

STANDARDS OF EMPLOYING RELIGION TEACHERS IN THE POLISH  
EDUCATION SYSTEM

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The right to teach religion returned to the Polish educational system, mainly to public institutions after a long break in 1990-1991. Legal grounds for teaching religion in kindergartens and public schools are found in the regulations of the Concordat of the Holy See and the Republic of Poland signed in Warsaw on 28.7.1993 [3] and the Act of September 7, 1991 on the education system [8], as well as the ordinance of the Ministry of National Education of April 14, 1992 on conditions and methods of organizing the process of teaching religion in public kindergartens and schools [7]. Therefore, according to the provision of Art. 12 of the Act on the public education system, kindergartens, primary and junior high schools are obliged to organize religious education at the request of parents, while public upper secondary schools ought to do that at the request of parents or adult students. It should be recognized that students' parents or students themselves may choose whether to participate in religion or ethics classes or not. It is worth noting that both students, as well as parents may not declare the will to participate in either of the above at all. The application of catechesis in public schools does not include adult schools, however, according to art. 12 paragraph 5 of the Concordat, The Catholic Church may use the freedom of teaching catechesis to adults, including academic ministry [4]. In non-public as well as public schools with the rights of public schools there is no obligation to organize religious education.

Religion lessons in Poland can be conducted by: diocesan priests, nuns, religious, deacons and alumni, as well as lay catechists and catechists. Religion teachers are employed in accordance with the Act on the education system [8, Article 12], however, it should be noted that classes in religion lessons can only be conducted by teachers who own a special written referral to a given kindergarten or school issued by: a relevant diocesan bishop in the case of the Catholic Church, whereas for other Churches and other religious associations a written referral is issued by the superior authorities of these Churches and religious associations. The teachers of the Catholic religion must own a so-called *missio canonica* – a special type of a referral from given by a diocesan bishop [3, article 12, paragraph 3]. The referral should be attached to the school's employment contract. The provisions of the concordat as an international agreement bind both parties to this agreement in equal parts, so the concordat is both a kind of a church and a state law. These provisions concern only teachers of the Catholic religion, however, the same principles also apply to the employment of public religion teachers of other faiths or denominations by public schools [5]. Churches and religious associations have the opportunity to influence the choice of a catechist in a kindergarten or public school. Attention is paid to the fact that the catechist of a given faith or denomination is not only a teacher and educator, but most of all a person that teaches the truths which constitute the message of the faith of a given church. *Missio canonica* is a guarantee of the allegiance of a given catechist to the doctrine of a church which designated him to perform this function [5 pp. 37-38, 4]. Withdrawing this mission will

mean losing the possibility of such teaching. Religion teachers are part of the school's teaching council where they do their work, apart from that they also have the right to perform organizational classes of a social-religious and ecumenical character on the school's premises. Secular catechists may be employed on a part-time basis. Some of them combine teaching religion with teaching other classes, e.g. Polish, geography. Such people graduated from pedagogical studies in a selected position and after that completed post-graduate theological and catechetical studies. Only such teachers might become form teachers, however people employed only as catechists have no such possibility. The catechist is subject to two institutions: the Board of Education, which checks the teaching methodology and the compliance of teaching with the program. However, such control can also be carried out by the headmaster of the school or kindergarten. The other institution is the diocesan curia, which has the right to check the content of religious instruction in accordance with the adopted program. The salary of a religion teacher is determined depending on the degree of his or her education and the level of career advancement. Pedagogical supervision over the teaching of religion and ethics in terms of teaching methodology and compliance with the program is conducted by the school's or kindergarten's headmaster and pedagogical supervision staff. Moreover, there are visitors appointed by the diocesan bishops of the Catholic Church and the superior authorities of other Churches and religious associations and those people are authorized to visit religion lessons. When employing religion teachers, the headmaster is obliged to work closely with churches and other religious associations. Headmasters do not have the freedom to employ any person as a religion teacher in the school they manage, because qualifications depend on having a canonical mission. In practice, the headmaster will not be able to dismiss the catechist employed at his or her own school, because then he or she will not be able to secure the school's religion teacher's position [2, p. 239].

According to the Regulation of April 14, 1992 schools and institutions are required to organize catechesis for a group of not fewer than 7 students of a given class or department. In case of a lower number of students in a class or department or pupils in a kindergarten group, religion classes should be organized in an interdepartmental or interclass group. If a will to participate in the catechesis of a given deposition or depositions is commonly declared by fewer than 7 students, the organ governing a school or an institution in consultation with a relevant church or a religious association is obliged to organize religion classes in a interschool group or an out-of-school (or out-of-kindergarten) catechetical point. In a situation where students or pupils of schools and kindergartens run by different organs take part in an interschool catechetical point, the aforementioned organs settle and agree on the rules on which running such groups or catechetical points should be based [7,6].

Employment of religion teachers in the Polish education system is based on the Act of January 26, 1982. – Teacher's Card (translator's note – Karta Nauczyciela) [1] and on the base of a referral received, a so-called *missio canonica*, whereas their dismissal is based on a written cancellation of a referral made by a the Diocesan Bishop with a proper information passed to the authorities running the school.

REFERENCES

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8. *Ustawa z dnia 7 września 1991 r. o systemie oświaty* (i.e. Journal of Laws of 2019, item 1481).