

READY - Religious Education and Diversity

Sharing experiences of, and approaches to,
teacher education in the context of
"Education and Training 2020" (ET 2020)



The subject "Religion and Culture" in the canton of Zurich

In Switzerland, the individual cantons (there are 26!) have educational sovereignty. Accordingly, religious education is designed very differently in each. The canton of Zurich, as one of the largest cantons, has taken on a pioneering role and, with the subject "Religion and Culture", offers a non-confessional subject, which must be attended by all children and adolescents. It is administered by the state elementary school and given by the teachers. It is up to the churches to offer their own denominational instruction, which is given in addition and by catechists, other church employees and pastors and does not take place in school. All teachers of the canton of Zurich were given the opportunity to teach this subject up until 2017 with a continuing education initiative. At present there is an extension and supplement of the subject in ethics. As part of the curriculum 21, which will be valid from 2018, the subject will now be called "religions, cultures, ethics". Corresponding teaching materials are currently being developed.

In a parent information flyer of the Education Directorate in the canton of Zurich, the conception of the subject "Religion and Culture" is described as follows:

“Children and adolescents encounter people of different backgrounds, religions and worldviews in everyday life. Diversity is an essential feature of our society. Religious traditions are not of equal importance to all. Beliefs and values inspire questions. Similarities and diversity can be discovered.

How and why do people celebrate festivals? How do they organize their everyday life? Which ideas are important to them? Which rules do they observe? How have religious traditions shaped cultures? Such and similar questions need to be addressed with children and adolescents. This helps the adolescent understand the world in which they live. Teaching should also promote respect and understanding for people with different religious, cultural and ideological backgrounds.

Objective and Syllabus

- *The students realize how diverse religion is in society.*
- *They will get to know elements and characteristic traditions of different religions.*
- *They understand the importance of religious traditions in society.*
- *They can communicate with people of different beliefs and worldviews, people of other religions and cultures in their everyday lives.*
- *They respect different lifestyles and values.*

Emphases at the Primary Level (Primarstufe)

The students are given knowledge about religions, which they encounter in their everyday life, including at school. In particular, the students get to know the elementary content, traditions and customs of Christianity, which have shaped culture and society in the canton of Zurich and still do.

Emphases at the Secondary Education I (Sekundarstufe I)

At secondary level I students acquire basic knowledge of the major world religions: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism. They quarrel with how people deal with their religious and cultural traditions.“

The subject "Religion and Culture"

Your child will be educated in the new subject "Religion and Culture". The subject conveys knowledge of different religions as part of the culture. This is part of the general education and promotes understanding of the world today.

The subject respects the worldviews and attitudes of parents and children.

Religious activities are not allowed in the school. For example, there is no prayer in the classroom. Rather, the students learn when and how people pray in different religious traditions.

The religious education of the children remains the responsibility of the parents. The school subject "Religion and Culture" does not replace the instruction of the churches and other religious communities, but also does not presuppose it.

The subject "Religion and Culture" is structured in such a way that all students participate, regardless of their origin or religious affiliation. The constitutional Freedom of belief and conscience is respected."

"Religion and Culture" is a compulsory subject and is taught as follows:

- *1st to 6th grade: 1 lesson per week*
- *7th School year: 2 lessons per week*
- *8th School year: 1 lesson per week*

Please contact your child's teacher if you have any questions. On the website of the Volksschulamts you will find the curriculum and further information about this subject:

www.vsa.zh.ch/RK

To follow the latest developments, subscribe to the newsletter of the Zurich University of Teacher Education:

https://phzh.ch/de/ueber-uns/Fachbereiche/Religion_und_Kultur/Newsletter/#

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<http://www.unterstrass.edu/institut/>



Prof. Dr. Jürg Schoch



Prof. Dr. Eva Ebel

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