
Introduction

This volume offers an introduction to all questions of teaching Religious Education as a school subject and as an academic discipline related to this subject. The chapters cover most of the aspects that religion teachers have to face in their work, as well as the theoretical background necessary for this task. The volume is a textbook for students and teachers of religious education, be it in school or in an academic context, who are looking for reliable information on this field.

The book has proven its usefulness in German speaking countries. This volume is the English translation of the German Compendium of Religious Education that has gone through many printings and several editions. The first edition was edited by Gottfried Adam and Rainer Lachmann in 1984. The present English version is based on the 2012 edition which aims for a most current representation of the field. The background of the book is Protestant but its outlook is clearly ecumenical, and questions of interreligious education are considered in many of the chapters. The compendium continues to be widely used in Germany, Austria and Switzerland – as an introduction to the field as well as a handbook for students who are preparing for their final exams.

The English edition makes this compendium available to students and colleagues in other countries. Some of its contents are closely related to a German context, for example, in respect to legal regulations. While readers have to be aware of their respective context it may still be of interest to learn about the situation in another country. The German understanding of Religious Education is of special interest because of the way in which educational and theological perspectives are brought together, instead of limiting the subject to religious studies. It may remind readers of the pluralistic situation in Europe that also applies to Religious Education with its different models. Other aspects related to the actual teaching process, however, are not limited to a specific situation or country. It is actually one of the interesting questions connected to the translation of such a textbook which parts or aspects of Religious Education can be considered international and which ones belong to the national context. In this respect, the present book opens up new opportunities for international exchange and comparative research.

Moreover, textbooks for religious education – as well as in other fields of study and teaching – are part of the process of setting standards. What knowledge and skills does a religion teacher need to have? What training should he or she go through? It seems that not much work has been done on such questions, although teacher training is a key question for the quality realized in any school subject. It would certainly be good if this compendium could become part of an international – or at least European – endeavor in this direction.

Readers should be aware that the present volume does not address teaching methods. This does not mean that such methods can be neglected. In the German context, methods of teaching religion are covered in two companion volumes (edited by Gottfried Adam and Rainer Lachmann).

Translations are always difficult. The more a discipline is related to the particular circumstances in a country and to specific practices there, the more difficult it is to find exact translations for its terminology in other languages. Moreover, the German language has developed special concepts that cannot be translated into English. This is certainly true for the term *Bildung* that has a special ring and meaning of great importance for the German discussion. It means education in a refined sense, also concerning the inner life of a person and his or her autonomy. Wherever possible, we have tried to find English equivalents for the German terms. In some cases, we have left or added the German term so that readers can see the background of the English translation. One German institution is mentioned quite often in many of the chapters – the Protestant Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland*); following the common way of abbreviating its name it is often referred to as EKD. The reference to “religious education” can have different meanings. In this book, it is written in capitals when it refers to the school subject; in all other cases, especially in reference to the academic discipline, it is written in small.

We are much indebted to the many people who have invested much time and energy into the project of this English edition. The translators of the individual articles are mentioned at the beginning of the respective chapter. As a native speaker, Marianne Martin (Tübingen) was the main language editor of all the chapters. Maria Valencia (Vienna) also played an important role in checking and improving many of the original translations. The layout of the texts was done by Karin Sima. Student assistants Claire Ulbrich and Ferdinand Schumann were responsible for adapting the footnotes.

We are very grateful that the authors were willing to make their chapters available for translation, to find translators and to check the translations.

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