaluate the interview situation in general. A semi-structural format instead of structural interviews aimed to increase participants' credibility and ensure that their voice is heard. Also, the fact that interviews were conducted individually offered students as well as teachers a possibility to talk about matters that they would have otherwise felt reluctant to share in a group or in class.

Nevertheless, especially the power relations between researcher and the participant were acknowledged particularity with the pupils' interviews. In addition, differences among the students' conceptual abilities and abstract thinking, as well as the students' lack of experience with the research situation, influenced the research situation. However, it is not possible to fully understand another person's perspective. It is generally difficult to reach another person's viewpoint if the gender, age, or culture differs from the

viewpoint of the researcher. This issue is mostly present when doing research with children, but as Karlsson (2010, 132) points out, this is generally the case, and not only specifically related to children.

There were also possible limitations in this study. A wider geographical area for collecting data would have offered an interesting perspective to see whether there are some differences in the relevance and use of narratives depending on whether participants are living in the city or in the countryside or in which part of the country they are living. This could be an interesting way to widen the perspective in future studies. The number of observed lessons was rather small (N=2) but the topic of the lessons was precisely what was investigated and thus, gave researchers a good impression of what kind of learning opportunities narratives in the school can provide. This follows the qualitative case study methodology, as the most information-rich cases are chosen (Flyvbjerg, 2006), in this case, lessons of worldview education where cultural narratives are explicitly present. Case study methodology also highlights the contextuality of the research and it is likely that the study conducted in a different context, for example in a different subject such as mathematics, would have produced different kinds of meaning making and interpretations (see. e.g., Krummheuer, 2000).

In the actual learning situation, the presence of the researcher and video-camera could have impacted communication in the lessons and pupils' personal characteristics, such as shyness and the fact that the researcher was not a familiar person, could challenge full participation in both common learning situations and interviews. Nevertheless, it seemed that pupils forgot the camera and research situations quite quickly and pondered deeply the themes in the lessons. Also in the interviews, especially pictures and videos promoted children's participation and as stated before, all the pupil's described interview situation as 'nice'.

The interview location in the school was not optimal since the sounds coming from the hallway might have disturbed pupil participants. Also, the quite strict time limits of the method chosen (stimulated recall interviews) caused pressure to both pupils and the researcher. For the researcher, there were two afternoons to conduct the interviews if they wanted to follow the 48h rule (see Calderhead, 1981). For the pupils, the interview time occurred

during one of their lessons and while she or he was in the interview, the others did their assignments and the one in the interviews had to do them afterwards. This might have affected, for example, the variety and lengths of the answers if the pupils felt hurried.

In the teacher interviews there were two kinds of participants: those who were familiar with the researcher beforehand and those recommended by another participant and thus, unfamiliar with the researcher. This familiarity might have influenced the interviews and answers given by teachers. On the one hand, teachers might have felt more relaxed and open to a colleague who understands a teacher's work and school context. On the other hand, some might prefer a researcher 'from outside'. Nevertheless, all the interviews could be considered in depth in length and content. Equality and consistency were also stressed so that the main format and themes in the interview were always kept the same.

The researcher was an insider in the way that the school as working environment was familiar to her, as well as cultural narratives as a learning content and pedagogical method. However, narratives as a theoretical framework or as philosophical approach was kind of a new perspective for the researcher and during the time of data gathering, the knowledge about these approaches was developing and emerging. These philosophical aspects could have guided towards a slightly different angle, for example towards a narrative mode of thought (Bruner, 1986).

## 4.8 Reflectivity and researcher position

A researcher brings his or her own perspective to the qualitative inquiry. As Patton (2002, 64) almost poetically describes it "a human being is the instrument of qualitative methods". A real person is making observations, writing field notes and a research diary, interviewing participants, and interpreting responses. Thus, self-awareness and reflectivity towards all the work is necessary. Reflectivity, understood as 'active acknowledgement by the researcher that her/his own actions and decisions will inevitably impact upon the meaning and context of the experience under investigation' (Horsburgh,

2003, 309) can be seen as a prime measure used in qualitative research to secure the credibility and trustworthiness of a study. Reflectivity needs to include self-awareness, but also cultural consciousness, As MacBeth (2001, 32, referred Patton, 2002, 64) highlights reflectivity as "deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text and world, and for the representational exercise itself." This means that a qualitative researcher should be attentive to cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origin, i.e., one's own perspective and voice as well as the perspective of the research participants (Patton, 2002, 65). Patton is requiring self-awareness (2002, 64).

In the data gathering process the researcher was trying to minimise the impact of the researcher on the data participants produced. This was done via non-participatory observations and giving space for the interviewees to explain and give meaning to their experiences instead of assumptions or personal interpretations during the interviews. If the researcher had any trouble understanding, she asked to give examples and open the concept more, thus ensuring that the interviewee's own voice could be heard. However, the researcher considers herself as a kind of insider of the research, as her former positions as a teacher have had a strong impact on her personal and professional identity development and later influenced her identity as an educational researcher. The benefits of this 'inner understanding' of the school world and the lifeworld of a teacher may have helped her to encourage participants to share their thoughts and ask questions 'as colleagues' more freely. The researcher's familiarity with the school context could also apply to pupil interviews because the researcher had been working with children before and was experienced in these kinds of encounters.

The researcher is aware of the power relations present in the interview situations, and from another perspective the researcher was an 'outsider' and not familiar to the pupils nor all of the teachers. For example, when interviewing teachers with different cultural and religious backgrounds, the lifeworld of the researcher is in many ways different than the lifeworld of the teacher representing a minority group in the Finnish context and thus, confronts prejudices with pupils, their parents or school staff. Also, the life world of pupils is of course fundamentally different than the lifeworld of adults. In order to diminish the gap between interviewer and pupil, the interviewer

asked for examples and clarifications instead of making assumptions from her own, adult perspective.

It is also worth noting that during the whole research process, researcher investigated narrative theory intensively and that affected her understanding of narrativity as a fundamental and comprehensive way to conceptualise human existence and learning. This development of thinking and the emergence of wider understanding of narrativity can be found in the research articles.

# 5 ARTICLE-BASED RESEARCH RESULTS

## 5.1 Relation between articles

This research consists of three international scientific journal articles, which are divided into two main categories. All the articles discuss cultural narratives in the school context, firstly, in the viewpoint of the pupils and secondly, on the perspective of teachers. The research answers the following questions: (1) How do students interpret and give meanings to cultural narratives? (pupil's relevance) and (2) How do teachers interpret and use cultural narratives in worldview education? (Pedagogical relevance). This is also clarified in the Table 13.

**Table 13.** Perspectives of articles to cultural narratives in school

| **Cultural narratives in school** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Student's relevance to cultural narratives | | Teacher's pedagogical relevance to cultural narratives |
| Article I<br>-Starting point of and basis of the study<br>-Generating an overall picture of narrative learning situations and meaning-making in worldview education | Article II<br>-Focusing on interesting case: the aims and tensions in the pedagogical use of 'holy narratives' | Article III<br>-Generating wider understanding about the purposes of the pedagogical use of cultural narratives |

There are at least three main factors affecting teaching during learning situations: the content, i.e., culturally shared narrative, the student and the teacher, which can be placed in a didactic triangle (Kansanen and Meri, 1999; Hellström, 2018). In order to understand what kind of processes occur during learning situations, a closer look is needed to reveal these different relationships between the student and cultural narratives and teachers'

relations to cultural narratives and to their pupils. The different relations of the narrative learning situation are under scrutiny, as presented in Figure 5. Article I focuses on the student–content relation, referred to as a student's relevance which emphasises the student as an active meaning-maker and learner. Articles II and III investigate the teacher–content relationship, referred to as pedagogical relevance, in line with Uljens (1997) who sees pedagogy as a broad educational term which includes general and subject didactics. Even if none of the research questions were explicitly pointed towards the personal relation between teacher and student (Hellström, 2018) (called pedagogical relation by Kansanen and Meri, 1999), the teacher–student relation was evidently present when the teacher's pedagogical relevance to cultural narratives was investigated. The teacher–student relationship can be seen as a part of pedagogical relevance since the learner is seen as an important, even integral part of pedagogy (see Uljens, 1997; Watkins and Mortimore, 1999).

It should be noted that the interpretation presented here is slightly different from some other visual illustrations of the didactic triangle. Often, the pedagogical relationship is outlined as the relationship between the educator and the student, and the didactic relationship is presented as the teacher's relationship to the student–content relation (Kansanen and Meri, 1999). In this figure, however, the concept of pedagogical relevance deliberately and consciously refers to the relationship between the teacher and cultural narratives since pedagogy covers both didactical and pedagogical processes. In addition, cultural narratives are not regarded only as content that the student should learn. Instead of content learning, the focus is more on the transformative power of the cultural narratives, initiating and bringing about change in a person's identity and worldview. Also, even if none of the articles were directly focused on the teacher–student personal relation, it is evident that this relation is profoundly present in all the learning situations and is a fundamental aspect of all pedagogical decisions and settings (see Uljens, 1997).

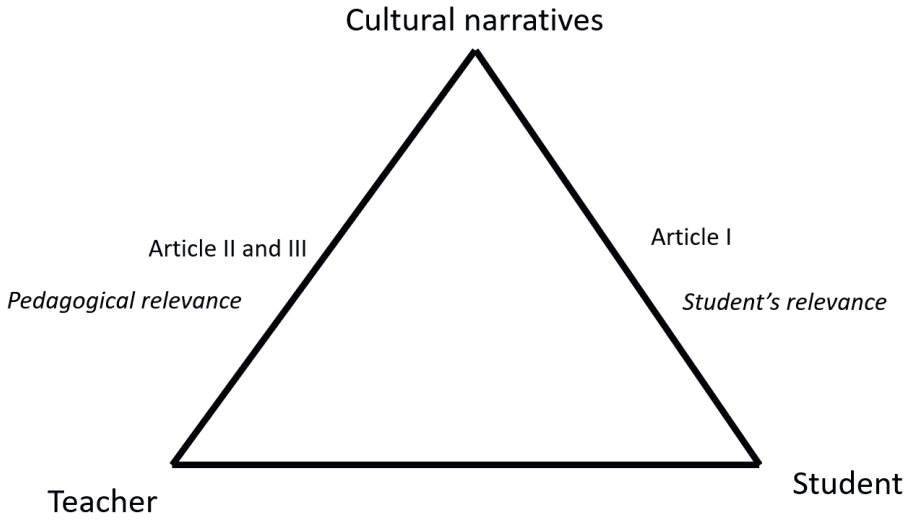


**Figure 5.** Relations in the narrative learning situations.

The first article approaches the research topic holistically and offers the basis for the whole study since it draws a comprehensive picture of the narrative learning situations and relations of the stakeholders present in the school. It also provides a pupil's perspective to meaning-making processes related to cultural narratives and thus dispenses insight into socialisation, identity processes and learning.

The second article's scope rose directly from the teacher interviews and their pedagogical decision-making and gave a new perspective related to cultural narratives in the school context. The article is seen as an interesting case which offers a new kind of understanding about the tensions related to pedagogical use of a special kind of culturally shared stories, those regarded as 'holy narratives' in religious communities.

In the third article, teachers' perspectives regarding the pedagogical use of narratives were widened and deepened. Also, the concept of narrative learning was under scrutiny in order to understand the learning processes related to cultural narratives in the pedagogical context.

Research questions and the main results of the research articles are compiled in Table 14. The main research question, *What kind of meaning-making and pedagogical processes are related to cultural narratives in worldview education?,*

is viewed through the three original research articles. The first sub-question, *How do students interpret and give meanings to cultural narratives in worldview education?,* is answered in Article I and second sub-question *How do teachers interpret and use cultural narratives in worldview education?* in Articles II and II. In the following, each individual article is presented in chronological order, with the main focus being on the results and then moving on to the conclusions.

**Table 14.** Research questions and main results.

| Title | Research question | Main results |
|---|---|---|
| The holistic and spiritual relevance of Bible stories among Finnish 10-year-old pupils: a classroom case study | What kind of relevance do the Biblical stories have for 10-year-old pupils? | The most common forms of relevance of narratives in the pupils' reflections were *affective, moral* and *religious* relevance.<br><br>The study indicates that different kinds of stories seem to emphasise different kinds of relevance. |
| What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives? Perspectives from Finnish Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education | 1) How are religious traditions' narratives used in Lutheran RE and Islamic RE? | 1) Narratives are used in learning *about* religion<br>- Familiarising pupils with religious stories<br>- Teaching about the origins and history of religious narratives<br>- Teaching about the cultural impacts of religious narratives<br>- Teaching about the dogma and practices of religious tradition<br><br>Narratives are used learning *from* religion as a way to promote-ethical thinking<br>-pupils' worldview and life questions<br>- pupils' personal competences |

| Title | Research question | Main results |
|---|---|---|
| | 2) What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of sacred religious narratives and how do the teachers negotiate these tensions?<br><br>3) What kinds of differences are there in the practices, tensions, and negotiations between Lutheran religious education (LRE) and Islamic religious education (IRE)? | 2) Tensions were found between<br>- the ideals of student-centred learning and sacredness of the narratives,<br>- experiential and creative learning and sacredness of the narratives<br>- teaching liberal educational values and protecting the authenticity of the sacred narratives.<br><br>3) Differences between tensions and practiced Lutheran religious education (LRE) and Islamic religious education (IRE) occurred<br>a) Between student-centred learning and sacredness of the narratives<br>- Presenting sacred characters interestingly vs fear of trivialising sacred characters (IRE)<br>b) Tensions between experiential and creative<br>learning and sacredness of the narratives<br>- Visual material to enliven the narrative vs respecting iconoclastic ideas (IRE)<br>- Working creatively with the texts vs fear of<br>disrespectful products (LRE)<br>-Using drama vs holiness of characters prevent using drama (IRE) |
| Pedagogical Purposes of Narratives in Worldview Education: Teachers' Conceptions | For what purpose do teachers use narratives in worldview education? | Teachers used the narratives:<br>1) To offer knowledge about religions and worldviews to their pupils<br>2) To help their pupils to reflect on existential and transcendental issues<br>3) To develop pupils' ethical abilities<br>4) To promote pupils' sense of community |

## 5.2 Article I: The holistic and spiritual relevance of Bible stories among Finnish 10-year-old pupils: a classroom case study

*Theoretical framework*: Article focused on pupils' perceptions and responses to two different stories presented in their worldview education class. The research question was *What kind of relevance do the Biblical stories have for the 10-year-old pupils?* The main aim was to understand what kind of relevance the stories have for pupils and what kinds of connections are made and seen as relevant to them. The theoretical framework was built on the emphasis of holistic education (Miller, 2005; Forbes, 2003), where the main idea is to help students to accomplish their fullest capacities and enable them to develop as human beings. Another viewpoint used was the Bible in the pedagogical approaches (Kett, 2015; Berryman, 2002).

*Data and method*: The data were gathered in the classroom in actual learning situations where the topic and methods used were related to narratives. The topic of the lessons in this study were the Easter story and the Parable of the prodigal son, and the special storytelling methods used were Godly play (Berryman, 2002) and Religious Pedagogy Praxis (Kett, 2015; Aitlahti et al., 2017). Two lessons (N= 2) were observed, photographed, video-taped and afterwards nine of pupils (N=9, 5 boys, 4 girls) participated in stimulated-recall interviews (Nguyen and Tangen, 2016). In concrete, pupils watched an excerpt of the video and saw photos from their lessons and explained their thoughts to the interviewer. After that they answered some thematic questions, which concerned (1) the pupil's own relation to narratives, (2) content of the narratives and (3) meaning of the narratives (Appendix X). Analysis was done via deductive, theory-oriented content analysis (Kyngäs and Elo, 2008) and was based on a practical model of holistic education which he calls forms of relevance (Hull, 2002). These forms of relevance were used in the analysis phase to organise the data under each relevance that occurred.

*Main results*: The results revealed that several forms of relevance were detected from the pupils' recollections. The most common relevance emerging from the Biblical stories was affective (emotional) relevance, moral relevance, and religious relevance. In addition, existential and cognitive

relevance was rather high. The fact that the affective relevance was the most common relevance pupils expressed indicates that stories were touching pupils emotionally and they were able to identify with the characters and diverse situations in which the characters were involved.

The affective relevance had a significant role in the recollections and the pupils were very skilful at acknowledging emotions in different situations, for example when pupils pondered the justification of the choices and circumstances which affected conditions. Moral relevance was the second most common form of relevance pupils reflected on during their interviews. Dissonance in the story seemed to interest pupils and made them also combine moral and affective relevance. This was present especially in cases when actions in the story again activated their views about justice.

Pupils also highlight religious and cognitive relevance, which can indicate the strong knowledge basis of Finnish worldview education. The quite high prevalence of religious relevance cannot be interpreted as an indication of the pupils' personal beliefs, even if the stories used seem to offer a platform for existential wondering, since the existential relevance, understood here as relevance connected to the meaning of life, cosmic and perennial questions, was rather high too.

One of concluding results was that different stories provoked different relevance. While moral relevance was high with the story of Prodigal son, The Easter story promoted cultural relevance which did not occur at all related to Prodigal son. This seems quite natural since the story is strongly attached to Easter celebrations and tradition, though secularisation has diminished this connection and features related to Christianity may be less present in family celebrations. This can explain the fact that pupils raise the meaning of school and worldview education, especially as a place to gain knowledge about Christian celebrations.

*Main implications*: The results show that Bible stories can be meaningful for the pupils, but not only related to the content of religious education. Instead, narratives can promote goals which exceed boundaries of different subjects, such as promoting holistic growth of the pupil. Narratives seem to interest pupils and evoked deep conversations and reciprocal dialogue. Various kinds of relevance indicated in the analysis shows that Bible stories

can work as a pedagogical approach in multiple learning goals and can still convey narratives strong enough to enchant the children and to be relevant to them personally.

## 5.3 Article II: What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives? Perspectives from Finnish Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education

*Theoretical Framework*: This article focused on investigating what kinds of pedagogical decision-making and negotiations are related to the use of sacred, religious narratives in the context of worldview education. Research questions were: *(1) How are religious traditions' narratives used in Lutheran religious education (LRE) and Islamic religious education?(IRE); (2) What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of sacred religious narratives and how do the teachers negotiate these tensions?; (3) What kinds of differences are there in the practices, tensions, and negotiations between Lutheran religious education and Islamic religious education?*

The theoretical framework was based on a teacher's pedagogical thinking (Clark and Peterson, 1986; Kansanen et al., 2000) and the study was contextualised into Finnish society and Finnish worldview education (see Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016).

*Data and method*: Data consisted of teachers' interviews (N=9), where 6 teachers were from the primary school and 3 teachers from upper and lower secondary school. All the teachers taught Lutheran or Islamic religious education and besides that, all the primary school teachers taught other subjects as well such as math, foreign languages and natural sciences. The topic of the interviews was teacher's pedagogical thinking and decision-making and tensions they have faced while planning and implementing their teaching was a theme the teachers brought forth spontaneously. Deductive and inductive content analysis (Kyngäs and Elo, 2008) was used to analyse the interviews. Deductive analysis was based on Grimmit's (1987) learning about and from religion model.

*Main results:* The results show that teachers use stories namely to produce knowledge and skills for their students. Learning about religions included the origins and history, cultural impacts and the dogma and practices related to religious narratives. Skills were empathised more in the learning from the approach where pupils' personal competences, such as social and emotional skills, were highlighted. This also combined religious narratives to ethical thinking and the broader idea of pupils' own worldview and life questions.

Pedagogical use of sacred narratives was also perceived as challenging and partly contradictory. The contestations seemed to lie in the liberal educational values like agency and autonomy (Halstead and Taylor, 1996) represented in the curriculum (NCCBE, 2014) and the ideals of integrity of sacred narratives, based on self-understanding and traditions of religious communities. This kind of sacredness and untouchable nature was perceived as partly problematic in the pure pedagogical perspective since the curriculum emphasises student-centred and experiential and creative learning which could challenge the integrity of the holy narratives. This was the case especially with Islamic religious education where teachers put more emphasis on Islamic self-understanding concerning the role and tradition of sacred narratives and had to negotiate more with the ideals of students' agency and participation stated in the curriculum.

Differences in tensions and practices in Lutheran and Islamic teaching occurred in student-centred learning vs. sacredness of the narratives as well as experimental and creative learning vs. sacredness of the narratives. In concrete, these tensions were present concerning the characters of sacred narratives, when the integrity and iconoclastic ideals prevent using drama or illustrative material in Islamic religious education and the fear of disrespectful products after using creative methods in Lutheran religious education.

*Main implications:* Teachers see narratives as a source for multiple pedagogical purposes, such as giving knowledge about religions and worldviews and promoting pupils' personal competences. However, it seems that using religious, sacred narratives in the context of religious education, there is no completely neutral way to make them serve pedagogical purposes. Liberal religious education exploits religious texts to the extent that they can be used to promote modern educational values such as rationality and agency

present in the curriculum. However, occasionally self-understanding of religious tradition conflicts with the pedagogical aims of liberal religious education and teachers have to negotiate between these two different viewpoints.

## 5.4 Article III: Pedagogical Purposes of Narratives in Worldview Education: Teachers' Conceptions

*Theoretical Framework:* In the article the main idea was to understand what kind of conceptions teachers have towards narratives in school and the concrete research question was: *For what purpose do teachers use narratives in worldview education?* The theoretical framework related to narrative mode of thought highlights the importance of narrative to explain people's way of thinking and organising life events via narrative cognition (Bruner, 1986). The article also addresses theorisation concerning worldview education and cultural narratives (Geertz and Jensen, 2014) and underlines the role of the teacher who works as an interpreter of the cultural stock of narratives and also implements practices related to narratives. The theocratisation of different modes of narrative learning is also being developed (Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Goodson and Gill, 2011)

*Data and method:* Research data consist of semi-structured theme interviews with experienced primary school class teachers (N=6). Interviews were focused on teachers' pedagogical thinking and decision-making and pedagogical use of narratives. Themes of the interview included the teacher's own relationship to narratives, use of narratives, content of narratives and meaning of narratives. The data were analysed via inductive content analysis (see Elo and Kyngäs, 2008).

*Main results:* Teachers used narratives for various purposes. Firstly, to offer knowledge about religions and worldviews. Teachers seem to understand stories namely as part of general common knowledge related to religions and worldviews or religious literacy (see Heimbrock, 2001) and thus, the aims related to this notion, that is, teacher's intention to offer knowledge about religions and worldviews to pupils, was often mentioned. Secondly, teachers used narratives in order to help their pupils reflect on existential and transcendental issues. Teachers felt that narratives open up possibilities

and space to discuss existential and transcendental question as well as reflect on stressing the freedom of different interpretations. Thirdly, one conceptualisation teachers described was to use narratives in order to develop pupils' ethical abilities. According to teachers, the use of narratives seems to develop pupil's ethical ability, the questions about right and wrong and what is considered valuable on personal and societal levels since many values present in our society like helping your neighbour and nurturing nature have their roots in religions and humanism, for example. Fourthly, narratives seem to, on the one hand, promote pupils' sense of community, and on the other hand, work as an indicator of classroom's atmosphere or safe space (Jackson, 2014). Two modes of learning through stories were stressed by the teachers, namely learning by hearing stories and learning by telling stories. The third form of learning, learning by recognising stories, meaning that we are 'narratively constituted and narratively positioned' (Clark and Rossiter, 2008, 65), was not explicitly present in the data or the contextualising of the pupil's autobiographical narrative (Goodson and Gill, 2011).

*Main implications:* Dealing with narratives has a lot to offer for pluralistic and polyphonic education since it opens various ways of viewing the world and stimulates discussions about humankind's place in it. Narratives can make implicit values of the society visible and offer a platform for critical reflection. Reflecting on questions about values, existence and ethical behaviour also helps pupils to realise that they are surrounded by metanarratives or 'cultural stocks of stories' (Hänninen, 2004), and this affects how they understand the world and see themselves. Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their own life questions, but the dimension of contextualising pupils' personal narratives (Goodson and Gill, 2011) seems not to be acknowledged by teachers and needs to be more emphasised in order to support consciousness of power relations and reflectivity in worldview education. School brings together pupils from very different backgrounds and thus, promoting a sense of community is an intriguing task. Shared narratives can offer one important way of promoting a sense of community since teachers pinpoint that cultural narratives that convey universal humanistic themes, such as how to cope with difficulties in life, touch pupils regardless of their background or worldview.

# 6 DISCUSSION

## 6.1 Meanings given to cultural narratives by students and teachers

In this study the aim was to investigate cultural narratives provided by religions and worldviews in the context of worldview education in Finnish schools. Worldview education refers to teaching of different religions, worldviews and ethics which in the Finnish system is mainly present in two subjects, religious education and (secular) Ethics. The main question was**:** *What kind of meaning-making and pedagogical processes are related to cultural narratives in worldview education?* The main question was investigated under two sub-questions which emphasised the perspectives of students and teachers: *(1)* How do students interpret and give meanings to cultural narratives in worldview education? *(2)* How do teachers interpret and use cultural narratives in worldview education?

The articles have examined students' meanings in relation to stories (called student's relevance) as well as the teacher's pedagogical thinking and purposes when narratives emerge as a learning method or content (pedagogical relevance). The study focuses on the relations between cultural narratives, teacher and students and the processes of self-understanding and positioning oneself in the larger cultural frame (see Bruner, 1990; Tolska, 2002). Relations between the content, teacher and student have been described via the didactic triangle (Kansanen and Meri, 1999; Hellström, 2018). In this research, these relations were named (differing from original didactic triangle) as student's relevance (student–content relation), focusing on a pupil's active meaning-making processes and development of worldviews that is the focus of Article I and as pedagogical relevance (teacher–content relation) highlighted in Articles II and III. Even if none of the research questions are directly pointed toward the personal relations between teachers and students (for Hellström (2018) this is personal relation and for Kansanen and Meri (1999) this relation is pedagogical relation) this relation is always present in pedagogy (see Uljens,

1997). Relevance refers to the meaning-making and interpretation processes that occur in the learning situations as well as in wider educational settings.

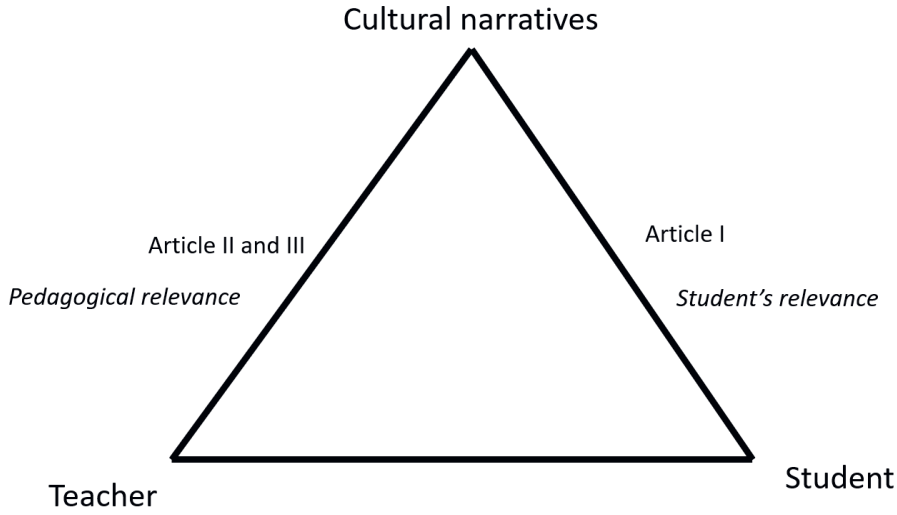


**Figure 5.** Relations in the narrative learning situations

Cultural narratives form a cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021), which refers to the totality of narrative representations available in a culture. Special attention is paid to narrative discourse, to conventions and ways of representing the story in culturally identifiable ways. Culturally shared narratives include different model stories, canonical scripts (Bruner, 1990) which people use to organise and give meanings to their life and world around them. Especially narratives from different religions and worldviews have had an important role in providing answers to existential and ethical questions related to human life, and because of that, special attention was paid to these narratives.

**Meanings given to cultural narratives by students**

According to the results, narratives seem to interest pupils and evoked deep conversations and reciprocal dialogue. All students in this study liked narratives and considered them as a good teaching method. Narratives

were a familiar method for them from other subjects, but they differentiate narratives used in religious education from stories used in other subjects. According to students, in cultural narratives used in the religious education there is always a lesson to be learnt, or an ethical message for the students. Students recognise that these are a special kind of narratives but not necessarily in the way religious traditions interpret them. Meanings related to emotions, ethical thinking, and knowledge about different religions were highlighted in student interviews. Also, cognitive, and existential relevance of narratives was rather high. From the results one can see that different narratives produced different meanings.

Affective and moral relevance was high in both learning situations under study which indicates that cultural narratives promote especially emotional skills and ethical thinking. Dissonance in the story seemed to interest pupils and made them also combine moral and affective relevance. For example, students recognised that characters felt and acted against their expectations related to forgiveness. This kind of 'merciful' thinking was incomprehensive to some of the students as it conflicted with their natural sense of justice. One student was creative about the ways to overcome this conflict by generating an alternative ending to the story, which was more 'just' in his opinion.

To summarise, it seems that cultural narratives can promote, on the one hand, the knowledge base related to different religions and worldviews, i.e. content learning (Mezirow, 2000), and on the other hand, more personal and holistic learning related to emotions and ethical thinking, which supports the construction of personal and collective identities, transformative learning with psychological, convictional and behavioural dimensions (Clark, 1991; Mezirow, 2000) and more just societies. The first mentioned perspective on learning is represented especially by the Anglo-American curriculum tradition; the latter is represented especially by the German and Nordic Bildung tradition (see Chapter 3.1). The rather high religious relevance cannot be interpreted as a clear indication of the students' personal beliefs. Instead, the general knowledge about religions and the interpretation framework provided by the classroom culture and 'field tradition' (Ubani and Keränen-Pantsu, 2018) as well as strong narrative tradition in worldview education (Luodeslampi and Nevalainen, 2005) might better explain the prevalence of this form of relevance.

**Table 15.** Student's interpretations and meanings related to cultural narratives in worldview education

| | |
|---|---|
| General remarks | - Students liked narratives as a content and working method in worldview education<br>- Students felt that narratives in worldview education had a special message to understand<br>- Different narratives promoted different meanings |
| Most common meanings given to cultural narratives by students | 1) Affective relevance<br>2) Moral relevance<br>3) Religious relevance<br>4) Cognitive relevance<br>5) Existential relevance |
| Aspects of learning related to cultural narratives in worldview education | Content learning:<br>- knowledge about religions and worldviews<br>Learning of skills<br>- emotional and social skills<br>Dimensions of transformative learning: psychological (the self), convictional (belief systems), behavioural (lifestyle) |

**Meanings given to cultural narratives by teachers**

Teachers in this study highlight the pedagogical relevance of cultural narratives when they described stories as an important an unquestioned part of teaching. In their recollections, the role of narratives as part of religious and worldview education was emphasised, so that children and adolescents are able to interpret and understand, for example, religious and cultural elements in society. In particular, the importance of Christianity as part of Western culture was highlighted. As a pedagogical approach, narratives were seen as an opportunity to reach dimensions related to one's worldview and identity as well as ethical thinking. Stories were also seen to have learning aspects that support the student's emotional and interaction skills as well as sense of belonging when experiences are shared together. Thus, narratives could promote different educational goals related to knowledge as well as personal development and cultural and societal aspects (see for example Egan, 2008; Biesta, 2020).

Teachers in this study stressed cultural narratives as part of cultural and religious literacy, that is, an ability to analyse intersections of religion and political, social, and cultural life in various ways (Moore, 2016) and an ability to act ethically, be tolerant and be able to have dialogue related to religions and worldviews (Heimbrock, 2001). Also, capacity to understand and take a constructive approach to diversity and pluralism was emphasised. Promoting knowledge about religions and skills, such as social and emotional skills, were seen as an important motivator to use narratives in learning situations. Stories connected to certain religions and (institutional) worldviews (see van der Kooji et al., 2013; 2015) were seen as 'general knowledge' (yleissivistys) (NCCBE, 2014, 143; see also Koirikivi et al., 2019). Thus, instead of just a tool to promote some other learning goal like emotional skills, narratives have a value on their own to familiarise pupils with religions in prevailing culture. This kind of learning could be referred to as content learning (see Table 16).

According to the results, cultural narratives can promote (1) content learning and (2) dimensions of transformative learning. Content learning comes close what Kegan (2018) calls informative learning which adds learners' knowledge and skills. It combines new content to existing ways of giving meaning, which is a common form of learning at all school levels. Transformative learning can be seen as a deep, constructive, and meaningful process of learning which supports critical and conscious ways learners make meaning of their lives (Mezirow, 2000). Both forms of learning are necessary and valuable, and content learning also increases the learner's sense of the self, but only in transformative learning does the change take place at the level of meaningful systems, in other words, at the level of worldview.

The results show that besides content learning, providing knowledge about different religions and worldviews through narratives can promote reflection on fundamental questions of being human such as searching for the meaning of life and existential wondering, ethical thinking, and sense of belonging in line with the Bildung tradition (Saari et al., 2017). These themes were present with both, students, and teachers. Experiencing life as meaningful is also a special aspect of worldview education. Identity reflections are often linked to the perennial questions and life issues: what is important and valuable to

me, how do I deal with death, how do I cope with difficulties and what brings hope for me (Keränen-Pantsu, 2017, 159).

Ethical thinking has been traditionally connected to stories (Meretoja, 2018) and has also been seen as a key function of identity development, where for example Taylor (1989) has stressed the aspects of good life and actions that foster human good. It has also been seen as one of the main aims of worldview education (Miedema, 2014; Kallioniemi and Ubani, 2016). As pointed out in this study, the ethical aspect and existential search with transformative potential (see Mezirow, 2000), which might be difficult to reach in school education, is possible via cultural narratives, especially those of different religious traditions. Pedagogical purposes of cultural narratives and aspects of learning (see Clark, 1991) are summarised in Table 16.

**Table 16.** Pedagogical purposes of cultural narratives from a teacher's perspective

| | |
|---|---|
| Aims and practices of teachers related to cultural narratives in worldview education | 1) Offer knowledge about religions and worldviews: teach the content, origins and history, cultural impacts, dogmas and practices related to cultural narratives<br>2) Promote students' personal competencies: social and emotional skills as well as critical thinking<br>3) Support the development of student's worldview and help to reflect on existential and transcendental issues<br>4) Validate students ethical thinking<br>5) Support student's sense of community |
| Aspects of learning related to cultural narratives in worldview education | Content learning:<br>1) Origins and histories, cultural impacts, dogmas, practices related to cultural narratives<br><br>Transformative learning<br>1) Psychological dimensions: changes in understanding of the self<br>2) Convictional dimensions: revision of belief systems<br>3) Behavioural dimensions: changes in the way of life |

The results show that cultural narratives have potential to promote transformative learning, which according to Clark (1991) has three dimensions: *psychological*, which means re-evaluating and re-constructing the self; *convictional*, which means revision of belief systems; and *behavioural*, which means changes in lifestyle. Cultural narratives have aspects that challenge our way of thinking about the self, the world and how to be in the world. With students, these dimensions were present when they wondered about the life situations, how they would have acted and what would be right thing to do. Teachers bring out the same elements in the pedagogical perspective as they wish to, in addition to content learning, promote holistic and transformative learning approaches.

## 6.2 Rethinking education: considering possibilities of narrativity

Bruner (1986; 1990) has stated that the educational field, as well as the Western way of life, have been dominated by logico-scientific cognition which has reached a paradigmatic position as an unquestioned measure of trustful and reliable knowledge. If one of the main tasks of education is to teach students academic knowledge (Egan, 2008; Biesta, 2020), logico-scientific knowledge has an important and undeniable role in school education. This has been crystallised in so-called STEM education, education of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. The role of STEM subjects in education is justified by increasing capacity of innovation and enterprise, career opportunities, global competition, and workforce to address grand challenges of 21st century like developing new energy sources and discovering cures for different diseases (Williams, 2011). There have been also critical voices claiming that this kind of education has already monopolised the educational landscape for centuries and its ability to create something new is questionable (Sanders, 2009).

This study claims that the educational field would benefit from a more comprehensive understanding of narrativity. This has been argued already by Bruner (1986) who suggests narrative cognition, a narrative way of knowing

as another, as a complete way of understanding human cognition and meaning-making processes in addition to logico-scientific cognition. Forming hypotheses, logical arguments and understanding natural phenomena, although important, cannot explain human existence, experiences, or human relations – understanding social and cultural reality recalls a different kind of conceptualisation, the narrative way of knowing. Narrative way of knowing seeks to explain the storied meanings people make for their experiences, happenings, and their relationships. The two modes of thought, logico-scientific and narrative cognition, are complementary to each other and they both are needed in education and life in general. Thus, they should not be seen as competitive but complementary ways of constructing knowledge and comprehending the world (Bruner, 1986; 1990). Fortunately, some promising developments towards this has been made such as Dahlström, (2014), who points out that when it comes to communicating scientific knowledge, narrative has great potential due to its effectiveness in describing things on a 'human scale'. Further, for example via metaphors, narrative can help to reach aspects of scientific knowledge (e.g., nanotechnology) that cannot be perceived with human senses.

From a scientific perspective, narrative mode of thought has not been understood as a reliable way to construct knowledge, and because of that it has not been widely recognised in education. One of the fundamental aspects of narrativity is temporality; narratives describe happenings that have happened, are happening and might happen in the future (Polkinghorne, 1991). Temporality is present in the classical Aristotelian definition of narrative where a narrative has a beginning, a middle, and an end. The importance of narrative has been, at least to some extent, established in history education where also the aspect of temporality is evident, as past events are interpreted and forwarded to future generations. However, it is important that history education is based on investigation and evidence in order to determine the most plausible story that can be told about past events (White, 1984). When viewing this study, besides language education and worldview education, history was the only subject in the current curriculum (NCCBE, 2014) that viewed narrative as an important way of organising contents of education (see Chapter 3 in this study). In language and worldview education the emphasis

was more on the connection between culture and narrative and the importance of culturally shared narratives as a part of cultural or religious tradition.

In addition to internalising cultural traditions and learning content, it is essential to see the possibilities of narrative teaching as a promoter of transformative learning, i.e., how narratives are used to bring about psychological changes in understanding of the self, convictional changes in revising one's belief systems, and behavioural changes in lifestyle (Clark, 1991; Mezirow, 2000). If we look at the general aims for education suggested by Egan (2008) and Biesta (2020), narrativity and narrative cognition has lot to offer to these goals. Egan suggest that education should promote individual development of each person in line with the Bildung tradition (Saari et al., 2017). Education should also socialise children into prevailing society and teach academic knowledge and skills needed in the present and future society (Egan, 2008; Biesta, 2020), which comes close to the ideas of Curriculum tradition and its skill-orientation (Hakala and Kujala, 2021). When viewing academic goals as well as personal development, Bruner (1990) claims that in the same way that students are taught scientific knowledge, they should be told how to construct credible and plausible narratives that are understandable to others. This means that students are able to share their experiences and make them a coherent whole. For some students this is easier than for others, but rather than seeing this as an innate quality, it should be seen as a skill that can be and should be imparted in schools (Bruner, 1990; Tolska, 2002).

Thus, it is important that students are able to share their experiences in understandable and credible ways as well as can tell a believable narrative about oneself and answer the question, 'Who am I?' in other words, build one's narrative identity (see for example McAdams, 1985; Ricoeur, 1992). A person forms his or her identity in all social relationships, also as a part of school education. Different communities, school among others, affect and transform students' understanding of themselves and the world around them (see Mezirow, 2000). It has been stated that students would need more support to understand their own identity and how the school experiences as well school community are important in terms of identity work (Lannegrand-Willems and Bosma, 2006; Flum and Kaplan, 2012). This aspect was also

emphasised by teachers in this study, who wish to support student's identity work and reflection on one's own worldview as one of the aims to use narratives in their teaching. Also, students seem to connect narratives to meanings related to one's own worldview, when they find affective, moral, and existential relevance of the stories in narrative learning situations.

In order to promote a narrative way of knowing in educational settings, teacher and students should have a wide understanding about the narratives that are present in culture and contain shared meanings and values. Not all kinds of narratives are not identifiable or believable; instead children are socialised into certain narrative structures and typical stories (Haste and Abrahams, 2008). This also applies to narrative identity work which does not happen in a vacuum but in interaction with the narratives present in a culture. The way students position themselves as individuals and as part of the community depends on what kind of inputs and stimuli the surrounding culture provides for identity work. This cultural reality can be parsed via conception of cultural narratives, narratives that are used as model stories (Loseke, 2007) which represent what is 'normal' or typical. They are stories that 'shape our lives' and transform us, (Mezirow, 2000) and form a *cultural stock of narratives,* the totality of narratives available in the prevailing culture (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021). Cultural narratives often consist of implicit values and expectations as well as gender and societal roles maintained by society. Religions and worldviews have had a strong impact on cultural stock of narratives. Identity work happens via narrative circulation (Hänninen, 2004): one is taking models and structures from the cultural stock of narratives, uses them to give meanings to one's own experience and to answer the question, 'Who am I?' and after that, add one's own life story into the cultural stock of narratives. This ongoing process shapes and changes both, one's own narrative identity and the cultural stock of narratives.

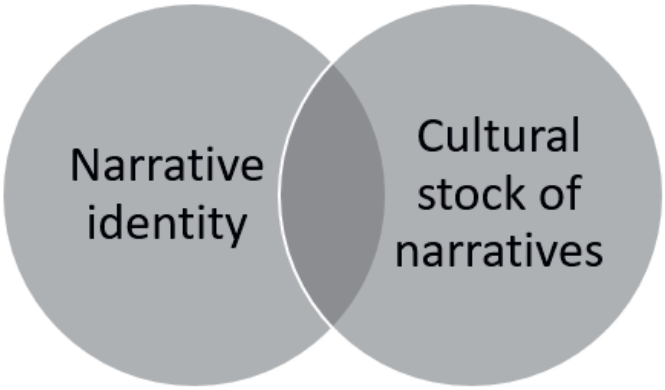


**Figure 3.** Interplay between narrative identity and cultural stock of narratives

In the construction of an individual's identity, influences, contents, structures of narratives and ways of telling are taken from the cultural stock of narratives. This process of absorbing ingredients from this stock of narratives begins to form in early childhood from the stories of who you are as a person, as a member of a family, as a member of communities and as part of a certain nationality and culture. Formal education has an evident task to widen the cultural stock of narratives of students and actively introduce also other ways of understanding the world, that is, cultural narratives which may differ from the person's family background or the surrounding culture. This can be described as *cultural competence* related to cultural stock of narratives, ability to comprehend diversity of cultures, languages, worldviews, religions and philosophies as a part of life (Halinen, 2015). A part of cultural competence is also to understand the significance of cultures and traditions in a person's life and holistic well-being, meaning that the cultural stock of narratives one feels they are a part of is important both personally and communally. Cultural competence is also highlighted in the Finnish Core Curriculum for Basic Education (NCCBE, 2014).

Teachers in this study stressed that one important aspect of cultural competence is knowledge related to narratives of religions and worldviews. According to them, this helps to understand both other cultures and our own, and thus promotes dialogue between different cultures and worldviews.

An essential element of such cultural competence is the comprehension of cultural narratives, which according to Haste and Abrahams (2008) can be called *narrative capital*. This term comes close to the concept of cultural stock of narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2021), which refers to the repertoire of cultural narratives available. In other words, a person with an abundance of narrative capital is familiar not only with the cultural stock of narratives underlying their own worldview, but also with other ways of construing worldviews through narratives. Narrative capital enables us to understand and appreciate worldviews of other persons. As children familiarise themselves with different folktales, myths, and conventional stories in their culture, they increase their narrative capacity and have a basis for identity work as well as tools to interpret the world around them (see also Warnock, 1994).

Narrative capital is also an important element of *multiliteracy* which got quite a prominent position in the latest Finnish curriculum (NCCBE, 2014). The term multiliteracy was first presented by the New London Group, a group of researchers focused on literacy pedagogy in 1990s. According to them, "multiplicity of communications channels and increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in the world today call for a much broader view of literacy than portrayed by traditional language-based approaches" (Cazden et al., 1996, 60). Researchers suggest that one of the aims of education is to help students face the changes in the cultural and societal environment and offer multiliteracy as a way to promote this goal (Cazden et al., 1996).

The importance of multiliteracy is also stated in the Finnish curriculum, where multiliteracy is seen to promote students' competence to interpret, produce, and evaluate information mediated for instance in visual, numerical, audio and kinaesthetic form (NCCBE, 2014). According to the NCCBE 2014, multiliteracy is based on the broad definition of texts which may be interpreted and produced in written, spoken, printed, audio-visual or digital form. This multimodality of texts contains also cultural narratives in various forms and ability to recognise religious or cultural narratives in paintings, comics or movies is an important part of multiliteracy also highlighted by teachers in this study. This also increases a person's narrative capital if one is able to 'read' and interpret the symbols and find connections between cultural narratives

and different forms of culture, for example the connection between the Bible and The Lord of the rings or The Chronicles of Narnia (see Kerry, 2011).

One part of that is developing one's narrative capacity, the ability to understand cultural stock of narratives one is part of and also narratives of others, which may differ fundamentally from one's own narrative. This is important from the civic education point of view as pointed out by Nussbaum (2002): she calls for *narrative imagination*, ability to imagine thought, feelings and desires that someone differently placed might have. This is important for several reasons. Firstly, Nussbaum (2002, 299) connects this to just and democratic citizenship where ability to imagine what it would be like to be in the position of someone different than yourself can create a basis for what she calls a world citizen and rise above one's own view and position to see things on a more societal and global level.

Secondly, narrative imagination can also support equality and reduce discrimination if the pupil is able to understand others' positions and circumstances that affect their position instead of taking things for granted and seeing positions and circumstances as others' own choices. Thus, one is able to develop empathy skills and also a reflective position to one's own thinking, hopingly overcome one's egocentric views to understand that one's own point of view is only one among many possible perspectives (Nussbaum, 2000). This aspect was strongly present in the results as students in this study found affective relevance as the most common relevance in the learning situations under scrutiny. It seems even with the different stories where students' produced relevancies otherwise varied, emotional relevance was the highest of them all. This indicates that narrative has a power to catch students' attention and make them identify with characters and their feelings and thus, promote narrative imagination.

Thirdly, narrative imagination can promote meaning-making, personal attachment and identity work, when experiences can be combined imaginatively to previous ones and give them new, unseen meanings. This is one of the most important abilities of humankind to learn: imagine 'possible worlds' (Bruner, 1986), think 'outside the box' and see yourself and your life choices as meaningful and responsible. This kind of education which promotes new kinds of thinking is necessary in an era of eco-crisis, when we

have to fundamentally rethink our way of living and being in the world (see for example Laininen, 2019; Kaukko et al., 2021).

Narrativity can be seen also a core aspect of learning. In this study *narrative learning* refers firstly to a cognitive and constructive process of organising experiences and information into a meaningful whole. In this process, previous experiences and knowledge relates to the new one and many times, this new understanding takes the form of narrative (Clark and Rossiter, 2008). Secondly, narrative learning refers to the different *modes of learning* which occurs through narrative, that is, listening, telling, recognising and contextualising narratives (Goodson and Gill, 2011; Clark and Rossiter, 2008). When viewing the teacher in this study, it seems that teachers intuitively know that narratives work well as a content and method for learning but could not theoretically explain or argue the learning process. This highlights the meaning of conceptualised narrative learning since it describes how people give meaning, organise, and find an inner logic about new knowledge, that is, to theorise the learning process itself (See Goodson and Gill, 2011, Clark and Rossiter, 2008).

In the results it seems that mainly two modes of learning through narratives are present: listening and telling narratives. Teachers comprehend narratives in education mainly as storytelling, making students familiar with different kinds of cultural narratives and also in some respects, making students aware of their identity and worldview. According to the theorisation of narrative learning, it is important to recognise that we are narratively constructed and narratively positioned (Clark and Rossiter, 2008). It is also important to locate the stories we tell about ourselves into a wider societal and cultural context (Goodson and Gill, 2011). In this study, learning by recognising narratives (Clark and Rossiter, 2008) was not so explicitly present in this study. It was the same with regard to contextualising narratives, like seeing student's autobiographical narrative in a wider context (Goodson and Gill, 2011). Teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their own life questions, but the dimension of contextualising pupils' personal narratives (Goodson and Gill, 2011) seems not to be acknowledged by educators and needs to be more emphasised in order to support consciousness of power relations and to promote reflectivity in worldview education. Occurrences of narrative modes of learning are shown in Table 17.

**Table 17.** Modes of narrative learning present in the results

| Mode of learning through narratives | Occurrence in the results |
|---|---|
| Listening narratives | + |
| Telling narratives | + |
| Recognising narratives | _ |
| Contextualising narratives | _ |

Teachers saw that narratives have a wide pedagogical value and none of the participants, neither pupils nor teachers, questioned the position of narratives as one of the core elements for learning. One conclusion might be that even though it is difficult to describe and understand the process between narratives and learning, there is a strong 'field tradition' (Ubani and Keränen-Pantsu, 2018) related to narratives in education, especially in worldview education (Ahava et al., 1970, Tamminen and Vesa, 1982). Narratives engage pupils in a studied subject and somehow invite them to be more personally involved. Narratives also connect the content and pupils' (as well as teachers') own lives and make them live again their experiences and maybe give them new meanings which also shapes their narrative identity. This means that the concepts of meaning-making, learning and identity are strongly connected via narrativity.

Ability to adapt to rapidly changing situations and an unpredictable future are probably the most important features of learning and developing pedagogical approaches in 2020s. This research shows that narrative learning could respond to this demand in that learning should be flexible and able to support various ways of knowledge-making, meaning-making, and identity processes. Another demand relies on social skills and lifelong learning (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999, 16). The ability to create and work with different communities and constant development determines our prevailing society and work life. This study suggests that these aspects of social skills and development such as listening, reflecting, and sharing experiences are

evidently present in narrative learning. This was described by both students and teachers. Narrative learning has a lot to offer for open pedagogy, which promotes empathy, dialogue, and deep respect for humanity. Results of this study indicate that narrative learning within cultural narratives can promote ethical thinking and meaning-making, connected to identity work and the ultimate need to support a good life (Taylor, 1989) as well as promote various competences, such as cultural competence and multiliteracy.

## 6.3 Implication to worldview education: widening the perspective to cultural narratives

At the core of worldview education are educational aims related to 'Bildung', the holistic view of the human and humanity and the aim to promote the good life (Saari et al., 2017; Tirri, 2014). This study sees worldview education as a 'meaning-making subject', which especially stresses the aspect of finding a purpose and meaning in life, understanding that there are several ways to find one's own way to "live in the world worth living in" (Kemmis et al., 2014, 27). Religions and worldviews have always offered answers to this kind of existential search and included ethical guidance which often takes the form of a narrative. In fact, religions and worldviews can be seen as narrative structures: narratives about the ontological reality religions are based on and narratives about the knowledge which is constructed in relation to belief systems and its followers. Through narrative, knowledge about humans, nature and beliefs systems is created and transferred to future generations (Keränen-Pantsu. 2017, 156).

Narrative way of knowing (Bruner, 1986, 13) is characteristics to religions and worldviews (see Smart, 1989; 1996; 2008). It is therefore no wonder that narratives, especially biblical narratives in Finnish context, have played an important role in teaching religious education (Ahava et al., 1970; Tamminen and Vesa, 1982). This was also present in this study when both teachers and students viewed cultural narratives as an integral and unquestioned part of worldview education which can promote various learning goals. When looking at the didactic development in worldview education (Ubani et al., 2021; Ubani,

2017) one can see different emphases which relate also to narratives' roles as part of teaching. Figure 6 outlines a timeline that considers the different educational emphases related to worldview education and the underlying theoretical approaches which affect them. It is worth noting that the sections are not clearly demarcated, but rather overlap and are sedimented as part of the subject. Thus, they form cumulative and complementary approaches towards narratives in worldview education.

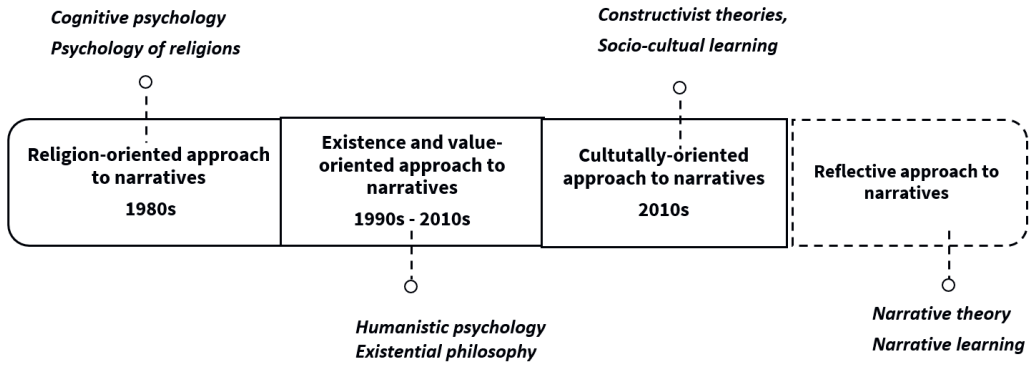


**Figure 6.** Different orientations to narratives in worldview education.

The religion-oriented approach relied on cognitive psychology such as Goldman's (1964) and Tamminen's (1991) studies on the development of religious thinking. Piagetian cognitive psychology and stage-theories influenced this era and the idea that children might be unable to understand biblical narratives other than in a concrete way, raising the question of whether they are suitable for young children (Goldman, 1964). However, especially the role of the Bible was strong in education, offering a basis for being a good, Christian citizen (Ubani, 2017, 92). Still, nowadays the knowledge related to cultural and religious narratives is seen as an important part of worldview education based on the empirical results of this study (Article I, Keränen-Pantsu and Ubani, 2018; Article II, Keränen-Pantsu and Rissanen, 2018; Article III, Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2019), as well as at the curriculum level (NCCBE, 2014). However, in the 1980s religion education and narratives

related to it was intended to some extent internalise the religion that was taught; nowadays there is no such confessional connotation (NCCBE, 2014).

A shift towards existential and value education happened at the turn of the 1990s when Niemi (1991) published her influential existential analytical didactics and later this was followed Tirri's and Ketola's (1998) didactics which emphasised value education (Ubani, 2017). Worldview education was seen to develop and transform values and value systems (Mezirow, 2000) as well as to nurture pupils' existential search (see Ubani, 2013). Biblical themes offered by biblical narratives were offered to develop one's own personal worldview (Ubani, 2017) and this kind of approach has been strong in the field of worldview education ever since. Both students and teachers in this study emphasised these dimensions, since moral and existential relevance of cultural narratives was rather high among the recollections of students and according to the teachers the use of narratives support ethical thinking as well as existential wondering. During this time German symbolic didactic approach as well as Montessori approach affected the narrative tradition in worldview education (Luodeslampi and Nevalainen, 2015). Unlike Piagetian stage-theories, these approaches rely on the holistic view of a child as an intentional spiritual searcher who has abilities to ponder deep ethical, theological, and philosophical questions, and this competence should be nurtured and developed.

Worldview education in the 2010s was affected by the increasingly pluralistic and multicultural society. This means that more emphasis was put on the diversities in and between the studied religions and worldviews as well as a stronger emphasis on secular worldviews. Cultural aspects were highlighted when, besides constructivist theories, also cultural anthropology influenced the subjects (Ubani, 2017), and further, in the school context, cultural interpretations of religion were emphasised (Ubani et al., 2021). Related to narratives at the curriculum level, they were strongly connected to cultures and languages (see Chapter 2 in this study; NCCBE, 2014). In worldview education cultural narratives were seen as part of general knowledge related to religions and worldviews and in the results teachers emphasised the connections between religious narratives and culture, such as festivals and forms of art and wished to develop their students' cultural competence

through narratives (Keränen-Pantsu and Rissanen, 2018; Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2019).

As could be seen, all the approaches described in the timeline could be indicated in the results of this study. This implicates firstly, the strong presence of narrative in worldview education and secondly, the cumulative nature of changing focus areas: they all affect the essence of worldview education, only the emphasis varies. The last approach towards narrative is a suggestion made by this study and is further investigated in the last section 6.4 'towards narrative reflectivity'.

When looking at the approaches towards narratives, it is obvious that sections are related to one another. Existential search and identity work is done in a certain culture, which offers certain cultural model stories. In the culturally-oriented approach emphasis is put on the lived experience and diversity which is present in all cultures: even in the same community the relation between individual and community varies and certain belongings, for example to a religious community, can be at the core of the individuals self-understanding or an aspect that affects the individual's life very little. Nevertheless, paying attention to the inner variance of cultures and their representations should diversify the cultural stock of narratives present in the classroom and offer a versatile way of organising one's life and experiences.

Why is a wide cultural stock of narratives is important? If it is combined with the modes of narrative learning (Clark and Rossiter, 2008; Goodson and Gill, 2011), when students *listen* to narratives they get familiar with different cultural and religious narratives which work as cultural tools that help to understand, for example, beliefs and values contained in a culture. This increases student's participation, awareness of values and ability to understand people's different ways of giving meaning to their experiences and their life. This also amplifies their knowledge about different religions and belief systems. When students *tell* narratives, they organise their experiences into a comprehensible form, reflect on their views with others and also gain new perspectives which may transform their original thinking. They use cultural tools, structures and shared meanings that are present in the prevailing culture. This increases students' self-awareness and positions themselves as individuals and as part of a community. This is not self-evident,

instead it demands a conscious expansion of the cultural stock of narratives: In order to support inclusiveness and intercultural relations of all students, also the cultural narratives of minorities should be actively added in the prevailing cultural stock of narratives which is not static but always evolving as societies change and develop. This highlights the modes of *recognising* and *contextualising* narratives: cultural narratives are not universals, instead they are defined and interpreted in a certain historical time and place.

When students wish to position themselves as a part of community, as part of a shared cultural stock of narratives, the question of sense of belonging and *safe space* (Jackson, 2014) is raised. It has been seen as an important factor related to learning, and it is important to offer experiences where one is accepted regardless of one's cultural or religious background. Teacher and class together should seek ways to steer towards a culture where different identities and worldviews can be present without the fear of being viewed as ridiculous or neglected by other means. Narrative learning situations require openness and willingness to share thoughts and ideas a story has provoked and calls students to share their own experiences related to a story's theme. Participation in these situations demands safe space: According to teachers in this study, students were not willing to share their own ideas, not to mention their real-life experiences, if they did not feel safe enough and may have feared that their thoughts or experiences may be used against them later (Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2019). Thus, on the one hand, using narratives in the classroom can work as an indicator for safe space, and on the other hand can promote a safe learning atmosphere were dialogue, worldview and identity construction is possible.

When a cultural stock of narratives is viewed in the context of worldview education, there is a special stock of narratives present: cultural narratives provided by religions. It is worth noting that those narratives have a special status for religious communities. They represent something that communities have maintained and transferred from one generation to another but also transformed and re-interpreted in new contexts. Some of these narratives are considered 'sacred' in the community's or tradition's self-understanding. In the educational context, pedagogical use of sacred narratives demands knowledge about the position and role of sacred narratives in the community

if a teacher wishes to respect the tradition's history and value basis of a student's home. Results of this study show that when using sacred stories, the teacher must continually negotiate with the ideals of liberal education (see Halstead and Taylor, 1996) presented in the curriculum (NCCBE, 2014) such as using methods that emphasise children's empowerment and the self-understanding attached to the stories of religious communities which might limit pedagogical possibilities. Teachers actively negotiate between these ideals and take religious traditions' self-understanding into account in order to prevent insults to religious values and practices. Tensions in the use of religious narratives seem to relate to the specific nature of religious education as a subject since there seems to be norms that are not laid out in the curriculum and are instead arising from religious tradition. These norms are related to, for instance, the sacredness of characters in the narratives or iconoclastic ideals nurtured by community. This highlights the special nature of religious narratives containing an authoritative and 'holy' position in a community and emphasises the teacher's role to mediate between the pedagogical ideals and ideals of the traditions of a religious community (Keränen-Pantsu and Rissanen, 2018).

Cultural narratives, such as narratives of worldviews and religions, can work as a means for joining a certain tradition. For religious traditions these narratives are more than just cultural: they are held sacred and give answers to cosmological and ontological questions about the existence of the world, God and humankind. This also challenges teachers who must deal with multiple ontologies present in the classroom: for some, religious narratives represent deep existential and ontological beliefs and others might equate them with fairy tales. However, when religious narratives are used in school, it is worth noting that even though they belong to a certain tradition and might connect an individual to a certain community, this belonging should not be predefined as the aim of worldview education, nor is the role of education in general to promote membership in a certain (religious) community (Keränen-Pantsu, 2017). Instead, education should offer space for asking questions related to family and cultural background and how one positions her/himself in relation to it.

Besides *safe space* (Jackson, 2014) where different identities and worldviews are allowed, this kind of personal positioning towards cultural or religious

background requires *brave space*, space where traditional interpretation and meaning can be challenged and critically reflected upon (Iversen, 2019; Poulter, 2021). This kind of attitude towards cultural narratives should be further explored since teachers in this study seem to mostly lean on the traditional interpretations. Especially children with minority status are many times forced to negotiate between family tradition and the pressures of being the 'same' as the majority (Rissanen, 2014). Also, the traditional interpretations and background assumptions related to cultural narratives should be critically reflected upon. For example, certain religious narratives might have very limited roles for women and intolerant attitudes towards strangers (Pollefeyt and Bieringer, 2005). If one of the aims of worldview education is to promote one's own worldview and identity work, educators should encourage students to enter a reflective process of constructing one's life story and enable a brave space (Iversen, 2019; Poulter, 2021) where also traditional interpretations can be viewed critically.

## 6.4 Towards narrative reflectivity

The role of cultural narratives is still significant, as they define Western culture, way of life and value basis even if the rise of secularisation and increased diversity and pluralism has challenged it. Still, as stated Gadamer (2004), for example, the texts of Plato and the Christian Bible have had an enormous impact on the development of Europe. According to Gadamer, they have the 'historical effect' [*Wirkungsgeschichte*], which refers to the formative influence of history transferred through culture and language, influences an individual's thoughts and actions. According to Gadamer, all human understanding is historically affected and we can never make these effects completely transparent to ourselves. Although we can try to increase the awareness of these implicit impacts of cultural narratives through education and narrative learning.

Hidden assumptions related to cultural narratives come close to another important aspect of education, especially present in worldview education where different values and belief systems are explicitly present. Worldview

education can be also referred to as a 'reflection subject' since the kind of critical reflection towards hidden assumptions and evaluations Gadamer (2004) and Mezirow (2000) point out should occur in classes at the individual and societal level. This study sees narrativity as one of the promising theorisations for how human beings understand themselves and their place in the world (see Meretoja, 2014; Bruner, 1986, 1990; Ricoeur, 1992; McAdams, 1985, 1996) I suggest that educators responsible for worldview education should develop their abilities and capabilities to become more *'narrative-reflective'.* This means that teachers should be aware of the cultural narratives that define their pedagogical decision-making, and on a more fundamental level, the values and assumptions that they affiliate with the aim of education and good teaching and role of the student. This kind of reflectivity or learning by recognising stories (Clark and Rossiter, 2008) did not explicitly occur in the studies and was rather deduced. In addition, although teachers encourage students to reflect on their own life questions, the dimension of contextualising the autobiographical narratives of pupils (Goodson and Gill, 2011) seems not to be acknowledged by educators and requires greater emphasis (see Keränen-Pantsu and Heikkinen, 2019).

Thus, the conceptualisation of narrative learning and pedagogical use of cultural narratives calls for a *narrative-reflective educator,* in order for the teacher to understand the cultural stock of narratives one is surrounded by and to understand the meaning and impact of one's own narrative identity and life history has on values, practices and ideals they are convening and the importance of their attitudes and own example in educational settings (see also Mezirow, 2000). This also involves pupils' life stories, which should be able to be contextualised as part of a wider cultural stock of narratives and certain understanding of an individual's relationship to society (Goodson, 2013; Loseke, 2007). This kind of reflectivity should include also educational practices such as methods and materials used in education. This means critical examination of whether the material and teaching methods used open various possibilities for pupils to explore their identities or if the chosen material and pedagogical approaches aim toward a predefined and narrow understanding of certain identities, cultures and narratives. The latter approach might strengthen stereotypes, be blind to power structures and

support the status quo without understanding that it is evidently privileging some worldviews and ways of living as well as excluding others.

According to this study, in education there is a particular need for in-depth reflection on both a teacher's personal life history and professional identity as well as the structures of social reality which create model stories (see Haste and Abrahams, 2008; Loseke, 2007). These model stories represent the kind of thinking and way of living that is valued and desirable and how identity work and the co-existence of diverse worldviews in the school context is possible. Thus, the conceptualisation of modes of narrative learning should be complemented by adding the concept of reflectivity. Table 18 shows the completed model of narrative learning.

**Table 18.** The completed modes of narrative learning

| Mode of learning through narratives | In education | In worldview education |
|---|---|---|
| **Listening narratives** | Getting familiar with cultural narratives and model stories | Getting familiar with narratives of different religions and worldviews |
| | Getting familiar with 'cultural tools' | Getting familiar with 'cultural tools' provided by religions and worldviews<br>Develop narrative capital, ethical abilities and cultural and religious literacy |
| **Telling narratives** | Interpreting experiences, identity and society via cultural and personal narratives | Interpreting experiences, identity and society via personal and cultural narratives, especially those offered by different religions and worldviews |
| | Using 'cultural tools' | Using 'cultural tools' provided by religions and worldviews |
| **Recognising narratives** | Recognising that people, communities, societies and cultures are narratively constituted and positioned | Recognising that people, religious and other communities, societies and cultures are narratively constituted and positioned and understanding the influence of religious stock of narratives in it |

| Mode of learning through narratives | In education | In worldview education |
|---|---|---|
| **Contextualising narratives** | Understanding personal and cultural narratives as situated in a certain time and culture | Understanding personal and cultural and religious traditions in their historical and societal context. |
| **Reflecting narratives** | Reflecting one's life story, worldview and the surrounding cultural stock of narratives | Reflecting one's life story, worldview and the surrounding cultural stock of narratives |
| | Reflecting values, beliefs and implicit meanings related to one's personal and professional identity | Reflecting values, beliefs and implicit meanings related to one's personal and professional identity |
| | Reflecting pedagogical aims, structures, practices and materials | Reflecting pedagogical aims, structures, practices and materials in worldview education |

These dimensions described above are intertwined in many ways: listening, telling, recognising, contextualising and reflecting narratives often take place in reality in the same process. The breakdown of these dimensions is done only for analytical purposes, and it is essential to pay particular attention to the dimensions shown at the bottom of the table, especially reflection.

In the field of worldview education, Grimmit's (1987) three-fold model (learning religion, learning about religion and learning from religion, presented also in Article II (Keränen-Pantsu and Rissanen, 2018) has achieved strong support, though also some critique (Teece, 2010). According to this study, the narratives are seen mostly as *learning about* mode (knowledge and skills) as well as *learning from* mode (pondering of one's own worldview). However, it seems that religions in this model are kind of static dogmatic systems from which it is possible to learn basic knowledge and skills and whose intrinsic diversity often receives less attention. Likewise, less attention is paid to the fact that each society understands religions and worldviews in in a certain way, so perceptions are strongly context-bound and maintain certain types of power structures.

Making these structures and context-boundness visible is particularly important in worldview education in order to understand how all kinds of identities are not supported but are inevitably marginalised and 'forced' to create their own counter-narrative in order to maintain agency. Thus, If the pupils are not able, for some reason or another, to embrace the prevalent, valued master narrative, they must construct a counter-narrative (McAdams and McLean, 2013) to justify their existence in a current social group's micro- and macro level, such as a school class or Finnish society. Children come to school with their values, attitudes and worldviews and teachers should have awareness and readiness to handle and support different kinds of backgrounds and identities. As suggested in this study, narratives and narrative learning can offer versatile possibilities to achieve the task and further studies are needed in order to gain more understanding of these processes.

Returning to Grimmit's (1987) model, for aforementioned reasons this study suggests that in the prevailing model learning about and learning from, more emphasis should be paid to 'learning by reflecting narratives' which could complement the model into a more pluralistic and inclusive way. It emphasises that 'universals', metanarratives, (Lyotard, 1979) and shared cultural narratives are placed under reflection in order to understand the power relations and background assumptions involved and how these inevitably appear in teaching and determine what is permissible and desirable. This kind of critical reflection should be part of all learning situations, i. e. teacher and student (their background, position, and interaction), interpretations of curriculum, selected topics and perspectives, pedagogy and materials chosen. To emphasise reflective attitudes, teachers should favour learning methods and materials that allow different kinds of interpretations and meaning-makings instead of offering just one 'right' way to understand things. Narrative provides an excellent tool for this kind of approach, enabling reflective openness and polyphony.

In order to develop general education and worldview education, further studies are needed both at the policy level as well as practical level. Research where perspectives of reflectivity and narrative learning are present should include teacher education as well as practical approaches in school: practices, materials and methods in order to see the current situation and find out what

kind of new approaches are needed to promote cultural and societal justice. Perspectives of children and adolescents should also be investigated more widely: this study is just a start and different age groups, as well as different societal and cultural backgrounds, deserve more attention.

In addition, theoretical and philosophical studies are needed to further develop the ideas of narrative learning and its transformative aspects. Liberal education should foster equality, a person's self-development, autonomy, and freedom. These values are stated in policy documents, such as curriculum in its normativity. In Finnish education, especially in worldview education, one of the aims is to support personal identity work as a part of formal school education. It should be noted that any educational curriculum, especially that of worldview education, always carries some implicit values and beliefs that influence the development of the student's identity and character. It shapes the way students perceive the world, themselves, and their place in society. These implicit values and beliefs are embedded in curriculum design, including the choice of cultural narratives which are provided through worldview education. This is also a question of identity work since this study implicates that cultural narratives have a good potential to support the development of identities and worldviews.

However, the question of supporting identity work is not simple; rather, it leads us towards the pedagogical paradox introduced by Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) (Kant, 1923; see also Siljander 2005, 28–29). Kantian pedagogical paradox deals between the normativity of education and freedom and autonomy of the individual. How can predetermined education lead to an autonomous and free individual? In the context of this study, it would be interesting to investigate more deeply what kind of cultural narratives can support an individual's identity work towards freedom since the content of identity should not be predetermined nor seen as essentialist and static, but as a process where exploration of different roles and belief systems is a central part of growth and identity construction.

It is also worth noting that identity work is always done in a certain community, society, and culture. This invites us to explore in more detail how we should enrich the cultural stock of narratives in order to support, on the one hand, freedom of children to define themselves in relation to a prevailing

culture and society, and on the other hand, to promote commonly shared educational aims and values. These ideals and values are not static either, and because of that, Kant's ideas about the tension between reproduction and transformation of culture and society are also worth revisiting (see Uljens, 2007, 8-9) since this study implicates that cultural narrative has transformative potential, potential to challenge our view of life and way of life.

In order to critically evaluate cultural narratives of our time, reflective approach should be stressed. Reflectivity should make us see that the cultural narratives a person is part of or influenced by are those that shape our word: we see our world in the lens that cultural narratives offer us. In order to see how cultural narratives affect our lives, it is necessary to consider narrativity as one of the core elements for continuous identity work and learning. Both of these processes are central to humanity. However, we are facing a time where questions related to humans and humanity are not enough. We are living in the era of eco-crisis which demands us to see further, from human-centredness to planetary well-being and education (see Moilanen and Salonen, 2022). Eco-crisis challenges humankind to redefine its way of living and existing, to tell new kinds of cultural narratives about the core of humanity and meaningful life which is not based on consumerism, unfounded belief in continuous growth and progress or other unsustainable ways of living. All educators are now called to this mission: it is our duty to create education that enables sustainable cultural development for future generations and in this task, cultural narratives and narrative learning has a lot to offer. Change the narrative, change the future.

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# APPENDICES

**Appendix 1** Semi-structured theme interview of teachers

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- Name
- Age
- Gender
- Years of teaching

NARRATIVE PEDAGOGY

My relationship to narratives

- How do you define your own relationship to narratives? (Own life/teaching)
- Why do you think I chose to interview you about this topic?
- What kind of stories have been important to you?

Use of narratives

- What kind of topics do you think the stories are suitable for?
- Why do you choose the narration for these themes?
- What does the use of stories support in students?
- What kinds of skills does the use of stories develop in students?
- What does the use of narratives require from the student?
- What does the use of narratives require from the whole class?
- What does the use of narratives require from the teacher?

The content of the narratives

- What kinds of stories are best suited for narration?
- What kinds of stories are best suited for a religion lesson?
- How do you use Bible stories/Quran and Hadith in your teaching?
- How do you further work on the stories?

The relevance of narratives

- Why do you use stories in your own teaching?
- What kinds of narratives are meaningful to the student?
- What kind of narratives are especially relevant in a religion class?
- How can students' reflections on life issues be supported?
- How can the stories be linked to the students' own lives?

- How can stories be used to develop students' emotional skills?
- What do you think is the significance of the stories in terms of society?

**Appendix 2** Semi-structured theme interview of students

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

- Name

- Age

- Gender

STORY PROCESSED IN THE RELIGION LESSON

Content of the narrative

- Tell in your own words what you remember from the story (you can use pictures to help).

- What do you think was the most interesting part of the story? Why?

- Did you find any of the people interesting? Why? How would it feel to be that person?

- This story was related to Easter. How do you celebrate Easter at home? Does this story relate to your way of celebrating in any way?

Contexts of narrative telling

- Why was the story told in religion class?

- When you talked in class after the narration, did you get any insights from other people's comments?

- Where else could this story be told? What things would we talk about then?

- Were you familiar with the story in advance? Where had you heard the story before?

- This story is also sometimes used in the church service. Do you think the story is suitable for a church service? Why/why not?

The meaning of the narrative and emotional skills

- What kind of thoughts did the story evoke in you? Why/what made you think these things?

- What thoughts did you have from the discussion after the story?

- What were the feelings in the story? (you can use emotion cards to help)

- Do you recognise situations where you have felt these feelings? Tell me a situation.

- Did you find familiar everyday things in the story? Describe or give an example.

- What was the most important thing in the story? Why? (Reasons for the survey) Are any of these things the most important? Why?

- What was most important to you in the story? Why?

NARRATIVES OF RELIGION LESSONS

General attitude towards narratives

- Have you heard many stories? What kind of stories have you heard? Do you like stories?

- Do you like to create stories yourself, e.g., by writing, drawing or using electronic devices?

- Do you like to tell stories, for example what has happened to you or what you have seen happening around you?

- If I ask you to tell a story that is important to you, what would you tell?

The content of the narratives

- What kind of stories do you remember hearing in religion classes? What are the stories about?

- Do you remember any work that was related to the stories? What was it like?

- Is there anything in common in the stories? What? How do they differ from other stories you've heard?

-Are the stories in the religion lessons familiar to you? Where have you heard the stories?

- Do you read stories about people from the Bible, such as Moses or Jesus? Do you reflect on stories or their lessons in your own everyday life? How?

The importance of narratives

- Why are stories discussed in religion classes? (Reasons for the survey answers)

- Did the stories in the religion lessons really happen?

- Do you like the stories in religion lessons? (Reasons for the survey answers)

- How do you feel when you listen to the stories told in religion class? (what kind of things do you think about, do some feelings arise?) Do these thoughts and feelings differ from what you experience when listening to other stories? How?

- I have heard that there is a message/meaning behind the stories. What do you think that means?

- Are there such meanings in the stories from the religion classes? Why/what? Are the meanings important to you? How? Do the stories you hear affect your daily activities?

- Is there a story from the religion lessons that you particularly remember? What narrative, and in what way does it feel important or meaningful to you?

- Was there something special in the story of yesterday's religion lesson that is not in the other stories?

FINALLY

- Is there anything else you would like to tell me about?

- How did this interview feel?

**Appendix 3**: Research permission (in Finnish)

Raili Keränen-Pantsu
[redacted]
railike@student.uef.fi

TUTKIMUSLUPA-ANOMUS

9.3.2016

TUTKIMUSLUPA-ANOMUS

Olen väitöskirjatutkija Itä-Suomen yliopistosta filosofisesta tiedekunnasta. Teen kertomusten käyttöön liittyvää väitöskirjatutkimusta, jossa olen kiinnostunut opettajien tavasta käyttää kertomuksia sekä oppilaiden näihin kertomuksiin liittyvistä merkityksenannoista osana katsomusopetusta. [redacted]. Olen ollut yhteydessä koulunne opettajaan [redacted] ja sopinut hänen kanssaan asiasta. Pyydänkin tutkimuslupaa aineistonkeruuni toteuttamiseen koulunne [redacted]-luokan [redacted] opetusryhmässä.

Tarkoituksenani olisi havainnoida [redacted] Oppitunti olisi tarkoitus osittain myös videoida, mutta niin etteivät oppilaat näy videolla, ainoastaan kerrontamateriaalit ja opettaja. Videomateriaalia voidaan käyttää soveltuvin osin myös koulutustarkoituksiin. Oppitunnin jälkeen tutkimukseen osallistuvat oppilaat täyttäisivät kyselylomakkeen oppituntiin ja uskonnonopetuksen kertomuksiin liittyen. Kyselylomakkeiden pohjalta valitsisin vielä 4-5 oppilasta [redacted]2016 koulupäivän aikana järjestettäviin haastatteluihin, joissa käsittelisin uskonnonopetuksen kertomuksia ja niiden merkityksiä lapselle. Tästä lähtee vielä erillinen kirje oppilaiden vanhempien koteihin, jolloin huoltajilla on vielä mahdollisuus kieltäytyä lapsensa haastattelusta.

Väitöstutkimustani ohjaa Itä-Suomen yliopistossa uskonnonpedagogiikan professori Martin Ubani. Aineistoa tulemme käsittelemään luottamuksellisesti niin, ettei koulu, oppilas tai oppilaan vastaus ole tunnistettavissa. Tutkimuksemme toteutamme hyvän tieteellisen käytännön mukaisesti, tutkimuseettisen neuvottelukunnan ohjeita noudattaen. [redacted] ja riippuen tutkimuksen julkaisutavasta lähetän sen mielelläni myös Teille luettavaksi.

Ystävällisin terveisin,

*Raili Keränen-Pantsu*

Liite 1. Tutkimussuunnitelma

**Appendix 4**: Letter to the guardians of the pupils: (in Finnish)

Hei! [redacted].2016

Olen opettajataustainen tohtorikoulutettava Itä-Suomen yliopistosta Joensuun kampukselta. Teen kertomuksiin ja kerrontaan liittyvää väitöskirjatutkimusta, jossa olen kiinnostunut katsomusopetukseen liittyvistä kertomuksista ja neljäsluokkalaisten oppilaiden niille antamista merkityksistä ja merkitykseen yhteydessä olevista tekijöistä.

Tarkoituksenani on kerätä osa väitöstutkimukseni aineistosta havainnoimalla neljännen luokan [redacted] Tunnista olisi tarkoitus myös videoida osa, mutta niin että vain opettaja ja opetusmateriaalit näkyvät. Oppitunnin jälkeen tutkimuksessa mukana olevat oppilaat täyttävät kyselylomakkeen oppituntiin ja uskonnonopetuksen kertomuksiin liittyen. Kyselylomakkeen täyttäminen vie oppitunnin jälkeen 10–15 minuuttia, toivoisin kuitenkin mahdollisimman monen oppilaan jäävän täyttämään lomakkeen. Tämän jälkeen haastattelen vielä muutamaa oppilasta tarkemmin. Haastattelut järjestetään [redacted].2016 koulupäivän aikana. Haastatteluihin valitsen oppilaan haastatteluun suostuneiden joukosta, kyselylomakkeiden pohjalta.

Saatua aineistoa tullaan käyttämään sekä omassa väitöstutkimuksessani että työtäni ohjaavan professorin Martin Ubanin omassa tutkimuksessa. Kerättyä aineistoa käsitellään luottamuksellisesti, eikä koulu, oppilas tai oppilaan vastaus nouse esille niin, että vastaaja olisi tunnistettavissa. Väitöstutkimukseni toteutumisen kannalta olisi erittäin tärkeää, että saisin mukaan aineistooni mahdollisimman monen oppilaan vastaukset. Toivon, että täytätte alla olevan tutkimuslupaosan yhdessä lapsenne kanssa, ja että oppilas palauttaa sen kouluun omalle luokanopettajalle viimeistään [redacted]

Ystävällisin terveisin,

*Raili Keränen-Pantsu*
Kasvatustieteen tohtoriohjelma
Filosofinen tiedekunta
Itä-Suomen yliopisto

---

Oppilaan nimi:_____

Saako oppilas osallistua kyselyaineiston keräämiseen? ☐ KYLLÄ ☐ EI

Saako oppilas osallistua haastatteluaineiston keräämiseen? ☐ KYLLÄ ☐ EI

Huoltajan allekirjoitus:_____

# ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

**ARTICLE I**

Keränen-Pantsu, R. and Ubani, M. (2018): The holistic and spiritual relevance of Bible stories among Finnish 10-year-old pupils: a classroom case study, International Journal of Children's Spirituality, DOI: 10.1080/1364436X.2018.1449736

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**ARTICLE II**

Keränen-Pantsu, R. and Rissanen, I (2018). What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives? Perspectives from Finnish Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education, Journal of Beliefs & Values, DOI:10.1080/13617672.2018.1450804]

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**ARTICLE III**

Keränen-Pantsu, R. and Heikkinen, H. (2019). Pedagogical Purposes of Narratives in Worldview Education: Teachers' Conceptions. International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research, 18(5),58-72.

[Open access]

## ARTICLE I

Keränen-Pantsu, R. and Ubani, M. (2018): The holistic and spiritual relevance of Bible stories among Finnish 10-year-old pupils: a classroom case study, International Journal of Children's Spirituality, DOI: 10.1080/1364436X.2018.1449736

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# The holistic and spiritual relevance of Bible stories among Finnish 10-year-old pupils. A classroom case study.

Raili Keränen-Pantsu and Martin Ubani

**Abstract**

In this article, we explore what kind of relevance Bible stories have on 10-year-old pupils in religious education lessons. The data was gathered in Lutheran RE lessons in Finland. The Bible stories were told by using special storytelling methods, Godly Play and Religious Pedagogic Practice. The study used stimulated recall method interviews to study the reflections the students (N=9) had during two lessons. The data was analysed with deductive content analysis. The study showed that different forms of holistic relevance could be identified in the recollections of the students. The most common forms of relevance were emotional, moral and religious relevance. The study indicates that different kinds of stories emphasise different kinds of relevance. In addition, while there were some similar features in the relevance of the stories among the students, there were also differences between the students. In the end, the implications of this study teacher education and classroom learning are discussed.

Keywords: Bible, storytelling, holistic learning, spirituality, religious education

**The holistic and spiritual relevance of Bible stories among Finnish 10-year-old pupils. A classroom case study.**

## Introduction

In this study, we investigate what kind of relevance the teaching of Bible stories have to pupils in Lutheran religious education. In many countries, the Bible and its stories remain as one of the integral sources and contents in religious education (Schreiner, Kraft, and Wright 2007). There is also a fairly recent body of literature focusing on children and youth's reception of the Bible and its stories (Ipgrave 2013; Worsley 2013; Kammeyer 2014). Such research includes studies on young peoples' responses on New Testament passages (Loman and Francis 2006), studies on theological beliefs while using the Bible as a stimulus (Freathy and Aylward 2010), reflecting biographical narratives to Bible stories (Kammeyer 2014) and reports on the (negative) attitudes of the students to the Bible (Copley et al. 2001). However, already since the 1960s, many authors have explicitly recognised the challenge of the significance not only of religious education but of Bible stories especially (Loukes 1961; Grimmitt 1978; Hull 2002; Ubani 2013a; Conroy et al. 2013; Keränen-Pantsu 2017; Korkeakoski and Ubani 2017).

Recent years have also witnessed a steady interest in classroom learning and processing in religious education. Concerning spirituality, these studies have focused on students' reflections after the instruction on the lesson, such as Ikonen and Ubani's (2014) study on upper secondary students' spiritual sensitivity (Hay 1998) in the classroom, Ng's (2012) research on the merits of using methods that foster spiritual sensitivity and Sewell's (2009) study described the role of relationships in fostering spiritual development among 7-9 year old children. However, with the present study, we wish to get closer to the actual learning situation and processing among students with a research method called stimulated recall (Nguyen and Tangen 2016). The research method uses material from the lessons to enhance the recollection among the students of the implementation of two different methods of Biblical storytelling in the Anglosphere and Germany: Godly Play and Religion Pedagogic praxis (Berryman 2002; Kett 2015). Both methods promote holistic and experiential learning and reflection.

With this study, we wish to contribute to the discussion concerning spiritual development in the public education classrooms by showing the diversity of reflections and significance potentially

present in the learning situation focusing on Bible stories. This is done by presenting examples on how affective, social, moral and especially spiritual domains are present in the students' recollections of the lesson, i.e. how the relevance of the instruction varies. Therefore, in this article, "relevance" is used simply to denote something being meaningful and significant to the person in a manner that it can be traced back to the basic domains of humanity (Hull 2002). The research question of the article is: What kind of relevance do the Biblical stories have for the 10-year-old pupils?

**The Bible in Finnish religious education today**

Finland has a 'weak confessional' (Ubani 2007; Ubani and Tirri 2014) model of religious education: the students are segregated into 11 different RE lessons or in Ethics instruction based on the home religious affiliation. Concretely, 'weak confessional' means that while the principle content of instruction and the basis of the students' segregation is grounded on the respective religious tradition; the objectives do not include catechetical "learning religion" aims and that devotional elements are restricted from instruction (NCCBE 2014; Ubani and Tirri 2014). However, the rapid de-lutheranisation of religious demographics during the past decade, the previous research and surveys on the decrease in Christian religiousness and more negative or distant attitudes towards institutional religion in the homes, children and youth (Helve 2006) question the relevance of the current instruction in religious education.

In the literature (Kallioniemi and Ubani 2016), the Finnish RE has been characterised as being based on integrative practice by including diverse methods and sources, intimate interaction with small groups, developing critical thinking and argumentation skills as well as holistic knowledge where various means and sources for the outlook on life are recognised. The Finnish basic education aims to promote the development of the whole child (NCCBE 2014). In the current curriculum of RE in Finland (2014), 'The task of instruction of religion is to provide the pupils with extensive general knowledge and ability regarding religion and worldviews.' (NCCBE 2014, 264). The instruction in RE also includes contents related to religious literature and sacred texts, wherein one of the objectives is: 'to guide the pupil to get acquainted with the holy books and legends of the religion he or she studies and its key dogmas' (NCCBE 2014, 265).

In Lutheran RE, the contents related to the Bible are to some extent distributed in all the three content areas of the curriculum (C1-C3). In *Relationship to one's own religion* (C1) pupils are familiarised with the religion they are studying. Bible stories in this content area serve as a religious common knowledge, e.g. the connection of Jesus' life and Cristian festivals and cultural and societal significance of Bible. In the *world of religions* (C2), the pupils are familiarised with different religions and worldviews. The purpose of stories in this content area is to develop generic religious literacy and to understand, for example, the Biblical rhetoric used in politics. Topics related to ethical thinking and life questions are handled in the content area *Good life* (C3). There, Bible stories are connected to ethical thinking and children's everyday life, emotional skills and empathy (NCCBE 2014).

**Holistic relevance of the instruction in RE**

Since the early 1990s, the interest in pupils' orientation towards instruction has increased in generic education research (Boekaerts et al. 2001). In general, scholars have maintained that education is more than 'just' the acquisition of useful skills but rather like an initiation into a range of forms of knowledge and understanding to the end of a meaningfully connected and unified perspective on the human experience (Carr 2007). Thus, generic educational research has increasingly acknowledged the presence of diverse goals among students in the same classroom (Boekaerts et al. 2001; see Ubani 2013a). Regardless, such research has often concentrated on academic goals, learning strategies and self-regulatory mechanisms but neglected 'non-academic' aspirations, such as the social and well-being goals of the students.

In educational literature, *holistic learning* and *holistic education* are common expressions (see e.g. Preston 2012; Sagberg 2015). Arguably Smuts (1929/1987) first used the term 'holism', with which he referred to the natural mechanism of the universe. In his explanation about holism, he points out that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and the individual pieces of any entity cannot exist or be fully understood unless each of the pieces are related to the functioning of the entire structure (see Sagberg 2015).

Holistic education can be viewed as a movement which 'intellectual precedents' includes 'a mixture of disciplines involving philosophy, education, psychology, and theology' (Forbes and Martin 2004). The common denominator for the holistic education movement is, for instance, the sharing

of a criticism on a reductionist, fragmented or mechanistic view of humanity in as presented in behaviouristic or cognitive learning theories (Forbes and Martin 2004), and the recognition of affective, social and experiential elements in learning. Holistic education and humanistic education draws from the similar humanistic philosophical roots that emphasise child-centeredness and reformist pedagogy. However, one way to distinguish between humanistic education and holistic education is that the latter also recognises spirituality in its outlook on human and personality development (Miller 2005).

In schools, one of the integral tenets of holistic learning is moving away from specialised subject content to a "curriculum of connections" (Miller 2006), where parts of knowledge are connected to each other. Holistic education promotes the importance of teaching the whole child, which is much more than academic curriculum or goal; it is about to step to a path of knowing, experiencing and learning (Miller 2005; 2006). Similarly, Forbes (2003, 3) has described how holistic education addresses the wider development of people at the cognitive and affective levels. Therefore, the aim of holistic education is to help students to accomplish their fullest capacities and enable people to develop to be the very best they can be as human beings. Here, students are seen as active, critical and actively involved in learning situations and who have a vision of themselves as part of changing world and multiple communities they are part of. Consequently, holistic education is concerned with the many basic sources of meaning and seeks to reconnect the person to the contexts within which meaning arises (Miller 2005).

In this study, we use the holistic domains (Hull 2002; Miller 2006; Ubani 2013b) for identifying the different ways instruction can be relevant for the pupils. These domains can be termed affective, psychological, cultural, cognitive (mental), social, moral along with spiritual. In humanity, these domains are overlapping and sometimes hard to distinguish from each other (Hull 2002). Nevertheless, the use of them as an analytical research tool can facilitate discerning the diverse experiences among students concerning the very same lessons. In this study

- *affective relevance* refers to a situation where the content in the study arouses a heightened sense of emotions and may affect what is considered as the mood of the participant. This relevance also includes the feeling of empathy towards the characters to the story,
- *psychological relevance* denotes the persons' well-being, self-conception and self-esteem. Different forms of self-understanding can be seen as a part of this relevance,

- *cultural relevance* refers to the instruction that gives the student cultural literacy and enables to recognise different aspects of cultural life. For instance, art education or cultural celebrations would be an example of such content.
- In *cognitive relevance,* students feel that the content is interesting and relevant information and skills. Here, the content is connected to the knowledge structures of the learner in a way that it contributes in the existing knowledge and skills of the pupil.
- When the instruction has *social relevance,* the pupil feels connected to a certain group during the lesson. This sense of membership can, for instance, be with the classmates in the lesson but also other groups, such as religious, ethnic or national group or gender.
- *Moral relevance* means that the pupil has an experience of getting supervision, for instance, for life choices, relationships and behaviour, and concerning good and evil in life.
- *Physical relevance* denotes bodily-kinesthetic actions and awareness of the body during the lesson.

The next form of relevance is a group of three. According to the prevalent categorisations in holistic education (Hull 2002), the spiritual domain would be the basis for the next form of relevance. However, in order to make the analysis more discerning, we distinguish in *spiritual relevance* between religious, non-religious spiritual and existential relevance. In this study

- the *religious relevance* consists of meanings referring explicitly to Christianity such as the thoughts about (Christian) God, doctrine, devotional life and teaching.
- In contrast, *non-religious spiritual relevance* emphasises the human experiential aspects related to transcendence and the experience of 'more' (Hay, 1998) in the lesson without a direct reference to institutional religion or God.
- The *existential relevance* is connected to the meaning of life, cosmic and perennial questions.

**Data and analysis**

The study was conducted in two Finnish Lutheran RE lessons in a primary school located in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. The lessons were given to the same class of students (9-10 years of age) in December 2015 and March 2016. Consent was obtained from the guardians and pupils. The lessons (2x45 min) were photographed and video-recorded. In the next two days after the lessons, 9

students (4 girls and 5 boys) were interviewed with the stimulated recall method (Nguyen and Tangen, 2016). The participating students were selected based on their written description of their experiences of the stories so that students with most reflections were chosen. In addition, it was secured that different students would be selected from the two lessons. In these interviews photos and short periods of video were used as stimuli for recalling the experiences, thoughts and reflections that the stories had aroused during the lessons. The purpose of the use of this method was that the recollections of the pupils of the lesson would be as fresh as possible. The material was selected so that a chronological succession of key moments of storytelling situation was achieved.

The first lesson was about the parable of the Prodigal son (Table 1). The storytelling method used was based on Jerome Berryman's (2002) Godly play. The idea in Godly play is to learn and play with Cristian language and give the pupil room to wonder together about the themes of stories (ibid.). However, this parable has not been published via Godly play foundation. Therefore, in this case, the teacher created a storytelling session which followed a Godly play session and used Godly play material; the pupils sat in a circle, the teacher told the story and asked the wondering questions, like what was their favourite part of the story.

Table 1: Content and material used in the lessons.

| **Name of story** | **Content** | **Materials** |
|---|---|---|
| **Prodigal son**<br>Luke 15: 11-31 | The father has two sons; the younger one asks for his share of the heritage and leaves and the older one stays with the father to take care their farm. The younger son ends up spending all his money and wants to return to his family. The father welcomes the son back home. This causes tensions in the relationship between the father and his older son. | Godly play material from the story of 'good Samaritan' e.g. wooden figures, fabric and some tree-dimensional items, such as goblet and a toy animal. |
| **Easter story**<br>Matthew 26-28<br>Luke 22-24<br>John 18-20<br>Mark 14-16 | This story focuses on the occurrences of Easter; the last supper with the disciples, the crucifixion of Jesus on the Good Friday and the Resurrection. | Material typical to Religion Pedagogic Practice: fabrics of different colours and material from nature, such as stones, flowers and sticks. |

The topic of the second lesson was the Easter story (see Table 1). The method used was Religion Pedagogic Practice (RPP - Religionspädagogische Praxis), as developed by Franz Kett and Ester

Kaufmann in Germany in the 1970s. The RPP method promotes holistic and meaning-oriented religious education. According to Kett (2015), the instruction forms the heart, hand and mind alike and helps creating opinions and attitudes in relation to religion. These are considered conductive to finding sense and allowing religious questions as well as experiences and interpretations (Kett 2015). In this lesson, the story of Easter was told together with the students. The pupils sat in a circle and the teacher led the pupils to the theme. A collage which consisted of fabrics and material from nature, such as flowers and stones, was built piece by piece by the pupils as the story progressed. The material served as a symbol of the different aspects of the story, e.g. the stones symbolised the emotions that Jesus had. Pupils were also encouraged to empathise with the story and share their thoughts.

After both lessons, four (lesson 1) and five (lesson 2) students were interviewed. All the interviews were transcribed. The analysis of the data was done with deductive content analysis (see e.g. Elo and Kyngäs 2008); the analysis used the previously mentioned different forms of holistic relevance of instruction as a tool for identifying the respective forms of relevance. The holistic framework was used to identify and distinguish different aspects of pupils' experiences. In the report, pseudonyms are used in describing each of the students. The report of the results begins with an overview of the results and then proceeds to describing how each form of relevance was present in the data.

## Results

### *General overview of the forms of relevance*

In the data, a rich variety of different forms of relevance were identified. In table 2, the frequency of different forms of relevance is listed. The table is coded so that one pupil's response to an individual question could consist of different types of relevance, but each type of relevance was counted only once. Therefore, the table gives an overall indication of how the different types of relevance were emphasised by each of the students, but the type of data does not give a possibility for a further comparison of frequencies between the students.

Table 2: The frequency of statements concerning each type of relevance per interview question after both lessons.

Lesson 1: The parable of Prodigal son.

| Name | Affective relevance | Cognitive relevance | Moral relevance | Spiritual relevance | | | Psychological relevance | Social relevance | Cultural relevance | Physical relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Existential relevance | Religious relevance | Non-religious spiritual relevance | | | | |
| Jim | 5 | 4 | 8 | - | 7 | - | 4 | - | - | - |
| Ben | 11 | 1 | 23 | 1 | 10 | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Mary | 15 | 2 | 14 | 2 | 4 | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Tina | 7 | 6 | 10 | 4 | 10 | - | 2 | - | - | - |
| Total | 38 | 13 | 55 | 7 | 31 | - | 10 | - | - | - |

Lesson 2: The Easter story.

| Name | Affective relevance | Cognitive relevance | Moral relevance | Spiritual relevance | | | Psychological relevance | Social relevance | Cultural relevance | Physical relevance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | Existential relevance | Religious relevance | Non-religious spiritual relevance | | | | |
| John | 14 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 4 | - | 5 | - | 2 | - |
| Tom | 17 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 6 | - | 3 | - | 4 | - |
| Jake | 7 | 6 | 1 | 5 | 2 | - | 2 | - | 3 | - |
| Megan | 7 | 7 | 5 | 8 | 5 | - | 2 | - | 3 | - |
| Carol | 15 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 7 | - | - | - | 3 | - |
| Total | 60 | 31 | 26 | 30 | 24 | - | 12 | - | 15 | - |

The most common forms of relevance in the pupils' reflections were affective (*f1* = 38; *f2* = 60) moral (*f1* = 55; *f2* = 26*)* and religious relevance (*f1* = 31*; f2* = 24). In fact, reflection referring to affective relevance was quite common in both stories used, but this was especially so in the Easter story. The method used in that lesson, RPP guides the students to empathise with the perspective of Jesus: this may explain the regularity of this relevance when contrasted to other forms of relevance in the individual recollections of the pupils. On the other hand, the Parable of the Prodigal son seemed to have moral relevance to the students. This could relate to the ethical content of the parable such as the forgiveness of the father and the position of the older brother in the story. In general, more instances of relevance concerning the Easter story than the Parable of Prodigal son could be identified from the recollections of the students. However, the former story also lasted longer than the latter and included many story blocks such as last supper, arrest, crucifixion of Jesus

and the resurrection, whereas the prodigal son contained only one shorter story. Finally, the emphases on different forms of relevance and the amount of relevance of the stories seemed to differ on an individual basis rather than based on gender (table 2).

***The holistic relevance of the Bible stories to the students***

The first form of relevance that was identified in the recollections of the students was called **affective relevance** (*f1* = 38; *f2* = 60). In the interviews, affective relevance was shown when the students talked about the feelings of the characters of the story. Sometimes they also linked these feelings to their own life by describing situations when they have felt the same as the protagonists. In the interviews, the students also described how storytelling in RE in general touched their feelings. Most of the students also told that they liked stories and enjoyed hearing them in lessons. They also described how they strongly empathised with the story:

So, if the story is very gloomy, then you yourself are also feeling sad. And if the story is happy, then you also feel more joyful. (Carol)

There was some difference within this form of relevance between the stories. In the Parable of the Prodigal son, most of the emotions that the students described concentrated on the feelings of the main characters and especially on gladness and envy:

(…) so that the (older) brother should be happy that his little brother came, but instead he was jealous. (Mary)

However, when the students reflected on the lesson focusing on the Easter story, most of the recollections that were identified as showing affective relevance referred to the experiences of confusion, sadness and a sense of oppression. In the recollections, references to sad emotions were more common than feelings of joy and happiness, regardless of the reminiscing, the resurrection of Jesus among all the interviewed students. Most of the students empathised with the feelings of Jesus or Mary the mother of Jesus:

He (Jesus) felt bad and then thoughtful as to why God is doing this and probably sad. (Jake)

During the lesson about the Easter story, the class was talking about the feelings of Jesus before the crucifixion. At that moment, one boy got very emotional and asked the teacher to continue the story as he was feeling 'too sad.' Later on, the teacher said that this particular student had had very difficult life situations and that it could explain the strong impact the story had on him.

The interviews implied that the religious stories had relatively common **moral relevance** (*f1* = 55; *f2* = 26) to the students. All the pupils described how the stories used in RE have some kind of message or lesson that is intended to guide them on how to live a good life. In general, the students described that the stories in RE were special when compared to stories in other subjects because there was always a moral in the RE stories. In the analysis, moral relevance was quite often identified in reflections concerning the parable of the Prodigal son (*f1* = 55). However, the reflections seemed quite superficial as the pupils described that the moral of the story was "don't waste your money", "don't be lazy", "don't ask for your inheritance before your father is dead" or "don't bribe your friends". Some of students also told that the moral lesson was "don't be jealous" referring to the older brother of the prodigal son. None but one of the students had thought that the story was a description of God and his mercy. One student mentioned forgiveness as the moral of the story and reflected it on his own choices in life:

So if your sister is behaving badly and you get annoyed, you should still forgive even though you hate it so much. (Ben)

Interestingly, sometimes the question of mercy was incomprehensive to the students as it conflicted with their natural sense of justice. One student tried to overcome this conflict by thinking about an alternative ending to the story:

They arranged a party for the son when he returned and after that his father became angry with him and said something to him. (Tom)

The moral relevance was quite often connected with religious reflection. During the Easter story, the students had pondered about the unjust conviction of Jesus and the betrayal by his friend. Some of the students seemed to also justify the betrayal as it was seen as a part of "God's plan" and, therefore, 'good':

He (God) planned the whole thing…the death of Jesus, so that Judas did it… (Jake).

The pupils described a lot of issues referring to **cognitive relevance** (*f1* = 13*; f2*= 31) of the stories. It could be that this form of relevance was heightened by the research method as the pictures and video arguably helped the pupils to recall the plot of the story, different characters, milieu and interaction between the characters. When they were interviewed, the students were able to remember the story well. However, the analysis was not able to identify a deep reflection on the character and form of the story in the recollections of the students that did not represent other forms of relevance.

The following four forms of relevance were less common in the reflections of the students than the previous ones. The **psychological relevance** could be identified in the recollections of the students concerning both stories (*f1* = 10*; f2* = 12). The stories seemed to have psychological relevance when the students were pondering about themselves and their personal approach, including their likings and disliking, on the themes of the story. Among some students, the psychological relevance was also connected with reflections on what they would have done if they had been in the same situation as the main characters. Some of the students also remembered situations which had been like situations in stories they were studying. One student described how one image in the lesson had reminded a pupil of how the fire department had come and broke down the door in an emergency situation: 'It was basically like rolling the stone on Jesus' tomb!' (John).

The Easter story seemed to have had some **cultural relevance** for the pupils (*f2* = 15). This form of relevance could be identified in the recollections when the students were talking in the lessons about Easter and why and how it was celebrated in school and in their families. This form of relevance could not be identified in the data concerning the Parable of the prodigal son. **Social relevance** did not seem to play an integral role in this data: for instance, the students did not mention having any sense of belonging during the lessons. Some social aspect could be identified when the students were talking about the stories they had heard in church during their visits there with their family or with their class. Maybe if the teacher would have led the conversation more to the celebration of Easter in family or a global context more convincing references to social relevance could have been identified. Regardless, the fact that the atmosphere in the classroom seemed very intimate and that the students seemed to have a close and trustful relationship with each other and the teacher all implies some form of social relevance and belonging in the lesson. **Physical relevance** was not easily identifiable in the recollections of the students even as both

lessons used concrete materials and tasks that required physical involvement. For instance, the students had a chance to bring some stones or flowers into the collage. However, some reference to this form of relevance could be in the recollections of how concrete material in RPP had helped some of the students to follow the characters' feelings: they had been discussing the deep and sad feelings of Jesus at the same time when they had had a quite heavy rock in their hand.

***Spiritual relevance of the Bible stories***

As was stated earlier, we distinguished between religious, non-religious spiritual and existential relevance in this study. Based on the analysis, it was to some extent possible to identify these forms of relevance from the students' reflections during the lesson. However, it must be admitted that quite often there was a strong overlap between these forms of relevance.

The Bible stories seemed have a quite clear **religious relevance** to the pupils (*f1* = 31; *f2* = 24). It is understandable as the concepts in the Easter story refer explicitly to the Christian message and the students are quite likely used to the traditional Christian interpretation of the story of the Prodigal son as a story of forgiveness. The tone of religious relevance in the two lessons seemed to be connected to the different features of the stories. Concerning the story of the Prodigal son, pupils were reflecting about the truth claims and meaning of the Bible stories, in general:

If no one told these stories, no one could believe that these things exist because he or she hasn't heard about Jesus or God. And in the RE lessons, talking about the Bible is like being a part of that thing. (Tina)

On the other hand, an integral characteristic of religious relevance concerning the Easter story among the students was the interpretation of the events as an implementation of God's plan and providence. The students who were interviewed seemed to have elaborated the topics even further than most immediate meanings. All five of the interviewed students connected the sacrifice of Jesus and the reconciliation of the sins with God's plan. One of them described how the resurrection enabled eternal life without infirmities:

God's plan is that all the people are not dying, or if there are sick people, they will heal. (Tom)

In the recollections of the students, **existential relevance** was often connected with religious relevance. In fact, most of the existential reflection was done during the lesson with the Easter story

(*f2* = 26). There, the students pondered about the meaning and rationale of the incidents regarding life in general and to themselves. For instance, the students were reflecting on God's plan to save the world and on the kind of sacrifice God had to make. To the students, God had seemed very human-like. Students had also pondered on the meaning of Jesus rising from the dead. One student described her feelings almost poetically:

It was like a day of a new beginning when Jesus rose from the dead. (Megan)

The final type of spiritual relevance that was examined from the interviews was called **non-religious spiritual relevance.** The analysis showed that this form of relevance did not exist as a separate form of relevance in the recollections of the students. It seemed that the prevalent reflection on the topics was either religious or existential: even generic descriptions of experiences during the lessons were conceptualised in a Christian framework or in relation to meaning and purpose.

**Discussion**

In this article, we explored what kind of relevance Bible stories have to 10-year-old pupils in religious education lessons. The study showed that to some extent all aspect of holistic development could be identified in the recollections of the students. In addition, the study seems to indicate that different kinds of stories seem to emphasise different kinds of relevance. Finally, the study seems to imply that while there were some similar features in the relevance of the stories among the students, there were also differences between the students. It is possible that the differences among the students relate - to some extent - to the individual spiritual development trajectories among the children. For instance, based on Hunt (1972), Loman and Francis (2006) studied three kinds of modes concerning the interpretation of Biblical stories: the literal, symbolic and rejecting with a large sample. Among other things, they noticed that during the years 11-14 there seemed to be shifting from the literal acceptance mode to either the rejection mode or to the symbolic acceptance mode. If applicable, these students are on the verge of an age wherein they will have a stricter differentiation concerning the Bible than indicated by this study.

In a thorough study by Sagberg (2015, 19) on holistic religious education, the key question is stated as: 'In what ways can children be supported in their process of meaning-making when this process includes religion?' As described, our results show that Bible stories can be meaningful for the

pupils, albeit not solely in a manner, i.e. religious learning, that has been expected, strived for or worried about by 'some professionals' (see Ipgrave 2013). Pollefeyt and Bieringer (2005) claim that the gap between biblical culture and contemporary culture is widening so that the relevance of the Bible is put into a question when talking about modern-day Religious Education. Based on this study, it seems that Bible stories can still convey narratives strong enough to affect the children and to be relevant to them personally. It also implies that the spiritual significance is something that cannot be forced on the pupils (Ubani 2013a). On the other hand, this study seems to highlight the prevalence of the religious interpretation of Bible stories and the seemingly little non-religious spiritual relevance of the stories. The prevalence of the religious interpretation cannot be interpreted as a direct indication of the pupils' personal beliefs. It is perhaps connected with the content of the stories, general knowledge about religions and the framework of interpretation the students are acculturated to in lessons 'according to one's own religion' (NCCBE, 2014). However, in the future, it should be critically examined was to hether the weak confessional setting is able to give room to diverse spiritual experiences, expressions and reflections of the stories and thus secure the integrity of the pupils' spirituality.

The potential for spiritual relevance is something that the educator should strive to maintain in the classroom (Fraser and Grootenboer, 2004). Arguably, the teacher in this study has been able to provide a 'safe space' for the students that supports and enhances their reflections. In Lutheran RE, stories can serve as stimulating material for students' reflections and should be used widely.

However, a study on primary school student teachers, for instance, indicates that while they appreciate the narratives in Religious Education, they have problems with using the Bible in education (Ubani, Poulter and Kallioniemi 2015). Pollefeyt and Bieringer (2005) have presented some causes that could explain the uneasiness with the Bible among teachers and teacher students. The first is what they call 'biblical fundamentalism'. According to them, when people are not introduced to other alternative approaches as they develop, their reaction is to reject the Bible together with the fundamental approach. They use the term "scientific" fundamentalism to describe the second problematic approach. It refers to historical-critical method used in a way that it accepts only its own method as a hermeneutical approach which leads to fundamentalist reading of its own results. The third problematic approach is the moralising use of the biblical message (Pollefeyt and Bieringer 2005). In this approach, the biblical message is reduced to its ethical dimension which is then transformed into moralising the children.

What we suggest here is that teacher education could use the holistic framework as a tool to support the future teachers to become open to the rich variety of interpretations of the stories and cater to the potential in every classroom for spiritual experiences and existential search. It should be noted that while the holistic framework is able to comprehensively recognise the breadth of experiences during the lessons, it is not very sensitive to the aspects such as the quality of learning inherent in each of the domains. Furthermore, in the future, the holistic model for evaluating the student processes could be combined with research on learning outcomes and studies on personality. This should be done in order to test whether there is a relationship with the significance of the instruction, the content of instruction, learning and individual characteristics that could give explanations for one aspect of the complex nature of learning in religious and spiritual education.

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Biography:

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## ARTICLE II

Keränen-Pantsu, R. and Rissanen, I (2018). What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives? Perspectives from Finnish Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education, Journal of Beliefs & Values, DOI:10.1080/13617672.2018.1450804]

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# What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives? Perspectives from Finnish Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education.

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In this article, we examine how narratives of religious traditions are used as resources in religious education and compare practices from Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education in Finnish public schools. The sacredness of narratives from holy books entails that there can be contestations over their pedagogical use, and teachers need to negotiate the possible tensions between the pedagogical aims of liberal religious education and the integrity of the holy narratives. The research data consists of interviews with teachers of Lutheran (n=4) and Islamic (n=5) religious education as well as classroom observations. The results of qualitative content analysis show that teachers use narratives as pedagogical resources when teaching *about* and *from* religion. However, tensions occurred between the ideals of student-centred, experiential and creative learning, on one hand, and respecting the sacredness of the narratives, on the other. We also present teachers' ways of negotiating the tensions as well as some differences between Lutheran and Islamic religious education in the pedagogical use of narratives.

Keywords: religious education; Islamic religious education, Evangelic Lutheran religious education, narrative

**Introduction**

This qualitative study explores how narratives of religious traditions are used as resources in religious education (RE) and compares practices of Evangelic Lutheran (LRE) and Islamic religious education (IRE) in Finnish public schools. In regard to religious education in European schools, a trend of moving from confessional denominational towards liberal religious education can be detected. This means that the traditional understanding of religious education as a transmission of faith has widely given way to more modern understandings of RE, where the aims of liberal religious education come close to multicultural or intercultural education, antiracist education and citizenship education and develop skills of communication, such as interpretation, criticism and dialogue and give pupils agency (see e.g. Jackson, 2004). In Finland, religious education "according to the student's own religion" is given in public schools. Religious education is organised denominationally, but its aims are committed to liberal educational values, such as autonomy, rationality and tolerance (see e.g. Halstead & Taylor, 1996) and material from religious traditions is understood as resource for the development of the student's individual identity. Thus, it aims to teach *about* and *from* religion but there is no intention to socialise students *into* religion (Grimmit 1987; see also Geoff 2004).

However, liberal forms of religious education have also been accused of renouncing the self-understandings of religious traditions and fitting them into a liberal worldview (Barnes 2006), and, for instance, many kinds of value negotiations are found to be involved in teaching Islam in a modern liberal context (Rissanen 2014). In particular, the aim of *teaching from* religion in the context of liberal religious education demands more in-depth scrutiny. Religious traditions provide plenty of material, such as sacred stories, that can be used as pedagogical resources in supporting the development of the students' identity also in school context. However, the sacredness of these

resources entails that there can be contestations over their pedagogical use. More research is needed on how RE teachers negotiate the possible conflicts between the pedagogical aims and the integrity of the holy narratives.

**Pedagogical use of religious narratives**

There is no commonly shared definition of narrative in the research field, but there is an 'everyday understanding' of the term. (See e.g. Rudrum, 2006). Riessman (2008, 3) uses the terms *narrative* and *story* interchangeably, as do we in this article. We make sense of our experiences by narrating them; it has even been stated that to be human is to tell stories and that is what separates humans from all the other beings on Earth (Fisher 1984). Narration is a sense-making act whereby we construct a coherent entity out of our experiences. This leads to the idea of narrative identity since we construct and interpret our experience of who we are by narrative means (see e.g. Ricoeur 1992). Learning, also, can be regarded as a narrative process, which takes place through stories. Clark and Rossitter (2008) distinguish three different levels of narrative learning. According to them, people learn from (1) *hearing* stories, e.g. religious parables, myths and personal experiences (2) *telling* stories, and (3) *recognising* the narratives that shape sociocultural context and cultural conventions. Recognition of narratives enables people to view these underlying cultural assumptions and to examine and critique them.

Stories are always told for a reason and, as Riessman (2008) describes, stories are "strategic, functional and purposeful". This is well-suited to the school context where teachers' pedagogical thinking and curriculum set the framework for the educational use of narratives. There has been a rising interest towards teachers' pedagogical thinking since the 1980s when Clark and Petersen (1986) published their widely noted article "Teachers' thought processes". Teachers make educational decisions all the time. One key question in this research field is how do teachers justify

their decisions and what kinds of reasons guide the actions in classroom (Kansanen et al. 2000). In this study, we are interested in teachers' pedagogical thinking and decision-making in the context of liberal religious education, and, in particular, in how teachers negotiate between the self-understanding of religious traditions and the liberal educational values as represented in the curriculum.

Thus, this study focuses on the pedagogical use of a particular set of narratives, namely, religious narratives from the holy scriptures – The Bible, the Qur'an and Hadith.[1] In the study of religion, these narratives are seen as cultural products that maintain and convey religious values and are considered sacred by the religious traditions. Traditions under scrutiny in this study – Christianity and Islam –- are largely based on sacred narratives. When processing narratives that are a part of cultural and religious tradition, the question of who is entitled to interpret these narratives is easily raised. From a religious studies' perspective, all these narratives are 'products of their time' and interpreted in various ways in different cultural and religious contexts, so in order to understand these stories, you should understand something about the origins, cultural contexts and interpretative traditions of the texts – aspects that are present also in the Finnish curricula for religions (Finnish National Agency of Education 2014). However, when religious traditions teach about their holy books, preserving the originality of the texts is a common ideal: for example, memorisation and recitation of the Qur'an are typically seen as central aspects of traditional Islamic education. (see e.g. Berglund 2017; Nakib 2015). Nevertheless, in the context of liberal education and socio-constructivist learning theory, which also serve the ground for the Finnish RE curriculum, the ideals of student-centred learning are embraced (see. e.g. Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2016) and it is obvious that pedagogical use of religious narratives is never totally free from interpretation. For example, sacred narratives include material which supports liberal educational values – but also

[1] Hadith are records of traditions or sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, which have served as source for Muslim religious norms and moral guidance, second only to the authority of the Quran, the holy book of Islam. (See e.g. http://academic.eb.com.ezproxy.uef.fi:2048/levels/collegiate/article/Hadith/105855 )

material that contradicts them. From the perspective of modern readers, the Bible, for example, seems to support patriarchy, anti-Judaism, slavery, violence and intolerance if the readers fail to go beyond the text and have a critical dialogue with it (Pollefeyt and Bieringer 2005). Thus, RE teachers have to negotiate between the aims of the curriculum and religious traditions' self-understanding of the position of the texts and, as Copley (2007) points out, teachers as narrators hold the power, since they are the ones who represent the narrative in certain light and with certain interpretation.

**Islamic and Lutheran religious education in Finnish context**

Most of Finland's population (nowadays roughly 72 per cent) belong to the Evangelic Lutheran Church. Over the past few decades, the number of Muslims in Finland has rapidly increased, but the Muslim population is still relatively small - approximately 1 per cent of the Finnish population (Martikainen 2010). When awareness of the Islamic presence in Finland rose in the 1990s, it was considered alien and threatening, and the general opinion concerning Muslims remains negative (Martikainen, 2010; Sakaranaho 2006, 252-253). However, educational policies are a good example of efforts that have been made to make the Finnish mainstream population more sensitive to cultural and religious diversity.

The Finnish system for religious education is unique compared to most other European countries. (see Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2016). Students have the right to receive their own religious education, if at least three students belonging to the same religious tradition reside in the same area. Currently, there are curricula for 11 different religions, and those students who do not belong to any religious tradition study secular Ethics instead. This seems a very segregated system, but, in practical terms,

approximately 90 per cent of students in basic education (7–16-year-olds) participate in Evangelical Lutheran education, 2 per cent of students participate in Islamic RE. The quota for other religions is 2 per cent and 6 per cent of students participate in secular Ethics. (Educational statistics in Finland, 2017). Basically, Evangelic Lutheran RE, Orthodox RE and secular Ethics are being taught across the country, Islamic RE in the largest cities and minority religions only in certain schools or areas. In Finnish schools, IRE takes a form of "general Islam" and different branches of Islam do not have their own curricula.

It is worth noting that despite the fact that RE in Finland is denominationally organised, it is non-confessional in nature and religious practice in the classroom is prohibited. The contents of teaching also cover other religions and worldviews. RE teachers' qualification demands a master's degree from a university, including pedagogical studies and subject studies. Teachers are hired by the municipal government, not by religious communities. Teachers are not required to belong to the religion or denomination they teach (Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2016). The Finnish national core curricula for basic education emphasises liberal educational ideals related to students' autonomy and agency (e.g. developing into one's full potential as human being, building understanding of oneself and of society), ideals related to tolerance and respect for difference (e.g. the ability to view issues from the perspectives of others and the ability to engage in intercultural interaction) and ideals related to rationality (e.g. critical thinking) as the underlying values of basic education. Basic education aims to lay the foundation for the development of active global citizenship. (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014). These values are present also in the curricula for religions, which also emphasise the development of critical thinking, autonomous identity and intercultural/interreligious skills.

In both Islamic and Evangelic Lutheran religious education, learning *from* religious narratives is a significant part of the teaching, especially in primary school. In secondary school, the focus shifts towards teaching *about* holy scriptures and, for instance, different interpretative traditions of holy scriptures are covered. Objectives related to the learning environments and working methods of religion continue to transmit liberal educational values and socio-constructive learning concept since they guide the teacher to use creative, functional and experimental methods, projects and discussions that support the pupil as a holistic and active learner. This student-centred approach requires teachers to support teaching where pupils actively construct knowledge in multiple ways. Stories, music, visual arts, play and drama are mentioned as examples of implementing such teaching. Narratives are seen both as learning content and as teaching methods in religious education (Finnish National Agency for Education, 2014).

**Data and methods**

In this study, we examine the pedagogical use of sacred and traditional narratives in Finnish religious education. Our research questions are:

1) How are religious traditions' narratives used in Lutheran and Islamic religious education?

2) What kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of sacred religious narratives and how do the teachers negotiate these tensions?

3) What kinds of differences are there in the practices, tensions, and negotiations between Lutheran and Islamic religious education?

This qualitative case study combines data from two originally separate study projects. The first study focuses on teachers' pedagogical thinking and use of narrative pedagogy in classroom, especially in religious education. Its data contains interviews with teachers of Islamic religious

education (n=2, teachers 4–5, IRE) and Evangelic Lutheran religious education (n=4, teachers 1–4, 6, LRE). The main data is also complemented with ethnographic data collected from lessons. The second study is a multi-site ethnographic study that focuses on Islamic religious education in Finland, and its data includes observations of three separate Islamic religious education courses in lower and upper secondary levels, and interviews with the teachers of these courses (n=3). In this article, we analyse and present previously unpresented data from these studies. The interviews were conducted by the authors in the Helsinki metropolitan area in 2010 and 2016. Interviews were conducted in Finnish and all the citations are translated by the researchers. The theme of the interviews was the teachers' pedagogical thinking and pedagogical decision-making. Teachers were not asked directly about the tensions they have faced while planning and implementing their teaching about and from religious narratives, but this was a topic and perspective that the teachers brought forth spontaneously, which can be viewed as an important factor supporting the validity of this study.

For the purposes of aiming at deep and contextual understanding of the various tensions that might be related to the pedagogical use of religious narratives, the case-study methodology is a natural choice. Case is the unit of analysis, which can be an individual or a group of people or a system of action (Tellis 1997). According to Flyvbjerg (2006), "the typical or average case is often not the richest in information". In this study, we regard the Finnish approach to religious education as our case. The Finnish model of non-confessional religious education provided according to the student's own religion is a rather unique "system of action" that serves as an interesting case for the analysis of the interplay between educational values from different frameworks. Furthermore, we have studied this system of action by focusing on the perspectives of the kinds of teachers that we most likely are able to learn from, and who also serve as interesting cases for this study. All these teachers have been teaching for more than 7 years in school and they can be considered as expert

teachers as they have taught various age groups and used different pedagogical methods in their teaching. All the teachers participating in this study can be regarded as insiders to the tradition they teach, but they are also committed to the curriculum.

All the interviews were fully transcribed and read through carefully several times. The data was analysed jointly through a process of deductive (research question 1) and inductive (research questions 2 and 3) qualitative content analysis (see e.g. Elo and Kyngäs 2008). For the first research question, the basis of deductive, theory-based analysis was Michael Grimmit's classification regarding religious education that can promote education into religion, education about religion or education from religion (Grimmit 1987). Our hypothesis was that in Finnish religious education, the ways teachers use religious narratives should mostly be in the *learning about* and *learning from* categories but we wanted to leave open the possibility that also the *learning into* category would occur; however, all the ways of using the religious narratives could be grouped under the categories *learning about* and *learning from* tradition (see table 1).

The research questions regarding different tensions and how teachers resolve these tensions were analysed via inductive, data-based content analysis. All mentions
of sacred narratives, such as the narratives of the Bible or the Qur'an or the stories of Hadith, were counted and listed. From these lists, we determined if there were any tension present in the teachers' comments regarding the use of sacred texts in the context of religious education. We understand tension as a situation in which the teacher recognises two or more competing ideals that she or he has to negotiate when using religious narratives as the content or resource of teaching. 7 different types of tensions were discovered, and these were grouped under 3 main categories (see table 2).

## Results

### *Teaching about and from religious narratives*

In our analysis of the interviews, we categorised different ways of teaching about and from religious narratives in Finnish Lutheran and Islamic religious education (see table 1).

Table 1 Teaching about and from religious narratives in Finnish Islamic and Lutheran religious education

| Education about religion | Education from religion |
|---|---|
| • Familiarising pupils with religious stories<br>• Teaching about the origins and history of religious narratives<br>• Teaching about the cultural impacts of religious narratives<br>• Teaching about the dogma and practices of religious traditions | • Learning from religious narratives as a way to promote<br>o ethical thinking<br>o pupils' worldview and life questions<br>o pupils' personal competences (e.g. communication and social skills, emotional skills, critical thinking) |

All teachers interviewed for this study regarded religious narratives as important content of religious education as the traditions they teach about are largely based on holy scriptures. *Familiarising the pupils with religious narratives* was regarded as an important aim in itself, but also the *origins and history of narratives* were seen as a part of general knowledge regarding religions. Furthermore, *the cultural impact of religious narratives* were taught. This teaching content included topics such as the impact of religious narratives on festivals and rituals, language and concepts, as well as art and other cultural products such as music, movies and comics. Teachers felt that the use of religious narratives helps pupils understand religious language and expands their vocabulary.

When teaching about the *dogma and practices of religious traditions*, religious narratives also served as an important source, as teaching about dogma was seen as very abstract and narratives were viewed as a good way to approach the theme:

> (…) Well, because there are so many paradoxes in Christianity and how else could you explain a paradox or open up, for example, how it is possible that Jesus is a God and a man except through a story. That is, when you cannot explain why, you have to narrate it. (Teacher 6, LRE).

IRE teachers discussed the important role of Hadith alongside the Quran because, for example, the practices of praying are found in Hadith. Overall, the teachers' practices of teaching *about* religious narratives were in congruence with the aims of the national core curriculum, but they also were worried about the fact that knowledge about religious narratives is decreasing, which narrows the pupils' cultural competence of.

In addition to teaching about religious narratives, the teachers taught *from* religious narratives and used the narratives as resources for the development of various types of learning outcomes (see table 1). Religious narratives serve as premises to *ethical thinking* both in Islam and Lutheran RE. Although at the curriculum level, this connection is more transparent in Lutheran than in Islamic RE, also the Islamic religious education teachers used sacred narratives as a central resource when teaching about ethics. For instance, tolerance and how to relate to diversity as a Muslim was discussed a lot, and narratives from Hadith were often used as examples. In Lutheran RE, teachers typically narrated the story and afterwards worked with the students in order to translate the ethical message into modern day context. In Islamic RE, the teacher tended to start from a current ethical problem and then draw connections to, for instance, an example given by the prophet Muhammed in Hadith in order to increase the religious prestige of good behaviour.

Religious narratives were also used as sources when dealing with the pupils' *worldviews and life questions*. Both LRE and IRE teachers felt that using narratives gives pupils the space to make their own interpretations if the atmosphere is permissive. Teacher also felt that teaching from religious narratives would support the *pupils' personal competences*, such as their skills of sharing their experiences and listening to others. Pupils were encouraged to find connections between the story and their own life events and also to share their thoughts with others. They also reflected on the experiences shared by the others, asked for more details and questioned the solutions made by the characters of the story. The use of narratives also promoted critical thinking since the pupils were given the chance to evaluate the values that were present in the narratives and the teachers also encouraged the pupils to compare the image that the narrative gives to the media image, for example, of the prophet Muhammad.

***Tensions involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives***

In our analysis, we identified several tensions in the pedagogical use of sacred narratives (table 2).

Table 2 Tensions involved in the pedagogical use of religious narratives

| **Tensions related to the pedagogical use of sacred narratives** | **Identified tension** | **Lutheran RE** | **Islamic RE** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| **Tensions between student-centred learning and sacredness of the narratives** | -Presenting sacred characters interestingly vs. fear of trivialising sacred characters | | X |
| | -Making narratives understandable vs. protecting the authenticity of the narrative | X | X |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Tensions between experiential and creative learning and sacredness of the narratives** | -Visual material to enliven the narrative vs. respecting iconoclastic ideas | | X |
| | -Working creatively with the texts vs. fear of disrespectful products | X | |
| | -Using drama vs. holiness of characters prevent using drama | | X |
| **Tensions between teaching liberal educational values and protecting the authenticity of sacred narratives** | Teaching about & from the holy book comprehensively vs. choosing only narratives that promote liberal educational values | X | X |
| | -Encouraging pupils' autonomy to interpret the narrative vs. underlining the traditions' interpretation. | X | X |

Under the first category we grouped *tensions between student-centred learning and sacredness of the narratives (table 2)*. For instance, when presenting sacred characters, student-centred learning would demand that pupils can empathise and identify with holy characters, but the sacredness of the text could require that the characters are treated as holy and with distance. This tension was mostly described by Islamic RE teachers, who highlighted the honoured and 'untouchable' role of all prophets, especially that of the prophet Muhammad, in the religion. However, also in Lutheran RE, the teachers contemplated what would be appropriate language for the students to use when talking, for example, about Jesus. One teacher had considered a student's reference to Jesus as "dude" as appropriate since this is an expression of the pupils' everyday language rather than a demonstration of disrespectful attitude. The teacher recognised this kind of language as a sign of religious

education becoming more liberal, but she still prioritised bringing the teaching closer to the students' world.

The teachers also experienced tensions between their need to edit and contextualise the texts in order to make them more understandable and the need to protect the authenticity of the text. They felt it was valuable for the pupils to learn the narratives in their original form and important that the students became familiar with the holy books. Still, they found it difficult to make religious narratives relevant to the pupils as today's milieu, society and time are so different. In practice, the teachers sometimes shortened the narratives, used easier concepts and explained the circumstances in which the narrative occurs to promote learning and understanding of the narrative.

Under the second category, we grouped *tensions between experiential and creative learning and sacredness of the narratives* (table 2). The first tension was related to the use of visual teaching material with the narratives. If the teachers of Islamic RE wanted to enliven the narrative, they avoided using pictures with the characters due to the commonness of iconoclastic ideas in the Islamic tradition. Also, they rarely used videos because of the lack of appropriate video material:

> Well okay, of course drawing is a critical issue in Islam anyway. So if you want to illustrate some of the Prophets' stories, you cannot draw a human figure, and you cannot draw any of the prophets, so if you watch one of the Islamic TV channels or, let's say, TV in a country where Islam is the dominant religion or the Prophet's story, the prophets are presented with light covering their faces, and you cannot see their faces, because we must not know what they looked like. (Teacher 5, IRE).

Some teachers sought alternative images to enliven the prophets' narratives:

> (…) talking about the prophets is a bit challenging because you cannot actually show pictures of them, but you do something similar, so if you are talking about building the Kaaba in Mecca, let's look up the image of Kaaba on the Internet (…) to liven up that story. (Teacher 4, IRE).

To support active learning, Finnish RE curricula promote experimental, functional, and cooperative methods. In practice, teachers use methods such as drawing, drama and different activation exercises. However, the teachers described tensions between working creatively with the religious texts and the fear of students coming up with disrespectful products: teachers of Lutheran RE mentioned that sometimes the end-results of these creative methods are 'undesirable'. If this happened, the teachers solved the situation by, for example, sending the 'undesirable' picture drawn by the pupil to his/her parents and asking them to discuss with their child why this kind of behaviour is inappropriate. The Islamic RE teachers did not mention these kinds of undesirable products.

All RE teachers reported that one reason for use narratives in their teaching is to help children empathise with the story and identify with the characters and their life choices. The skill of empathy is also one of the objectives of the RE curricula. Teachers of Lutheran RE did not find any problems in using drama to help the pupils became familiar with all the characters of the narrative. It was acceptable, for instance, to play the role of Jesus or an angel in a play. However, the teachers of Islamic RE felt there are tensions in the use of drama as a teaching method in IRE due to the respect for the integrity of the characters, especially the prophets. Teachers told that they would be

particularly worried about the reactions of the parents if they were to ask the children portray any of the prophets. Drama, however, is mentioned as one of the teaching methods in RE in the national curriculum. Teachers of Islamic RE told that they have used fictive ethical narratives, but not narratives from the holy scriptures, as sources for drama.

Under the third category, we grouped *tensions between the teaching of liberal educational values and protecting the authenticity of the sacred narratives* (table 2). Finnish Islamic religious education has previously been observed as a field of negotiation where tensions between liberal educational ideals and Islamic educational values have to be reconciled (Rissanen 2014). In this study, we observed, in particular, how these tensions emerge in the pedagogical use of religious narratives. These tensions occur, for instance, when the religious narrative contains issues that are at odds with liberal educational values and the teacher has to balance between protecting the authenticity of the narrative and promoting liberal values. In practice, the teachers participating in this study seemed to negotiate this tension by choosing narratives that best promote liberal educational values, such as tolerance, and by avoiding narratives that are considered to contradict these values. Another way for them to negotiate these tensions was to emphasise that the context should be considered when interpreting the narratives – however, especially the teachers of Islamic RE emphasised that this is not an attempt to reform or "renew" the tradition:

> So, the way of delivering the message… that's very important, even though we have the hadith, we have the Quran, or the Sunna, meaning we have the word of the lord and the sayings of Prophet Mohammed. They are very important, we cannot renew them, but the context should be taken into account. We must leave them as they are, I have no authority, I have no power to say that the Hadith should be renewed or the, let

> alone the Qur'an should be renewed […] So pedagogy is very important, the didactic competence. (Teacher 7, IRE).

The second tension in table 2 under this category is tension between pupils' liberty to interpret the story and the teachers' desire to underline the 'right way' of interpreting the narrative. Autonomy as a liberal educational value demands giving students space to interpret the texts, but both Islamic and Lutheran religious education teachers felt the need to limit this autonomy, in some respect, for the sake of respecting the ways in which these narratives have been traditionally interpreted. Especially the teachers of Lutheran RE were concerned that their pupils would concentrate on irrelevant details of the story and miss the 'message' or teaching of the story.

> I also have some experiences that when talking about the events of Easter, the pupils' attention is fixed on the crucifixion and how it happened and where the nails were put and how could it be possible. Then their attention is drawn to something that is not essential. And it is also because Good Friday is not the main point of Easter. I think that if I tell the story, it can be somehow more at the children's own level and they will not get stuck on things that are not so essential. (Teacher 6, LRE).

The teachers of Islamic RE seemed to treat stories associated with the prophets in a way that did not leave much room for interpretation as they would say "we believe that these things actually happened". However, while the teachers of Islamic religious education regarded the interpretation of religious narratives as a highly sensitive issue, they were also very oriented towards teaching how to live as a Muslim in Finland, a practice that was interpreted as an endeavour to build a ground for the emergence of Finnish Islam (Rissanen 2014), and demanded the teachers answer the students' questions concerning the proper interpretation of the narratives in the Finnish context.

**Discussion**

In this qualitative case study, we explored how narratives of religious traditions are taught *about* and *from* in Evangelic Lutheran and Islamic religious education in the Finnish public schools, what kind of tensions are involved in the pedagogical use of these narratives and how the teachers negotiate these tensions. According to our results, the main objectives of teaching *about* narratives were familiarising the pupils with religious narratives and their origin and history, the cultural impacts of religious narratives and teaching about the dogma and practices of religious traditions. Teaching *from* religious narratives concentrated mainly on promoting ethical thinking, supporting pupils to ponder on their worldview and life questions, and developing pupils' personal competences like dialogue and social skills, emotional skills and critical thinking.

We found tensions between the ideals of student-centred learning and sacredness of the narratives, experiential and creative learning and sacredness of the narratives and teaching liberal educational values and protecting the authenticity of the sacred narratives. Teachers of Lutheran religious education seem to find the pedagogical use of religious narratives relatively uncomplicated. Teachers of Islamic religious education put more emphasis on the Islamic self-understanding concerning the role of narratives and they have to find different ways to negotiate liberal educational or curricular aims and the ideals of religious tradition. The differences between the tensions of LRE and IRE occur mostly in student-centred and experiential and creative learning, where especially in the IRE, the sacredness or integrity of characters restrict the pedagogical use of narratives; for instance, the IRE teaches felt more uncomfortable with using drama (which is mentioned as a learning method in the Finnish RE curriculum) as a teaching method.

Tensions in the use of religious narratives seem to relate to the specific nature of religious education as a subject. There are norms that are not laid out in the curriculum arising from religious tradition. These norms are related, for instance, to the sacredness of the characters and what kind of behaviour

is considered appropriate. As a part of their pedagogical thinking (Kansanen et al., 2000; Rissanen 2012), teachers are negotiating these unwritten norms and take religious traditions' self-understanding into account in order to prevent insults to religious values and practices. Since the Finnish education system and national curricula were historically developed in the societal context and are even today marked by Lutheranism, it is obvious that the present curricular norms might be more at odds with Islamic tradition. Still, some of these tensions – such as what is considered appropriate use of language – are also present in Lutheran RE.

The use of narratives in Finnish RE seems to differ radically from the way the Qur'an is used in traditional Islamic education; memorising parts of Quran is seen as a marker of good citizenship in the Islamic world, whereas in the context of modern secular education, Muslims students feel their Quranic studies are seen 'backwards' (Berglund 2017). If religious education is aimed to support identity negotiations (e.g. Jackson, 2004), there should be bridges to different pedagogical approaches to sacred scriptures; this is even more important when teaching minority students who navigate between the expectations of their families' traditions and liberal educational context in their every-day life (Rissanen 2014).

It seems that when using religious, sacred narratives in the context of religious education, there is no completely neutral way to make them serve pedagogical purposes. Liberal RE exploits religious texts to the extent they can be used to promote modern educational values present in the curriculum. Occasionally, self-understanding of religious tradition conflicts with the pedagogical aims of liberal RE and teachers have to negotiate between these two perspectives. However, it seems that value negotiations do not arise so much from conflicting values but from a slightly different interpretation of, for instance, autonomy (see also Rissanen 2012). It would be interesting to explore if these kinds of tensions occur also in other forms of RE and how students experience these tensions to understand these negotiation processes better.

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## ARTICLE III

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# Pedagogical Purposes of Narratives in Worldview Education: Teachers' Conceptions

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**Abstract.** This study explores teachers' pedagogical purposes for using narratives in Finnish religious and worldview education. The article stems from a philosophical and pedagogical view on *narrative cognition* as a fundamental element of worldview education. Teachers work as interpreters of the *cultural stock of stories*, including culturally fundamental religious narratives, and convert it into a pedagogical tool for identity work. The research data consists of interviews with primary school class teachers (N=6) about using narratives in the context of worldview education. Using qualitative content analysis as a research method, four main categories were identified. Teachers used the narratives: (1) to offer knowledge about religions and worldviews to their pupils; (2) to help their pupils to reflect on existential and transcendental issues; (3) to develop pupils' ethical abilities; and (4) to promote pupils' sense of community. Narratives are used in diverse ways; teachers use narratives in a dialogical manner in teaching, and pupils are encouraged to share their own thoughts and ideas. The narrative approach in worldview education provides means for teachers to promote conditions for a safe space and promote dialogue enabling worldview reflection. Narratives have a lot to offer for pluralistic and polyphonic education, opening up diverse ways of viewing the world. The study confirms that the narrative approach offers promising potential for worldview education but, given the restrictions of the small sample of this study, further research is needed.

**Keywords:** worldview education; religious education; teachers; narrative; pedagogy.

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## Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore teachers' conceptions of the pedagogical purposes of narratives in worldview education, which in this case means religious education and secular ethics in the context of Finnish primary schools. A fundamental presupposition of our study is the view that human knowledge, generally speaking constitutes narratives to a large extent, and the narrative form of knowledge has a significant role in teaching about and through worldviews (Geerz & Jensen, 2014).

There are many ways to understand the term 'worldview'. It could refer to organized worldview systems or ideologies that are present in the world and that different religions such as Christianity or Buddhism are offering. It could also refer to a more personal way of understanding the world and giving answers to questions 'who am I?' and 'where do I belong?' At the personal worldview level, one gives meanings and answers to existential questions of one's place in the world (van der Kooij, de Ruyter, and Miedema 2015). Selcuk and Valk (2012) also offer a transdisciplinary worldview approach, where the world is seen as a meaningful whole. Both religious and non-religious worldviews provide perspectives on ontological, existential, and epistemological questions on a personal, social, and cultural levels.

Worldview education does not only offer knowledge about different religions or belief systems but provides tools for reflection of one's personal worldview (Miedema, 2014). This definition is rather broad and encapsulates several subjects taught in schools, including history, arts, biology, and geography. In the present study, however, we use the term 'worldview education' in a narrow sense, focusing on two school subjects in Finland: secular ethics and religious education (later RE), which are divided into 11 different curricula (e.g. Lutheran RE, Orthodox RE, Islamic RE, etc.) (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education [NCCBE], 2014).

Even though RE is divided into different curricula according to a 'pupil's own religion', the aims of RE are the same in every form of RE. The main goal is to emphasize the development of a pupil's religious literacy (NCCBE, 2014, 264). Moore (2016) understands religious literacy as an ability to separate and analyze intersections of religion and political, social, and cultural life in multiple perspectives. Heimbrock (2001) sees religious literacy as an ability to be tolerant, to act in an ethical way, and active dialogue on religious and worldview issues. It also includes an ability to understand and manage diversity and pluralism in a constructive manner. The aim of RE is *to provide the pupils with an extensive general knowledge and ability regarding religion and worldviews* (NCCBE, 2014, 264) and secular ethics *to promote the pupils' ability to pursue a good life* (NCCBE, 2014, 272). In the Finnish curriculum, narratives are presented as tools to promote knowledge about religious, religious literacy and ethical thinking (NCCBE, 2014, 265-266). However, in secular ethics the narratives are not mentioned as directly but can be understood to include to come contents like Finnish culture (NCCBE, 2014, 273).

In Finland, all pupils are expected to familiarize themselves with different religions and worldviews and examine ethical dimensions of life from their own viewpoint as well as broader phenomena. The curriculum also stresses the understanding of the meaning of religions and worldviews on personal, social, cultural, and global levels. What is worth noting is that both RE and secular ethics as subjects are aimed at supporting the general aim of basic education: *growth as a human being and membership of society* (NCCBE, 2014, 20) through emphasizing the development of ethical competence and critical thinking, pupil's agency, identity development, and intercultural skills.

According to the Finnish legislative documents (National Core Curriculum for Basic Education, 2014; Basic Education Act 628/1998, 13 § (6.6.2003/454) worldview education must be *non-confessional and non-binding*. Even though worldview education WE is organized denominationally, it follows the national guidelines imposed by the Finnish National Agency for Education, which means that it is committed to liberal educational values, such as rationality, autonomy, and tolerance (see e.g. Halstead & Taylor 1996). Religious content such as narratives are understood as a source for ethical thinking and an element for supporting the wider development of the pupil's individual identity (NCCBE, 2014, 268-269). In Finland, the aims of worldview education are strongly related to broad educational areas such as citizenship education and human rights education (see e.g. Åhs, Poulter, & Kallioniemi, 2017). When making a more detailed review of religious education, Finnish RE draws from the models of teaching *about* and *from* religion (Grimmit, 1987) where teaching *about* religion contains, for example, exploration of the nature of religion, religious practices and festivals, and skills for ethical thinking and interpretation from a study-of-religion approach. Teaching *from* religion can function as a source for identity development. Pupils learn through reflecting their own ideas, meaning-making and values. They are active agents, reflect their own worldview and are oriented to learning from other worldviews. Teaching *into* religion, where the aim is to strengthen the religious identity of the pupils and their commitment to a given religious community, is no longer appropriate (Grimmit, 1987) (for more about the Finnish model, see e.g. Kallioniemi & Ubani, 2016).

In this study, our focus is on teachers' pedagogical purposes of perceptions of narratives in their worldview education. Our epistemological premise is that the narrative form of knowing is characteristic of religions (Smart, 1989; 1996; 2008; Geerz & Jensen, 2014), so it is evident that teaching about religions or worldviews has a lot to do with stories. This postulate has also been acknowledged in research literature. For example, Ninian Smart, a Scottish pioneer of secular religious studies (1989, 1996, 2008), distinguishes narrativity as one of the seven dimensions of religions and worldviews. Moreover, Geerz and Jensen (2014) pinpoint that narrative is perhaps one of the single most important interfaces between intrapersonal and interpersonal meaning production, which also occurs in religions and worldviews.

However, despite the obvious interfaces, there seems to be relatively little research about narrative pedagogy in worldview education, with a few

exceptions (e.g. Erricker & Erricker, 2000). More generally, the volume of research on narratives in education is also relatively small, again with some exceptions (e.g. Egan & McEwan, 1995; Clark & Rossiter, 2008; Goodson & Gill, 2011), compared to general research literature and the growing interest in narrativity in research and in society.

In the present paper, we are suggesting that worldviews are largely configured through narratives. We are interested in understanding the pedagogical way teachers use narratives, so the research question is *'for what purpose do teachers use narratives in worldview education?'*

Our approach has been inspired by a recent a change in the knowledge culture of social sciences, which has been called a 'narrative turn', and sometimes also a 'narrative boom' or 'narrative explosion' (Hänninen, 2004). This turn to narrative has been regarded not only as a paradigm shift in the academy but a more general cultural change in society, and has also influenced research on religions, education and pedagogy. Some scholars locate the starting point of the narrative turn about 50 years ago. Actually, according to Hyvärinen (2010), we should talk about four different narrative turns with different agendas and attitudes. He locates the first turn in literary theory in the 1960s; the second in historiography following literary narratology; the third in social sciences from the 1980s onwards; and finally, the fourth turn as a more general sociocultural turn to narrative in society, which is much broader and more multifaceted than the academic turns and still needs more careful analysis. Hyvärinen (2010) points out, however, that there is no simple plotline or causal chain between these layers or dimensions of narrativity. However, by the 1990s, claims to acknowledge *narrative cognition* (Bruner, 1987) as an eligible alternative in scientific research increased. It was recognized not only as a possible approach in research but as a necessary condition for understanding human life on its own terms. (Heikkinen, 2002.) *Narrative cognition* has a central role in worldview education, and its significance can be found even at the ontological and epistemological levels of religions and worldview systems, since they are configured narratively to a significant extent. The ontological and epistemological foundations are, in turn, reflected at the pedagogical level.

As Biesta and Miedema (2002) point out, pedagogy is always holistic in nature, where the whole person is involved, not only his or her cognition, but also his or her feelings, beliefs, attitudes, values, emotions, volitions, habits, predispositions, and actions. The logical link between pedagogy and narrativity is articulated by theories developed by Clark and Rossiter (2008) and Goodson and Gill (2011). Goodson and Gill (2011) distinguish three different ways of narrative learning: learning from stories; learning in the process of narrating; and learning by contextualizing autobiographical narrative such as one's own life story. Clark and Rossiter (2008), on the other hand, differentiate learning through stories as follows: learning by hearing stories; learning by telling them; and learning by recognizing stories. Recognizing stories in this context means that the person understands the narrative nature of his/her identity but also that groups, societies, and cultures are positioned and construed through narratives (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, 65). Pupils become aware of particular cultural

narratives that define their understanding about themselves (e.g. gender roles) and society (e.g. what is valued). These narratives are situated in a certain time and place and can vary between different countries and societies. Learning through stories comes close to the ideas of critical pedagogy since it increases pupils' awareness of the values these cultural narratives carry. Also, Goodson and Gill (2011) understand that narrative learning is an ongoing construction of one's personal life history that refers to stories people tell about themselves in relation to cultural narratives present in the society. These stories are always constructed and reconstructed in a certain context and in relation to a certain audience. In the educational context, the more pupils are aware of narrative structures they are surrounded by, the better they can also reflect what kind of story they are telling about themselves.

In worldview education, one of the main goals is to support the pupil's identity development (Miedema, 2014; NCCBE, 2014, 264-265). Given that narratives can be regarded as 'the primary scheme by which human existence is rendered meaningful' (Polkinghorne, 1988, 11), they provide us with the necessary tools to answer the question of who we are or what we want to become. In other words, narrative can be regarded as a tool for identity work (McAdams & McLean, 2013). If you sincerely want to tell someone who you really are, the answer is usually associated with a life story, which reveals where you come from and what meaningful things have happened to you. In other words, you are 'narratively constituted and narratively positioned' (Clark & Rossiter, 2008, 65). One of the aims especially in worldview education is to make pupils aware of these structures and help them to critically reflect their views. These kinds of stories are very personal and private and, in order to enable and promote sharing of significant life experiences, a trustful atmosphere is needed. According to Jackson (2014), we need to have a safe space where pupils are able to express themselves without fear of being labelled in some way or considered ridiculous. He pinpoints a teacher's role of providing a socially safe learning environment where different opinions, values, and ways of life can be discussed in a respectful way. As a matter of fact, he considers this as a prerequisite if we want pupils to really reflect their own worldview in a classroom context.

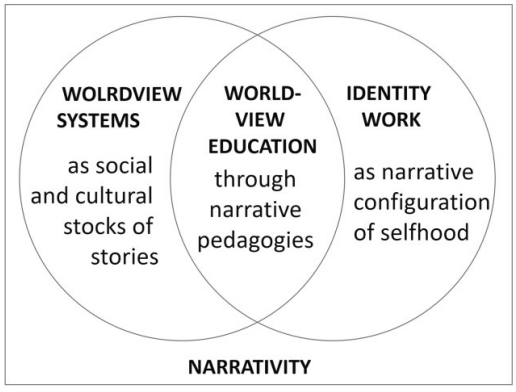


**Figure 1: Worldview education as narrative identity work within the cultural stock of stories**

One's life story is never configured in a vacuum, but is situated in a given historical and social context, so every human life story is enmeshed within 'a community of life stories' (Bruner, 1987, 699), or a 'cultural stock of stories' (Hänninen, 2004), which refers to the 'totality of narrative representations that the person hears or reads in the course of his or her life, ranging from pieces of gossip and TV advertisements to novels and sacred texts, and from fairytales to real-life stories' (Hänninen, 2004, 73). When you want to tell someone who you are, your personal life story uses the cultural stock of stories as a resource from where you take models, forms, and patterns for your own narrative, most often unconsciously. (See figure 1). These forms and patterns not only apply to your told or written narrative, but also to your inner and lived narrative, so construing a narrative identity is an ongoing circulation between personal narratives and socially and culturally prefigured narratives.

Teachers work as interpreters of the cultural stock of narratives, including religious stories (Copley, 2007). It is worth noting whether a teacher transmits narratives without the opportunity to critique and reflect, or whether the social and cultural stocks of narratives are being used as a toolbox for diverse and alternative narrative identities, including a possibility for 'counter narratives' (Bamberg & Andrews, 2004). Teachers are also in a key position on a larger scale, since they are teaching new members of the society and bringing their own values and attitudes to the teaching situation. Pedagogic practices are also a matter of power, teachers must acknowledge that power is an essential part of teaching and their response is to be conscious about it and help pupils to understand power structures. Some of these structures can maintain inequalities and stereotypes and teachers are obliged to be reflective about their practices. This also applies to learning contents, since some traditional sacred narratives are accused of promoting patriarchalism and violence (Pollefeyt & Bieringer, 2005). Because of these power relations, teachers comprise an interesting area of study in the context of worldview education, where values and attitudes are strongly present.

## Data and methods

The data of this study was gathered in Finland in the metropolitan area of Helsinki during spring 2016, and it is a part of wider research about teachers' pedagogical thinking and narrative pedagogy used in classrooms (see e.g. Keränen-Pantsu & Rissanen, 2018). Six primary school teachers (5 female, 1 male teacher, referred to in the text as teachers 1-6), who teach children from 7-12 years old were interviewed individually using semi-structured interviews. All the teachers had been working for more than seven years and can be considered as experienced expert teachers. Because of that, they were assumed to be more aware of their teaching aims and teaching strategies than novice teachers and they constitute a good focus group for this research (see Kansanen, Tirri, Meri, Krorfors, & Husu, 2000). All of them were teaching worldview education (1 teacher taught Lutheran RE, 1 Lutheran RE and Orthodox RE, 2 Lutheran RE and secular ethics, 2 Islamic RE), but it is worth noting that even though their classes were organized denominationally, (e.g. Muslim pupils study Islamic RE,

Lutheran pupils Lutheran RE, etc.) the group of pupils in the classrooms were diverse, which also affects the teacher's role.

All interviews were conducted by the first author and the language used was Finnish. Citations in this article were translated into English by the first author. The theme of the interviews was teachers' pedagogical thinking and narrative pedagogy. The interviews could be described as in-depth, since the teachers reflected on their whole teaching career and the development of their pedagogy. The duration of the interviews varied from 59 minutes to 1 h 11 minutes. Their aim was not to seek out representativeness, but rather to provide an opportunity to learn from the teachers on their own terms.

The analysis method was qualitative content analysis (see Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). Analysis were carried out in an inductive manner which, according to Hatch (2002), means that 'analysis is a search for patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about phenomena under investigation can be made' (Hatch, 2002, 161). First, all the interviews were fully transcribed and carefully read through many times, then all the aims that teachers described for using narratives in the classroom were listed. An aim served as the unit of analysis and could consist of one to several sentences. Looking for bigger themes that combine the aims that teachers described, we end up identifying four main themes. An example of the process can be seen in Table 1 where the main theme comprises the main categories, subcategories and examples of the data. The first author made most of the coding, and cross-validation with the second author took place in some critical sections if there were some challenges in coding. According to Hatch (2002), this kind of analysis is well suited to interview data, where findings are the presentation of participant perspectives as captured in interview or focus group data (Hatch, 2002, 229-230).

**Table 1: Sample of data analysis**

| Pedagogical purpose | Main category | Sub-category | Example of the data |
|---|---|---|---|
| (1) to offer knowledge about religions and worldviews to pupils | aims related to religious aspects of one's culture | to understand the connection between religious narratives and religious festivals | '…that every pupil, when leaving the lower classes of primary school would understand the connection between the holidays of the year and the life of Jesus.' (Teacher 1)<br>'…many things in our society and an annual calendar and everything is based on the Christian worldview or the Christian doctrine. Festive calendar still is meaningful and it is also general knowledge…' (Teacher 3) |
| | | to understand the connection between different forms of art and religious narratives | 'well it is so that the biblical stories, the most common, best-known biblical stories, are part of the general common knowledge as well, and they should be taught in school, of course, and they are of course related to art, paintings…we can study different paintings and stories behind them.' (Teacher 4) |

## Results

**Table 2: Teachers' pedagogical purposes for using narratives in worldview education**

| Pedagogical purposes | Main categories |
|---|---|
| (1) to offer knowledge about religions and worldviews to pupils | Aims related to<br>· content and historical context of sacred narratives<br>· religious dogma conveyed by stories<br>· practices of religion related to stories<br>· religious aspects of one's culture |
| (2) to reflect existential and transcendental issues, | Aims related to<br>· existence and nature of God<br>· questions about life and death<br>· human's place in the world<br>· pupil's life questions |
| (3) to develop ethical abilities | Aims related to<br>· everyday life situations (e.g. stealing, friendships)<br>· ethical thinking promoted by sacred stories |
| (4) to promote a sense of community | Aims related to<br>· atmosphere and belonging |

The teachers' pedagogical purposes for using narratives in worldview education was thematized into four main purposes (see Table 2). In the first category, narratives were a source *to offer knowledge about religions and worldviews*. The teachers said that it is part of common religious knowledge to know the basic religious narratives, since they are the basis of the whole belief system of particular religions. They attached great importance to pupils' understanding of how these traditional stories have affected the development and self-understanding of the religious community. There was also a need to enlighten the historical context from which the narratives have originated. For example, the message of the story of 'the Good Samaritan' will not be clear if you do not understand the societal status of Samaritan people and the purity regulations in the Jewish community. This was also applied to historical characters, like Martin Luther. In order to understand the role and significance to the development of the religious community, in this case Lutheranism, pupils must understand the circumstances and societal situation where the actions of Luther took place.

Religious doctrine, the core dogmatic content of, for example, Christianity was considered difficult to teach, since it often includes paradoxes, which could be

difficult to understand, even for adults, not to mentions children with limitations in abstract thinking. Stories can serve as a way to approach such abstract content at the pupils' own level.

> "The Easter story and Christmas story, I use to teach the doctrine of Christianity (...) I am able to teach (doctrines) through these stories, it is so symbolic and abstract, so it feels that the narrative is the only way to approach the doctrinal things in understandable way for children." (Teacher 1).

The teachers also considered it important for pupils to understand the religious festivals and their connections to sacred scriptures, and therefore the religious origins of the celebrations and the stories behind them. According to them, this kind of knowledge can be seen as general knowledge for understanding society. This category also included interaction between culture and religion. The teachers were worried about decreasing knowledge of religious literature, and the resultant deteriorating ability to understand the religious aspects of prevailing culture. The examples they used included the influence of the sacred stories, especially the Bible, which have been manifested in several form of art like paintings, sculptures, music, theatre, products of popular culture and religious symbolism in a broad sense. The teachers also said that modern forms of art like movies can also help children to understand religious narratives. They felt that lack of this kind of cultural knowledge is narrowing pupils' cultural competence.

> "We are often talking about movies with children, because almost everything Jesus did, they've seen in Star Wars movie or somewhere. Like Jesus in the holy mountain, you have seen it in many movies when there is some guy, and he turns into a radiating light and he disappears from sight. So that is what Jesus did, so it went, and the pupils just said 'yeah'." (Teacher 5).

Narratives serve as a tool *to reflect existential and transcendental issues* in the second category. The teachers felt that using stories gave pupils the freedom to make their own interpretations and gave more space to discuss perennial questions, which have interested mankind for ages. Stories that include transcended themes like the nature of God seemed to interest pupils and act as a good starting point to share their own ideas. The Easter story helped pupils to think about what kind of God would sacrifice his own son, whether Judah and the priests were just evil when they convicted Jesus, or whether it was part of God's big plan to save mankind.

In the data, questions about life and death emerge from many perspectives. The teachers felt that if children were from a very religious home, it was more obvious to them what happens after death and no one in the class questioned it. This was mainly the case in Islamic RE at primary school level, where teachers of Islamic RE said that more open discussion could be found with upper secondary pupils who also consider other options.

> "It feels that for Muslim children it (the question of afterlife) is somehow so self-evident. It comes so strongly from home so that no big questions arise, they easily start to talk about the judgment day, life after death, and what happens to people. That's like a theory that has been heard many times." (Teacher 3).

Pupils' own life questions were considered important and, according to the teachers, using narratives could promote pupils' own reflections about their worldviews. When they were aware of different worldviews and belief systems, they were able to evaluate and create their own relationship to those systems and use them as building material for their own worldview. Lack of knowledge and the secularization of families was seen as problematic, since there was no space to have these discussions anymore.

Stories also carry on universal themes that have always been close to human lives. Humans have sought answers to eternal questions and also comfort when they have faced difficult life situations. This was described beautifully by one of the teachers who wants to bring hope to her pupils:

> "Stories pass on the wisdom of life (…) Wisdom of life could be something like when things don't go as you wish or if you take a wrong path and still get to your destination, and how can something be blessing after all and what is important in life, family and other things." (Teacher 2).

Narratives were utilized *to develop pupils' ethical abilities*. There were two different approaches to dealing with ethical issues that occurred in this data: on the one hand, ethical stories that arise from the everyday situations of the pupils and, on the other, sacred, traditional narratives that carry an ethical aspect. According to the teachers, stories give the possibility to identify with different characters, and challenge pupils to think how they would act in certain situations. It also helps them to understand that ethical dilemmas are rarely simple and also have consequences for others.

> "Stories support pupils' own thinking, pupils' own engagement and pupils' skill of empathy, for example the ability to walk in other people's shoes, and they also help them to understand the choices that characters make. They also show pupils situations, where it is difficult to act morally correctly, and help them to understand the complexity of the situations and choices people have to make and how choices affect others." (Teacher 2).

One reason for using narratives in ethical themes was to give pupils the chance to view their everyday choices from a distance and without the necessity to share their own experiences if the themes were too difficult or came too close to them. It also gave pupils the freedom to interpret the stories in their own ways, and teachers felt that the discussion was more open, not so prescriptive. When using sacred narratives, teachers felt it important to link stories to pupils' own lives, so that the universal message could also touch them.

> "Most of the time I use narratives in ethical topics, because the story also works in difficult themes in a special way, you can look at it from the distance. Then teaching ethics is not only about telling pupils how they should behave." (Teacher 1).

> "In the context of worldview education the question of right and wrong like lying and stealing, so how do you act or behave right between friends or at home. So, the easiest way to teach these themes is with stories." (Teacher 3).

The teachers described how using narratives and especially traditional storytelling sessions *promoted a sense of community* in the classroom. When pupils come together and calm down to listen, there is something that seems to pacify them and touch their inner world. Some teachers even used the word 'holy experience' when, after the story, everyone sits in silence and the atmosphere is tranquil and respectful. These kinds of working methods also reveal whether there is something going on in the class like bullying or exclusion. Pupils don't want to share their own ideas provoked by the narrative, not to mention their real-life experiences, if they do not feel safe enough. Thus, using narratives in the classroom can work as an indicator for atmosphere.

> "Pupils have to feel themselves safe in the classroom so that they dare to participate for real and also that there's no right or wrong answers, and that all that is said is valuable. And if there is something in the atmosphere, something affiliated to bullying, it's paralyzing everything. You can ask for their homework and they answer, but if you have to share something genuinely personal, it's not working." (Teacher 4).

Teachers also attach great importance to an open atmosphere, which also allows interpretations other than those highlighted by the religious community. This also requires a confidential learning environment so that pupils dare to approach narratives with a critical sense.

> "It requires that the community where the interpretations is done has a permissive atmosphere. So, if the community is not supporting you to express yourself… So… This is complicated, it's not only about narratives, it's linked to the classroom community and that community, where...[the origins of the story are]." (Teacher 6).

## Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this study was to investigate for what purposes teachers use narratives in worldview education. We found four main aims for using narratives (1) to offer knowledge about religions and worldviews; (2) to reflect on existential and transcendental issues; (3) to develop ethical abilities and (4) to promote a sense of community.

According to our data, all the teachers have used narratives in multiple ways, and all the categories found in the data were present in every interview. More variety would have been expected; although all the teachers were teaching at the primary level, they represent both subjects of the Finnish curriculum, namely secular ethics and religious education. This finding was somewhat surprising given that, according to the curriculum (NCCBE, 2014), the role of narratives in teaching is more central in religious education than in secular ethics; in other words, the *narrative cognition* (Bruner, 1987) is more explicitly present in religious education than in secular ethics.

Teachers understood that narratives open up possibilities for offering knowledge (Category 1) and for existential and transcendental reflection (Category 2). As pointed out by Shelduck and Valk (2012), religious and non-religious worldviews provide perspectives on ontological, existential and epistemological questions on different levels, and these elements, especially existential and epistemological issues, were present in our results (Categories 1 and 2). Narratives also seem to develop ethical ability (Category 3). Dealing with narratives helps pupils understand that many values present in our society, like respecting others, helping your neighbor, nurturing nature, etc., have their roots in religions and humanism, for example. Reflecting on questions about values, existence and ethical behavior also helps pupils to realize that they are surrounded by metanarratives or 'cultural stocks of stories' (Hänninen, 2004), and this affects how they see the world and themselves. This kind of critical reflection is also one of the main goals of worldview education at curriculum level (NCCBE, 2014). In other words, the teachers wished to promote pupils' narrative identity work, although they did not express this explicitly. This was done by stressing the two forms of learning through stories stated by Clark and Rossiter (2008): learning by hearing stories and learning by telling stories. The third form of learning suggested by Clark and Rossiter, learning by recognizing stories, was not so explicitly present and was rather deduced. Moreover, although teachers encourage pupils to reflect on their own life questions, the dimension of contextualizing the autobiographical narratives of pupils (Goodson & Gill, 2011) seems not to be acknowledged by teachers and needs to be more emphasized.

One of the most significant findings of this study was the use of narratives for promoting a sense of community. In current RE literature, safe space (Jackson, 2014) is referred to as a tolerant atmosphere where different worldviews are recognized and can be present without fear of being stereotyped, discriminated against or ridiculed. However, finding concrete ways of accomplishing this kind of space is not an easy task, and many teachers feel unconcerned when they are not aware what is happening in social relationships in the classroom. The teachers felt that using narrative pedagogy in the classroom promoted pupils' sense of community in a special way. The teachers described how settling down with a story somehow connects pupils and encourages them to participate and share the thoughts created by narrative. On the other hand, stories also worked as indicators of atmosphere and can reveal if the space is trustful enough to share your ideas and explain your own worldview. Narrative pedagogy seemed to offer a useful tool to teachers to advance the conditions for creating safe space

in a classroom environment and promote dialogue enabling worldview reflection.

How to promote a sense of community through narratives in diverse learning communities is an intriguing task as social cohesion and inclusion are not easy to achieve when school brings together pupils from very different backgrounds. It is interesting that, according to the present study, shared narratives can be the 'thing' that promotes a sense of community. There is, however, a risk that paying attention to sacred narratives may exclude pupils (see e.g. Poulter, Riitaoja, & Kuusisto, 2016). Teachers in this study highlighted that stories that convey universal humanistic themes, such as how to cope with difficulties in life, touch pupils regardless of their background or worldview.

Categories found in the data represent aims and goals described by teachers of worldview education. However, we want to emphasize that these categories overlap in many ways. For example, when pupils reflect the essence of God in the Easter story, they also ponder ethical dilemmas present in the story. Thus, we highlight that the four categories found in this study must be regarded as an ideal typography and, in reality, they intersect. It appears that in Finland, according to this study, teachers' focus is on using the stock of religious narratives as a resource for reflective, critical and pluralist education so as to promote the personal identity work of the pupils. However, given the restriction of the small data size and an emphasis on experienced teachers in our sample, further research is needed. According to our study, narratives also have much to offer for pluralistic education, opening up diverse ways of viewing the world. Because of its central role, the narrative approach also shows promising potential for further research about worldview education.

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# RAILI KERÄNEN-PANTSU

This dissertation investigates cultural narratives as a part of Finnish worldview education. Interpretative and pedagogical processes related to cultural narratives indicate that narrative learning can promote several academic learning goals as well as more holistic development of identity and worldview. In addition, this study explores the theoretical perspectives of narrative learning and recognises the transformative potential of cultural narratives.

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