

Martin Jäggle, Martin Rothgangel, Thomas Schlag (Eds.): Religiöse Bildung an Schulen in Europa. Teil 1: Mitteleuropa. Unter Mitarbeit von Philipp Klutz und Mónika Solymár. V & R Unipress/Vienna University Press. 2013. (Wiener Forum für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft, Band 5,1). pp. 265.

Reviewed by Dr. Dr. h.c. Gottfried Adam, Prof. em., University of Vienna, Faculty of Protestant Theology

In the Introduction the three editors state, that it is time to take a closer look to the topic of Religious Education in the schools of all 48 European countries: What are the structures of organisation, the legal frameworks and the aims and objectives? They believe, this endeavor is necessary because of the impact of Education on societal and political issues and because the situation and state of religious communities/churches is in a process of rapid change. At present in the majority of the European countries Religious Education is established as a subject at public schools (p. 7f.).

The publication „Religious Education at Schools in Europe. Part I. Central Europe“ is the first volume of a joint research project of the Protestant and the Catholic Departments of Religious Education at the University of Vienna. It is called “Religious Education in Schools in Europe“ (REL-EDU). The project team consists of Univ.Prof. DDr. Martin Rothgangel and Dr. Mónika Solymár (Faculty of Protestant Theology), Univ.Prof. Dr. Martin Jäggle and Dr. Philipp Klutz (Faculty of Catholic Theology).

The central purpose of the research project is to make possible an international comparison of the different forms of Religious Education in all of Europe. There are six volumes in the planning covering the following regions: Vol. 1 Central Europe, Vol. 2 Northern Europe, Vol. 3 Western Europe, Vol. 4 Southern Europe, Vol. 5 Southeast Europe, and Vol. 6 Eastern Europe. No doubt, this is a timely and ambitious project. That it is designed as a cooperative protestant-catholic, i.e. ecumenical venture shows that the two editors Martin Rothgangel and Martin Jäggle are men of vision.

Let's take a closer look at Vol. 1 dealing with Religious Education in Central Europe. Friedrich Schweitzer (Tübingen) informs in the first article about „Comparing Religious Education in Schools in European Countries - Challenges for International Comparative Research“. He introduces into the matter of comparative research. He explicates, why it is being done and what results can be expected. He reports about the studies that have been published to date and gives a preliminary typology of international studies. The fact that the respective Hungarian studies (being published in English) are missing in this article, makes aware that the

communication in Europa needs to be improved. The author closes with proposals for a methodology of comparative research – from the perspective of Religious Pedagogy.

The following eight articles deal with Religious Education (in a broad understanding) in the different countries. They are arranged according to the following thirteen topics:

1. Socio-religious background (of the country, especially in relation to important changes, resulting from migration, for example)
2. Legal Frameworks of RE and the relationship between religious communities and the state
3. Developments in the country's education policies
4. Role of schools in denominational sponsorship
5. Conceptions and tasks of RE
6. Practice of RE
7. Observations on alternative subjects like ethics, philosophy etc.
8. Ecumenical and interreligious cooperation, Dealing with religious diversity, Ethnic groups, areas of conflict and open questions
9. Religion in schools outside of RE
10. Training of teachers of RE: institutes, structures, core areas
11. Desiderate and challenges for RE in a European context
12. Further information.

This pattern proves to be helpful in arranging the information about Religious Education and build a basis for comparative studies. The editors were successful in finding competent contributors for each of the eight countries. All articles are informative and well written. This volume will be a basic text for future international comparative studies, and presumably the forthcoming five volumes of the project likewise.

There is not enough space to review each contribution. For the theme of this issue of this Journal dealing with church related schools especially the topic 4 “Role of schools in denominational sponsorship” is relevant. All articles contain information about the position of these schools and their relevance in society, the legal framework, the impact of churches and religious communities in the educational system and the conceptions and tasks of religiously oriented schools. Here one can find primal overall information and reference to relevant literature. The countries covered and the respective authors are the following ones: Germany (M. Rothgangel / H.- G. Ziebertz - Univ. of Vienna and Wuerzburg), Austria (M. Jäggle / Ph. Klutz - Univ. of Vienna), Poland (C. Rogowsky - Univ. of Olsztyn),

Swiss (Th. Schlag - Univ. of Zuerich), Slovakia (T. Reimer - Univ. of Bratislava), Slovenia (St. Gerjolj / A.A. Saje - Univ. of Lubljana), Czech Republic (L. Muchová - Univ. of České Budějovice), Hungary (M. Solymár - Univ. of Vienna).

In our context the article about Hungary is of special interest. The author M. Solymár is a native of Hungary and has been teaching at Berzsenyi Dániel Evangélikus Gimnázium in Sopron. Her article reflects her thorough knowledge of the Hungarian school system as well as the situation of a church related school. On p. 241-245 she deals with the aspects of pluralisation of the educational system in Hungary, the sponsorship of school by churches, the special profile of these schools and their funding. Topic 6 (p. 246–251) deals with the school subject of Religious Education in public schools as well as in church related schools. This chapter informs about the rules of participation, curricula, school books and questions of teacher training and teacher competencies. These two chapters impart foundational knowledge about the church related schools in Hungary. I understand, this article will be updated and revised in the forthcoming English edition, taking into consideration the changes of the new educational reform.

The review presented, what this volume on Religious Education in Central Europe has to offer on the question of confessional schools in Hungary as well as in other countries in the central European region. Further on it showed what a rich source this publication is for international comparative research. According to the preface (p. 12) an English version of the text is going to appear in 2014. It will be published on www.rel-edu.eu.