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Baseline Study  
Religious Education (RE) in Denmark



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IERS Project. *Intercultural Education through Religious Studies*

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*Document: Baseline Study. Religious Education (RE) in Denmark*

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## 1. State, religion and RE – short introduction

The Danish Constitution as of 1949 (1953) guarantees freedom of religion (§§ 6 & 70, 1953), but not equality. § 4 (1953) states: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church shall be the Established Church of Denmark, and as such shall be supported by the State" (Folketinget 2013, official translation).<sup>1</sup> This means that the Established Church, called '*Folkekirken*' ('The People's Church') enjoys certain privileges, but the precise consequences of the paragraph is a matter of political and public discussions, including discussions as to whether this paragraph excludes Denmark from the category of 'secular states'.<sup>2</sup> Nobody, however, so far has claimed that the paragraph must have (legal) consequences for how religion(s) is taught in public schools, i.e. state schools. There is also nothing in the Constitution about RE, and thus nothing similar to what is found for instance in the German constitution as regards a state responsibility to provide confessional RE.

Denmark has traditionally been characterized as an ethnic, cultural and religious highly homogeneous country, but a gradual development towards more cultural- and religious pluralism can be seen. Politicians and public debates have been heavily preoccupied for more than 30 years with the so-called increased multi-cultural (and multi-religious) situation, especially what is considered a steady increase of "non-western" immigrants and descendants (65 % of the total of immigrants and descendants), especially those originating in countries with Islam as the majority religion.<sup>3</sup> Immigrants and descendants from all over the world now constitute 10, 7 % of the total population of 5, 6 million (58% of the total of immigrants and 86% of the total of descendants are from non-Western countries'). All the descendants from non-Western countries are under the age of 40, with the highest percent in the age of 0-17 (7, 2% of the total of the population). Most non-Western immigrants are concentrated in the Copenhagen Metropolitan Area and in other bigger cities. In

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<sup>1</sup> This English version of The Constitutional Act of Denmark can be found on [http://www.ft.dk/Dokumenter/Publikationer/Engelsk/~media/Pdf\\_materiale/Pdf\\_publicationer/English/The\\_constitutional\\_act\\_of\\_denmark\\_2013.pdf.ashx/](http://www.ft.dk/Dokumenter/Publikationer/Engelsk/~media/Pdf_materiale/Pdf_publicationer/English/The_constitutional_act_of_denmark_2013.pdf.ashx/)

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion about this, see Jacobsen 2009 and Jensen 2013

<sup>3</sup> Turkey, Lebanon, Pakistan and Iraq is in the top four countries for immigrants from "non-western" countries (Danmarks Statistik 2013)

some places, and thus also in some schools, up to 34,5 % of the population of a municipality is constituted by immigrants, e.g. with a Muslim background. In other regions and municipalities, the number, however, can be as low as 4% (Danmarks Statistik 2013), something with consequences, of course, for the schools and also maybe for discussions about RE, especially in elementary school.<sup>4</sup>

Statistical figures for adherence or membership to religion(s) can be found but quite often the figures must be qualified significantly, since questions about people's religious affiliation are not part of official national statistical surveys.<sup>5</sup> What is for sure, though, is that as of January 2014, 78, 4% of the total population were members of *Folkekirken*, a figure based on the number of people paying the 'church tax' together with the regular income tax. The number of members has declined steadily over the past 30-40 years. In contrast to this number, numbers about adherents to other religions are harder to get at. One way of getting numbers is to look at the numbers of members to those religious organisations that are officially registered as such because they have applied for and been given the status of a so-called acknowledged or recognized religious association ('trossamfund' = 'faith-community'). Since the number of registered religious associations, however, is not equal to the number of religious associations (and they are all legally allowed to exist and function without being registered), the number of adherents in total is even harder to get at. In short: many of the most well-known Christian as well non-Christian religions and denominations have off-shoots also in Denmark but the total number of adherents is rather small. If looking at the registered associations, the 2012 statistical figures show that 88.649 were members of Christian denominations (half of them members of the Catholic Church in Denmark), 43.922 were members of the some 22 registered Muslim associations, and some 7662 members of Buddhist

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<sup>4</sup> Statistic from the school year 2001/12 shows that 50, 4% of the public elementary schools (folkeskoler) have less than 5% pupils with "foreign descent", while 2, 5% of the schools have 50% or more pupils with foreign descent. The majority of the municipalities have less than 10 % pupils with foreign descent, while only three municipalities have 25-30 % and two 30 % or more (UNI•C 2012 [http://uvm.dk/Service/Statistik/Statistik-om-folkeskolen-og-frie-skoler/Statistik-om-elever-i-folkeskolen-og-frie-skoler/~media/UVM/Filer/Stat/PDF12/121122%20Elevtalsnotat%202011\\_12.ashx](http://uvm.dk/Service/Statistik/Statistik-om-folkeskolen-og-frie-skoler/Statistik-om-elever-i-folkeskolen-og-frie-skoler/~media/UVM/Filer/Stat/PDF12/121122%20Elevtalsnotat%202011_12.ashx))

<sup>5</sup> See Jacobsen (2013) for a discussion of problems related to the categorisation of religious identity for statistical purposes.

associations (Center for SamtidsReligion 2013)<sup>6</sup> Tim Jensen estimates the total numbers of religious adherents to Islam (people with a family relation to a wide variety of countries where Islam is the majority religion) as 205,000, to Buddhism 18.000, to Hinduism 13.000 and Judaism 3000. All in all: adherents to other religious (and other Christian) denominations than *Folkekirken* do not exceed some 5% of the total of the population (Jensen 2013).

RE (either named 'Kristendomskundskab' or 'Religion') is part of the educational system as a non-confessional and 'integrative' subject (Alberts 2007, 347), in primary and lower secondary school called '*Folkeskolen*' as well as in one type of the upper-secondary school programs, namely the *Gymnasium* and its counterpart, Higher Preparatory Examination (HF).

In the *Gymnasium*, the subject *Religion* was introduced in 1877 as a non-confessional subject and in 1967 the subject called *Kristendomskundskab* ('Knowledge of Christianity') (from 1974: *Religion*), came into HF. In 1975 the RE in the elementary school was changed to a non-confessional subject Due to different historical and cultural arguments, and particular the idea of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity as an important and constitutive aspect of a so-called 'Danish culture and heritage' or 'European/Danish foundational values', Christianity (especially Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity) is given more time in the various RE subjects, and it may be argued that it is also afforded a special status in the RE subject in *Folkeskolen*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Annual reports on membership of religious communities and religion in Denmark is produced by Center for SamtidsReligion at University of Aarhus, see <http://samtidsreligion.au.dk/religion-i-danmark/>

<sup>7</sup> See for example Jensen 2005, 2013 and Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013

## 2. The Danish educational system and RE<sup>8</sup>

The Danish educational system consists of the Danish *Folkeskole* (a comprehensive school covering both primary and lower secondary education), youth educations (upper-secondary and vocational education and training), higher education and a system of adult education.<sup>9</sup> Education is compulsory for ten years (grade 0 to 9) between the age of 6 and 16, and the public school also offers an optional 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Apart from the public school Denmark has a fairly important parallel system of private, 'independent' schools (*friskoler*) and continuation schools (*efterskoler*), most of them heavily supported by the state.<sup>10</sup> There are about 548 private schools (incl. *friskoler*), and some of these are based on religious ideologies and with the aim of combining general education with an education about the religion of the parents. Most religious private schools are Christian (22 classified as Catholic and 34 as Christian - most of them Lutheran-Protestant) but there are also about 22 Muslim private schools.<sup>11</sup> Many of the private and independent schools prepare the pupils for the same final exams as the *Folkeskole*, but can choose not to offer exams in *Kristendomskundskab* (*Undervisningsministeriet* 2013h §8a, 3). Though most

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<sup>8</sup> An English language overview of the Danish educational system is provided by the Ministry of Education at <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Overview-of-the-Danish-Education-System> and for Higher Education by the Ministry of Education and Science at <http://fivu.dk/en/education-and-institutions/higher-education>.

A comprehensive description is also presented by EU through *Europedia (European Encyclopedia on National Education Systems)* [https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Main\\_Page](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/mwikis/eurydice/index.php/Main_Page) (last accessed April 2014) and in UNESCO (2012).

<sup>9</sup> Adult education can be formal (vocational training programs or general programs at lower secondary level or levels coherent to the Higher Preparatory Examination Programme) or non-formal adult education (folk high schools, evening schools etc.)

<sup>10</sup> Private and independent schools can be divided in small independent schools in rural districts (*friskoler*), large independent schools in urban districts (*privatskoler*), religious or congregational schools, immigrant schools, German minority schools or schools with a particular educational aim. Continuation schools are a popular alternative at the 9<sup>th</sup> and especially 10<sup>th</sup> level of the compulsory school. The pupils live at the schools for one or two years, and besides normal school subjects (most continuation schools prepare the pupils to the same final exams as the *Folkeskole*) the continuation schools offers sports, music or other creative activities. This tradition and the tradition of '*friskoler*' mainly originates in the ideas and initiatives of the theologian and politician N.F.S. Grundtvig, and the teacher, Christen Kold. They thus often have a certain Lutheran-Protestant 'spirit' even if not explicitly pro-Christian.

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.uvm.dk/Service/Statistik/Statistik-om-folkeskolen-og-frie-skoler/Statistik-om-grundskoler/Antal-grundskoler>; [http://friegrundskoler.dk/?page\\_id=20](http://friegrundskoler.dk/?page_id=20)

subjects taught in private schools therefor have to be in line with the national curricula for the same subjects in the public school, it is difficult to find information on how RE is taught in e.g. Christian private schools

At most Muslim private schools, RE is timetabled as 'Knowledge of Religion' (religionskundskab), but it is characterised as confessional instruction in Islam (Ihle 2007, 53; see also Jensen 2004 on Muslim private schools and RE).

General upper-secondary school (academically oriented) is organized in four school-programs with different profiles, aiming at preparing the students for further studies and 'Allgemeinbildung' (*almendannelse*).<sup>12</sup> The 3-year 'Upper-Secondary Leaving Examination' (STX) also called *Gymnasium* and the 2-year full time 'Higher Preparatory Examination' (HF) consisting of compulsory subjects, subjects constituting a specialized study program, as well as of electives within humanities, natural science and social science are the most interesting in regard to RE.<sup>13</sup> The 3-year 'Higher Commercial Examination' (HHX) is offered at business schools and focus on business and socio-economic disciplines, and the 3-year 'Higher Technical Examination' (HTX) is offered at technical schools. More than 60% attends one of these general upper-secondary programs, mainly offered at public institutions.<sup>14</sup>

The educational system is managed centrally by two ministries.<sup>15</sup> The ministries issue the national normative curricula and non-normative guidelines for the various subjects or programs. These curricula function as frameworks to be implemented by the municipalities and local school board for the *Folkeskole* or by the self-governing

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<sup>12</sup> The usage and connotations of the Danish terms 'dannelse' and 'almendannelse' (often used synonymously) come very close to the usage and connotations of the German 'Allgemeinbildung'. The Danish terms refer to a sort of general, all-round education obtained in formal or informal ways and referring to what a person ought to know in order to be regarded as properly educated. Especially *dannelse* also includes the senses of 'formation' and 'development' thus referring to the ways in which a person and/or citizen is shaped or formed. The English term 'education' corresponds more precisely to the Danish 'uddannelse'.

<sup>13</sup> HF admits persons who have completed the 10th optional grade of *Folkeskolen*, while admission to the other programs is the compulsory education (0-9 grade). HF is also offered as 1-year single subjects or packages of subject at adult education centres; approximately 80.000 students complete one or more subjects per year.

<sup>14</sup> <http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Upper-Secondary-Education/Four-Upper-Secondary-Education-Programmes-in-Denmark>. Only few private Gymnasiums exist (20), and they lead to the same final examination, and therefor are governed by the same rules as the public institutions (Eurypedia 2014).

<sup>15</sup> The Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education and Science.



upper-secondary schools and the higher education system. The overall legal framework for the *Folkeskole* is regulated by *Folkeskoleloven* ('The Education Act'). From 1<sup>st</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> grade, *Kristendomskundskab* is a compulsory subject, since 2006 also part of a group of subjects with possible exams.<sup>16</sup> However special paragraphs concerning this subject are given in the Education Act: the subject is timetabled with one or to lessons per week each year, except at the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> grade during many of the pupils follow an out-of-school religious instruction for confirmation by a local Lutheran minister (§ 5), and there is also an opt-out possibility for pupils and teachers (Undervisningsministeriet 2010b, § 6, § 31.<sup>17</sup> The main field of knowledge is stated to be the Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity of *Folkekirken*, while 'other religions and views of life (*livsanskuelser*) are to be included and taught only in 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> grade level. (Undervisningsministeriet 2010b, § 6).

Teacher education aimed at *Folkeskolen* is a four year program offered at a University College<sup>18</sup> and consists of a number of compulsory subjects, one called *Kristendomskundskab/livsoplysning/medborgerskab* (*KLM*), ('Knowledge of Christianity/Life Philosophy/Citizenship' or 'Christian studies/Life Enlightenment/Citizenship').<sup>19</sup> In addition, the students specialize in three main subjects, *inter alia* *Religion/Kristendomskundskab* ('Religion/Knowledge of

<sup>16</sup> In the optional 10<sup>th</sup> grade, the subject *Kristendomskundskab/Religion* ('Knowledge of Christianity/Religion') is an elective subject, if the school offers it.

<sup>17</sup> The main rules read (our translation): "A child may be exempted from the classes in *Kristendomskundskab* following a written request by the person given the custody of the child on the condition that the custody also declares to the headmaster to see to the religious education of the child. Exemption can normally be given only with the beginning of a school year. If the child is 15 years old, exemption can be given only with the consent of the child. The minister of education may lay down [further] rules for the procedure to be followed in the case of exemption" (§6,2). It must be noted, that in the case of a child who is exempted, no authority can examine if the custody provides an alternative religious education and what is demanded of a such. Teachers can be exempted from teaching *Kristendomskundskab* if there is a conflict of conscience (§31).

<sup>18</sup> The teacher education for *Folkeskolen* was in 2011 moved from the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of Education and Science. The education underwent a major reform in 2012 with effect from the fall of 2013, the aims of which were to significantly improve the academic and professional level of the program. For an English description, see <http://fivu.dk/en/education-and-institutions/higher-education/university-colleges/university-college-educations/bachelor-of-education/the-danish-initial-teacher-education-b-ed-programme-for-primary-and-lower-secondary-schools.pdf> (last accessed April, 2014)

<sup>19</sup> 'Life Philosophy' (German *Lebensphilosophie*), 'Life-enlightenment' or 'Enlightenment of life' are different translations of the Danish word *livsoplysning* and refers to a concept developed by the Danish theologian N. F. S Grundtvig. The concept is often connected to the Danish tradition of Philosophy of Life or Life Philosophy also inspired by Grundtvig.

Christianity'). Teachers teaching RE in Folkeskolen so far have not been required to have specialized in this subject in order to teach RE, but with a new reform of the Folkeskole expected to be implemented from 2014-2015, it is a stated goal that all subjects are to be taught by specialized teachers.<sup>20</sup> Educators for the RE subjects in the teacher education have traditionally been recruited from the University Departments of Theology but more teachers with a MA from a University Department of the Study of Religion are now teaching these subjects.

Turning to the upper-secondary school, especially RE in the gymnasium and in HF, mention should be made first of the fact that there is no explicit link between the two when it comes to RE. There is no mentioning in no official documents that the two kinds of RE are to be seen and taught with relation to each other, and the two are actually also very different from each other (see Jensen 2014b).

The overall aims for the *Gymnasium* as stated in the relevant Education Act (*STX-bekendtgørelsen*) are to prepare the pupils for further education, provide them with 'Allgemeinbildung', with creative, innovative and critical skills, to prepare them for taking active part in the democratic society and to contribute to the development and understanding of national, European and global perspectives. The different subjects are, in contrast to what is the case in elementary school, closely connected to the relevant academic scientific subjects (Undervisningsministeriet 2013c, § 1). *Religion* in the *Gymnasium* (Stx) is a normal compulsory subject, timetabled with three lessons per week for one year, ending with an oral exam related to the analysis of a primary source, normally a text from some religion. Following a major reform of the *Gymnasium* and HF in 2005, students can now also choose to take a further B-level elective in *Religion* in addition to the compulsory C-level subject *Religion*. The two-year HF education have the same overall aims as the *Gymnasium*, but are also to have a more 'application-oriented' profile (*anvendelsesorienteret*). In 2005 the former subject *Religion* in HF became a part of a subject package called *Kultur- og samfundsfagsgruppe* ('Cultural and Social Sciences') together with the subjects

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<sup>20</sup> Statistic from 2013 shows, that 62 % of the teachers teaching *Kristendomskundskab* do not have this subject as one of their specialized subjects, which is the highest percent compared to the other school subjects (Undervisningsministeriet 2013g)

*Historie* ('History') and *Samfundsfag* ('Social Science'). The different subjects are to interact and each contribute with knowledge and tools built around cross-disciplinary themes. HF students can in addition also join the teaching in *Religion* at B-level. There is no opt-out possibility in the *Gymnasium* and HF. The RE teachers in the *Gymnasium* and HF are educated to MA level at the three Danish university departments of the Study of Religion.

### **3. National curricula for RE in the *Gymnasium* and HF<sup>21</sup>**

The Ministry of Education (upon the recommendations of an appointed expert group of RE-teachers and scholars from the university departments for the study of religions) issues the national curricula for the RE subjects in the *Gymnasium* and HF, called '*Læreplaner*' and for non-normative guidelines (*vejledninger*). Minor revisions can also be made by the appointed *fagkonsulent* ('Educational inspectorate'). Religion in the *Gymnasium* and HF is, as indicated above, closely linked to the academic study of religions. This can also be seen in the opening statement in the *Religion* guideline: "It is taken as self-evident as regards Religion in the *Gymnasium* that the teaching is study-of-religions based" (Undervisningsministeriet 2013e, 2, our translation). Besides, there are various kinds of formal or non-formal cooperation and mutual exchange of information between *Religion* teachers and the university departments for the study of religions and scholars of religion. Many *Religion* teachers function as external examiners at oral and written exams at the three university departments for the study of religions, the Association for *Religion* Teachers and the *fagkonsulent* frequently ask scholars of religion to arrange in-service training for *Religion* teachers and study trips and many university scholars from the study of religion writes textbooks.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For a more detailed historical account and analysis of the national curricula in the *Gymnasium* and *HF* in English, see Jensen 2007, Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013 and Jensen 2014. Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013 has served as starting point for part of this passage. For historical accounts in Danish, see for example Bugge 1994, Jensen 1994 and Iversen 2009.

<sup>22</sup> See Jensen 2007 and Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013

## RE in the Gymnasium

The 2013 curriculum for the compulsory C-level subject *Religion* in the *Gymnasium* defines the 'identity of the subject' as follows:

In Religion, the world religions are central, and Christianity is obligatory. The religions and their key phenomena are to be described and interpreted on a scientific, non-confessional basis in their relation to individual, group, society and nature. The subject covers the origin of the religions, their historical development, contemporary manifestations and historical bearing (*virkningshistorie; cf. German: Wirkungsgeschichte*). The perspective of the teaching is global. The role of the religions in the European and Danish history of ideas and identity formation receives special attention. The pupils are to work primarily with textual sources and other documentary material. (Undervisningsministeriet 2013f, our translation)

The overall aims are that the pupils achieve:

- knowledge about and understanding of religions
- insight in coherence and areas of conflict in specific religions, between religions and between religions and society.
- understanding of own and others positions (*holdninger*) on the basis of religious and secular traditions.
- qualifications in order to take a position (*tage stilling til*) and act with reference to those challenges religions give in a modern national and global context. (Undervisningsministeriet 2013f, our translation)

The focus and aim of the subject can thus be categorized as providing the students with historical-cultural and academic based knowledge about religion(s) and contribute to their personal and social knowledge and formation in order to better understand and handle the multi-religious and multi-cultural reality of Denmark, Europe and a globalized world.

These aims are supplemented with academic aims (*faglige mål*), stating that the students shall:

- give an oral presentation of religious-related topics (religionsfagligt stof) and use basic terminology pertaining to the scientific study of religions
- account for fundamental aspects of Christianity, including formative, historical and contemporary forms
- account for essential aspects of Islam and another world religion
- account for phenomenology concepts of religion such as myth (cosmogony, eschatology), ritual, religious specialists, cult and axis mundi

- characterize, interpret and put into perspective textual sources and other documentary material
- interpret and evaluate religious positions and areas of problems from a religious insider's point of view as well as from secular point of views, including criticism of religion
- be able to formulate on essential problem areas (*problemstillinger*) with regard to the relation between religion and modern society in a global context
- be able to express themselves in an academic manner as regards religious ethical problematics
- demonstrate knowledge about the identity and methods of the subject

In order to fulfil these academic aims, the curriculum defines the core content as:

- Christianity, in its global, yet especially European and Danish context and manifestations. This includes texts from the Old and New Testaments, from later times, and today.
- Islam, in a global perspective, including its European and Danish contexts. This includes texts from the Qur'an and present-day texts.
- A world religion (Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Japanese or Chinese religions).
- The key phenomena of religions, along with terminology and methods pertaining to the academic study of religions. (Undervisningsministeriet 2013f, our translation)

It is explicitly stated that the subject needs to cover more than the core content. The teaching must deal with at least one more area, either a specific religious-related topic, or another religion. It is also an obligation that the contents should be seen in interaction with other subjects. The curriculum states that 30 percent of the time shall be used on Christianity. As for didactical principles, it is stipulated that the religions, should be approached on the one hand as specific cultural and historic formations, each with its own identity and problems, and on the other hand, must also be approached from a comparative perspective as a cross-cultural phenomenon with general themes and problems. The religions are mainly approached through the study of classical and representative textual sources and other materials including IT, but religious objects, music, fieldwork should also be included. The overall approach to the texts and material should be a combination of descriptive, interpretative and critical approaches, thus paying attention to the self-understanding of the religions and to the secular points of views on the religions.

As mentioned above, Religion in 2005 became a B-level elective subject and can thus be part of a special 'profile' of a student's exam. The identity, aims and didactical principles of the subject are almost identical with the C-level subject, but even more stress is laid on a scientific approach. This can be seen in the general aims, which are supplied with the aim of developing the student's level of educational competence through academic absorption and competent use of theory and methods pertaining to the academic study of religions. The student are also, next to the academic aims from the C-level subject, to be able to account for these methods and theories, to analyse and discuss a longer and more complex text of religious or religious-related academic text and produce and discuss a research question (*problemformulering*). The core content is like the C-level about Christianity and Islam, but the third world religion are restricted to Buddhism or Hinduism, which also are to include texts from the formative and contemporary period. The content is supplemented with "theory from the science of religion" and a longer religious or religious-related academic text (some 30 pages). The core content is to be supplemented and shall include *either* one or two ethical, philosophy of religion or religious-related topics *or* on or two religions, and it is a must to include excursions and field work at the B-level. Finally it is stated that if Religion-B is part of a specialized study program, the profile of this is to be taken into consideration when choosing some of the content.

As can be seen, the subject in the *Gymnasium* is closely connected to the academic study of religions with focus on scientifically based knowledge, methods and theories *about* religion, on religious and non-religious discourses about religion and religions, the diversity of religions and diversity in religions as well as issues related to religions in society. The subject aims at contributing to the students *Allgemeinbildung* and social formation by providing the students with knowledge and analytical-critical skills. The overall perspective and content is to be pluralistic and global, yet also give special attention to a national and European perspective.

## RE in HF

Until the reform in 2005, the national curriculum for Religion in HF was very close to the Gymnasium curriculum. Now, as mentioned above, Religion, History and Social Science form a an integrated *Kultur- og Samfundsfagsgruppe* cluster ('Culture and Social sciences') with one exam and a common curriculum, but also with a specific core curriculum for each subject. The 'identity' of this cluster is to give the students:

insight in the interaction between the historical, social and cultural development locally, national and international as regards both interpretation of existence (*tilværelsestolkning*), the fundamental conditions of life (*livsvilkår*) and the opportunities for self-realization and action (*udfoldelses- og handlemuligheder*) of the individual (Undervisningsministeriet 2013d, our translation).

The students are to gain knowledge about and understanding of central elements of the historical development, the complexity of the modern society and dynamics, different religions, cultural values and 'views of life' (*livsanskuelser*) with the aim of developing the students self- and world understanding in order to prepare them for active participation in a modern, multicultural and democratic society. The academic aims read (Undervisningsministeriet 2013d, our translation):

The students shall be able to:

- use and combine knowledge and methods from the subjects in order to gain insight in historical, societal and cultural interactions and understand the different subjects special profile
- account for different life-views, religions and political basic positions and their impact in a historical and contemporary context
- reflect about humans as formed by and creators of history
- discuss one own and other's cultural values in relation to present time and the past
- use knowledge about central periods in order to understand cultural and societal interactions in the history of Denmark
- place religions and their historical bearing (*virkningshistorie*; cf. German: *Wirkungsgeschichte*) on different aspects of European culture and thinking
- examine relations between relevant variables and social and cultural patterns.

The common overall areas to be approached in a combination of the three subjects are:

- Globalization and meetings of cultures
- An area study project
- Identity formation in traditional, modern and late-modern societies
- Religious and political developments and innovations (*brud*) in a Danish or European perspective
- The good society (Undervisningsministeriet 2013d, our translation)

The teaching shall, as minimum, comprise four modules, where the three subjects support each other, taking as their starting points concrete problems of real life. The core content in *Religion* is:

- Christianity, with focus on its European and Danish manifestations, including biblical and present-day texts
- Islam, including text from the Qur'an and present-day texts and a European/Danish context
- some aspects of one more religion and central phenomena of the religions
- religious, ethical or philosophical problems
- the social, political and cultural role of religions past and present

(Undervisningsministeriet 2013d, our translation)

Activities outside the school, including field work studies (e.g. visits to religious institutions and sites) are to be included and the common themes shall be dealt with using methods, knowledge and concepts from the different subjects.

As can be seen, Religion in HF differs from Religion in Stx in several ways. First and foremost the content is more 'application-oriented' in line with the general profile of HF, and thus focus more on religions in relation to their social and cultural bearings past and present and political, social and cultural problems as well as cultural 'identity-formation'. Moreover the curriculum does not put the same weight, as was the case with the *Gymnasium*, on terminology, theories and methods pertaining to the scientific study of religions as a core content, all though it is mentioned as didactical principles. Instead ethical and philosophical problems are part of the core content, which recently (2013) has been removed from the core content in the *Gymnasium* subject.



#### **4. Religion-related topics and themes in other upper-secondary school subjects**

Religion-related topics and themes are not mentioned explicit in the national curricula for other upper-secondary subjects in the *Gymnasium*. Different subject-areas or core contents in some of the subjects *may* include perspectives of religion or religions: this could be the case in the compulsory subject *Oldtidskundskab* ('classical studies') that *Religion* is obliged to cooperate with. In the elective subjects 'Greek' and 'Latin', the teaching includes the history and culture of Antiquity and its bearings on European culture, and in different language subjects (compulsory, specialized or elective) like Arabic, Turkish, Japanese, Italian, German and English, the culture and history of the respective countries is part of the teaching. However, religion(s) are not mentioned explicitly anywhere in the normative curricula. In 'History', the European Middle Ages and the Reformation are mentioned as part of the core contents. In HF the subject *Dansk* ('Danish') includes Christian 'psalms' as part of the literature to be analysed, but besides this, themes of religion are not part of any other subjects in HF.

The picture is the same for the upper-secondary education in Higher Commercial Examination (HHX). A subject called *Samtidshistorie* ('Contemporary History') includes culture- and life conditions as well as the history of the last 200 years in national and international context, - but no specific references to religion-related themes are given (Undervisningsministeriet 2013a).

In the Higher Technical Examination (HTX) the compulsory subject called *Teknologihistorie C* ('History of technology') lists as core contents different time periods from Antiquity to modern times, to be studied from different approaches, *inter alia* 'the philosophical' and focusing on epistemological, ethical and value-based (*værdimæssige*) aspects of technologies and their implementation. A 'social science approach' is to focus on the interplay between technology and other cultural formations, including religion (Undervisningsministeriet 2013b). But nothing more specific is mentioned.

The pupils can choose a B-level subject called *Idéhistorie* ('History of Ideas') with a technical profile as part of their specialized study program. The subject aims to contribute to the pupils understanding of the development of human ideas about nature, technology, society and the individual. The contents areas are, as in 'History of technology', different time periods that shall be studied from different approaches. One is 'Ethics and existence', including:

- development of ethical basic ideas about human existence,
- the impact of ethics and existential philosophy on modern life-understandings
- ethical and existential aspects about development and implementation of technology.

Another is 'Belief and rationality', including:

- beginning and development of religions, mythological systems, life-views (*livsanskuelser*) and other metaphysical systems and beliefs
- contrasts, tensions and interaction between belief and knowledge
- secular and religious currents in the modern society

(Undervisningsministeriet 2013b, our translation).

What kind of teacher education such teaching would require, there is no indication of. Teachers in this kind of upper-secondary are not educated e.g. at the university departments for the study of religion.

A shared national curriculum is given for different possible electives, the different types of upper-secondary school may offer. Apart from the different language subjects and the above mentioned electives or specialized subjects, the subjects *International teknologi og kultur C* ('International technology and culture C'), *Kulturforståelse C* and *B* ('Understanding of culture') may be offered, and they may sometimes be part of a specialized profile in HHX and HTX.

Again it is characteristic that concepts, theories and issues of cultures are included without explicit reference to religion(s) (Undervisningsministeriet 2010a).

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