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How Teachers in Europe Teach Religion

An International Empirical Study in 16 Countries

edited by

Hans-Georg Ziebertz and Ulrich Riegel

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Preface

This volume represents a three-year collaboration of scholars of Religious education in sixteen European countries. The unification process of Europe in politics, economy, law, education and culture has made important steps but it seems that religion is a minor part of this process. Religions are still strongly related with national cultures and national history. The juridical basis of teaching religion in the European countries is different and this can be evaluated on the level of schools and universities as well. The aim of this study is to research teacher's perspectives of goals and methods of religious education. Due to the fact that the national circumstances are different it can be expected that teachers' perspectives differ as well. On the other hand the modern world's standards of education and religious education will be affected by this process as well. This could lead to comparable options for religious education and similar concepts.

This study offers knowledge and insight into the concepts of teachers how they frame religious education. Chapter 1 introduces the theme; chapter 2 describes and explains the frame of the study. In chapters 3 to 18 national scholars and research teams present the findings of the national data. Chapter 19 reflects on the national outcomes in a comparative perspective. The main challenge can be evaluated in the tension between pluralism and the tradition of mono-religious concepts. In chapter 20 we compare the findings with the goals of scholars of religious education and religious studies at the university level. School teachers are mostly educated in universities and we are curious if we can explore similarities or differences between what is taught in universities and what is preferred by teachers who moved to school practice.

This study represents a big step in comparative studies of religious education in Europe. The book contributes to a better understanding of religious diversity and offers basic insights in order to develop the European unification process also on the field of education religion. An important following-up project should focus on standards of goals and methods which could be supported by all European countries and representatives of religions. The authors of the book are aware that this cannot be reached within a short time period. Common standards can be the result of a process of collaboration, experiences and academic exchange. Nevertheless, an important step is made by this study.

This research was stimulated by the Thematic Network "Teaching Religion in a multicultural European Society" of the Socrates-Erasmus programme. The editors express their gratitude to the national research teams for their investigation of time and money to realize the empirical study in the national countries. The coordination of the project was done by the Wuerzburg department of Religious Education. Therefore the editors are grateful for all the help and the support and they want to give special thanks to Sylvia Scheller who prepared the manuscript for publication and translated parts of it as well. Last but not least we want to express our gratitude to all teachers who supported the study by filling in the questionnaire.