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Quality of Religious Education in Croatia Assessed from Teachers' Perspective

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Please cite as:

Barić, D. & Burušić, J. (in press). Quality of Religious Education in Croatia Assessed from Teachers' Perspective, *British Journal of Religious Education*.

In Press

Abstract

The main aim of the present study was to examine the quality of religious education in Croatian primary schools when assessed from teachers' perspective. Religious education teachers (N=226) rated the impact of certain factors on the existing quality of religious education in primary schools and expressed their expectations about the future status of this aspect of education. In addition, teachers rated different sources of their professional satisfaction as religious education teachers. We identified understandable latent dimensions of teachers' opinions, expectations and satisfaction where retained dimensions are modestly interrelated. The conducted regression analyses suggest that teachers with different professional status-related personal attributes are fairly uniform in their views, expectations and satisfactions. Interesting finding of this study concerns the relationship between school-based Catholic religious education and the parish-based catechesis, where existing relationship represent weak source of religious education teachers satisfaction. This represents the valuable empirically driven insight regarding the Catholic religious education in the Croatian schools with some importance to the broader context of religious education in general.

Keywords:

Religious education, teacher education, school quality, Croatian primary schools

Quality of Religious Education in Croatia Assessed from Teachers' Perspective

Quality assurance in educational systems has recently emerged as a crucial issue in almost all the educational policies around the world. An incentive for quality improvement in educational contexts comes from various sources and represents a concern of all the stakeholders in education. In the Croatian educational system, in the last two decades a variety of changes occurred at different educational levels from preschool to tertiary education. The changes aimed to improve all parts of the current school curriculum: course contents, the instruction process, teaching methods, and teachers. All these changes were intended to increase the quality of education.

The new social situation, which emerged after the fall of the communist regime in Croatia, also initiated changes in the educational system. Perhaps the most notable among them, concerns religious education in public schools, whereby in the 1990s religious education of all confessions became a part of the Croatian school curriculum. Current education legislative permits confessional religious education in preschool, primary and secondary education, as an elective subject. In this regard, the Croatian model of school-based religious education is similar to existing practices of religious education in other European countries (Pépin, 2009; Ziebertz & Riegel, 2009).

Catholic religious education is an elective school subject in the public school curriculum, and students can choose whether they will attend it at the beginning of the school year. It provides to all the students who choose it an accurate and authentic introduction to the Catholic religion, and an opportunity for growth in their personal, religious and cultural identities through dialogue, ecumenism and acceptance of different people, worldviews, religions, and confessional and cultural expressions. Some studies indicate that around 87% of primary and 80% of secondary school students take the course every school year (Razum, 2009).

Twenty years after it has been (re)introduced in the Croatian schools, Catholic religious education has gained a reputation and a place in the educational system. Introduction of religious education in the educational system stimulated a lot of questions, where certain social groups tried to negate the need for religious education in public schools. Although it can be an inspiring question for a debate, this issue is not covered in this study. The present study focused on primary school Catholic religious education teachers and their

opinions, satisfaction and expectations regarding Catholic religious teaching in primary schools.

Catholic religious education teachers, like all other schools teachers, have a significant and influential role in achieving their subjects' curriculum goals and objectives. Teachers' professional formation, which in the case of religious teachers takes place at theological university departments and theological institutes, should provide them with theoretical knowledge and the needed teaching competence and expertise. This initial education should also provide certain lifelong learning competencies. Teachers must be able to answer all the challenges of the current time (EURYDICE, 2003; European Commission, 2004; OECD, 2005). Teachers of Catholic religious education should possess sophisticated learning, communicational and organizational competencies, as important prerequisites in achieving educational goals and learning objectives. Furthermore, in daily school work, teachers should implement theologically-based teaching and, in addition, provide their students with a true Christian and a genuine religious experience (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002). In encyclical terms, except for being intermediaries of the content, they are first and foremost its trustworthy witnesses (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). In this sense, a teacher of Catholic religious education should successfully complete a program of professional formation at the accredited theological institution, should attend programs aimed at continuing education, and should be a trustworthy witness of learning content. These are the ultimate requirements and a teacher who fulfills them can earn the canonical mission (*Missio Canonica*), issued by the diocesan bishop. In this way, the Catholic Church approves teachers to teach religious education in the schools in their name (Holy See, 1983).

The question to what extent the completed formal education prepares the teachers for the challenging school environment is always an intriguing one. For these reasons, studies that examine the teacher education process and its impact on the overall education quality present a serious contribution in quality assurance matters (Hanushek, 2002; Evertson, Hawley & Zlotnik, 1995; Darling-Hammond, 2012). Darling-Hammond (2006) indicates that, despite numerous studies we are still faced with a certain paradox whereby “many lay people and a large part of policy makers hold the view that almost anyone can teach reasonably well – that entering teaching requires, at most, knowing something about a subject, and the rest of the fairly simple ‘tricks of the trade’ can be picked up on the job” (p. 2). Such a paradox is even more pronounced in the empirically under-researched educational systems than in those where the facts are available. In the contemporary Croatian educational

system, a limited number of empirically based studies exist, and we do not know enough about various aspects of the educational system (Burušić, Babarović & Šakić, 2009).

Therefore, in the present study we sought to examine the opinions, satisfaction and expectations of religious education teachers about some aspects of Catholic religious education quality in primary schools. Since there have not been enough empirical studies about teachers, a study on how religious education teachers perceive their profession and the importance of Catholic religious education represents a significant contribution to a better understanding. The first aim of the present study is to examine the general opinions of religious education teachers about some determinants of Catholic religious education quality in primary schools. Among other, we tried to examine, in more detail how teachers perceive the practice of professional formation of religious education teachers in Croatia, what is the current reputation of the religious education teacher job, how good is the interaction between them and their students and colleagues in the school. To a certain degree, all of these aspects represent areas of interest in every teacher's job perception, not only in the case of religious education teachers. Existing education-related studies identified and explained some of them as possible determinants of the quality of teaching and teachers' jobs (Huitt, 2003; Babelan & Kia, 2010; Mandarić, Hoblaj & Razum, 2011; European Commission, 2004; Ziebertz & Riegel, 2009).

Additionally, we aimed to explore the professional satisfaction of Catholic religious education teachers. This could provide a further insight about the status of Catholic religious education in Croatian school system. In addition, consideration of this aspect can provide us with valuable information about the teacher profession in general. Levels of job satisfaction and quality of teachers' professional life represent a significant part in teacher profession related literature (Hanushek, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 2012).

The final aim of the present study was to further examine religious education teachers' views about the immediate future and their expectations about the status of Catholic religious education in Croatian school system in the future. Although Catholic religious education strives to maintain its uniqueness, it is also quite clear that its position is in some degree interdependent with changes in the Croatian educational system. The current opinions and religious education teachers' expectations about the Catholic religious education status in the future are in that context quite informative and useful.

Method

Participants

Participants in the study were 226 religious education teachers from Croatian primary schools. The average age of the teachers was 38.1.

Measures

Three measures were used in the assessment of religious education teachers' opinions, satisfaction and expectations about religious education in primary schools. They are designed during a wider research project which sought to examine a range of issues related to religious education teachers and practice (Barić, 2010). The constructions of the measures was started with a comprehensive analysis of the formation process of religious education teachers in Republic of Croatia and are further enriched with the analysis of secondary sources (e.g education legislative, Church regulations etc.) related to existing teaching practice. This has led to the creation of the initial list of factors that may influence or determine teachers' opinions, satisfaction and expectations related to religious education. After several steps of redundancy analysis, factors that are largely present or are associated with teaching practice are produced in the final step.

We will briefly describe measures used in the present study:

Opinions about current Catholic religious education quality. Religious education teachers rated on five point Likert scales (ranging from 1 – *it does not affect at all*; to 4 – *affects very much*) to what extent eight determinants affect the quality of current religious education. These determinants are: (i) teachers' professional competencies; (ii) teachers' continuing professional development; (iii) teachers' own spiritual life; (iv) cooperative relationships between teacher and students; (v) teaching practices enhanced by modern instructional technology; (vi) quality of preparation for classes; (vii) quality of relationship between religious education teachers and other teachers (viii) openness of Catholic religious education for acceptance of social changes. The internal reliability of the measure formed in this way, expressed by Cronbach's alpha coefficient, is $\alpha = 0.63$.

Religious education teacher satisfaction. The religious education teachers rated their satisfaction with some elements of Catholic religious education in primary schools. They expressed their satisfaction with: (i) content of curriculum for Catholic religious education;

(ii) Catholic religious education textbooks; (iii) status of Catholic religious education and its' acceptance within the school; (iv) the interrelationship between Catholic religious education and other school subjects; (v) the relationship between school-based Catholic religious education and parish-based catechesis; and (vi) the general attitude towards the profession of religious education teacher. Teachers rated each aspect of the curriculum on a five point Likert scale (ranging from 1 – *not at all satisfied*; to 4 – *very satisfied*). The internal consistency of this composite measure is $\alpha = 0.70$.

Teachers' expectations about the status of Catholic religious education in the future. Teachers considered the possible influence of certain factors on the future position of Catholic religious education in the primary school setting. They rated on a five point Likert scale (ranging from 1 – *it will not affect at all*; to 4 – *will affect very much*) their expectations about the possible effects of different factors on the future status of Catholic religious education. These factors are: (i) Catholic religious education curricular commitment to the fundamental truths; (ii) Catholic religious education openness to societal changes; (iii) Catholic religious education ability to meet students' demands and inquiries; (iv) quality of initial education of teachers acquired during the theological study; (v) teachers' continuing professional development, and (vi) teachers' spirituality and moral behavior. The internal consistency of this composite measure is a modest $\alpha = 0.49$.

Status-related attributes of religious education teachers. In the present study, we also collected some status-related information: (i) *gender* (1 – male; 2 – female); (ii) *age*; (iii) *clergy or lay status* (1 – clergy individual; 2 – lay individual); (iv) *professional university affiliation* (1 – Zagreb University Theological Faculty; 2 – Zagreb University Catechetical Institute; 3 – Other affiliation) and (v) *work experience* (expressed in years of service as a teacher). These data were needed in order to test whether the findings of this study can be generalized across with different characteristics.

Procedure

The data used in this study were collected in research project focused on examining various aspects of religious education teachers' experiences in the Archdiocese of Zagreb. The data were collected in the period between December 2008, and January 2009 on the religious education teachers' regular meeting held in Zagreb. At the first meeting, the teachers were informed about the general purpose of the study and were given a detailed

explanation about the general research context. This was also an opportunity to familiarize them with assessment procedures. Every participant received an envelope with the survey questionnaire. The questionnaire had to be fulfilled individually and send back to predefined return address. Religious education teachers did not have to provide any personal data, and the survey was fully anonymous. The return rate was 65.78%, whereby 275 of the 418 distributed surveys were returned.

Data analysis

We used several descriptive and multivariate statistical procedures to analyze the data. In order to examine the underlying dimensionality of teachers' opinions, expectations and satisfaction, we performed principal component analysis, with the Kaiser–Guttman criterion for factor retention, and a Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization. A stepwise regression analysis was performed to determine if some status–related attributes of the religious education teachers determine teachers' perception, satisfaction and expectations about Catholic religious education.

Results

The teachers assessed to which degree certain factors affect the current religious education in primary schools. The estimated importance of these quality determinants is presented in Table 1.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

According to teachers' opinion, teachers' own spiritual life ($M=3.69$), cooperative relationship between teacher and students ($M=3.66$) and excellence of teachers' professional education ($M=3.61$) are influential determinants of quality of catholic religious education. The dimensions underlying teacher opinions were tested with the principal component analysis, which yielded two significant dimensions. Factor structure matrix after orthogonal rotation is shown in Table 2.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

The structure of the obtained factor loadings and its meaning suggests that two latent determinants affect the current quality: they encompass *the quality of teachers' competence* and the *quality of teaching practice*. Two retained dimensions form a clear and simple factor

structure, and explain almost half of the total variance of the quality of religious education in primary schools (47.28 %).

Next, we wanted to explain teachers' satisfaction with the elements of Catholic religious education curriculum in primary schools. The mean ratings of satisfaction were calculated (Table 3), and the latent source of teachers' satisfaction was determined with principal component analysis. The obtained factor structure matrix of teachers' satisfaction after Varimax rotation is shown in Table 4.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Teachers' professional satisfaction is largely related to Catholic religious education curriculum contents and to status of Catholic religious education and their acceptance within the school. The percentage of the total explained variance in the case of teachers' satisfaction was slightly higher than in the case of determinants of current religious education quality.

Apart from identifying the determinants of current Catholic religious teaching quality and religious education teachers' satisfaction, in this study we also sought to consider the teachers' expectations regarding the position of Catholic religious education in the future. More specifically, we sought to examine how much, in the teachers' opinion, certain factors could affect the religious education in the future. After the religious education teachers had rated these influential factors, we factorized their ratings using the same procedure as previously. The results relating to teachers' expectations about the future are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

[Insert Table 6 about here]

The results suggest that the factors that will affect religious education in the future are fairly similar to those which determine the current quality of this education. After reviewing the factors that affect current religious education quality, discovering the factors that could influence religious education in the future, and considering the main sources of teachers' satisfaction, in all further analyses we used the six composite scores, two for current quality, two for teacher satisfaction and two for expectations about future, as well. We formed each composite score by summing the ratings on the certain questions, which had the greatest

factor loadings on the retained latent dimensions. After the composites were formed, we calculated the intercorrelations between latent determinants. These intercorrelations are given in Table 7.

[Insert Table 7 about here]

The intercorrelations are moderate, and it is apparent that the basic determinants of teachers' satisfaction have somewhat lower correlations with the latent determinants of other aspects of quality. This correlation pattern may indicate that teachers' satisfaction is somewhat different feature of religious education quality, than is the case with perception of current quality and expectations about future.

Finally, in the present study we addressed another intriguing research question. We tested in detail the possibility of explaining the identified latent determinants of current education quality, teachers' satisfaction and teachers' expectations about the future. By stepwise regression analysis procedure, we consider the influence of some status-related teachers' attributes, such a teacher's gender, age, work experience, clergy or lay status, as well as the influence of the type of institution in which teachers completed their theological study. The main objective was to explore the possibility of explaining the identified latent determinants of religious education quality by these attributes. The final regression models obtained by stepwise regression analyses are presented in Table 8.

[Insert Table 8 about here]

The possibility of explaining latent determinants of religious education quality by status-related attributes of teachers is more than modest. The inspection of regression models structure, in cases when they are significant, shows that the teachers' gender, age and work experiences contribute to some degree to the explanation. In the case of teachers' satisfaction, only the latent dimension labeled "satisfaction with status" can be explained to some extent with the difference in the lay/church status.

Discussion

In the present study, some determinants of religious education quality: teacher current opinions, sources of their satisfaction and future expectations about Catholic religious

education in primary schools are identified. They influence the existing practices of religious education, contribute to the formation of expectations about the status of religious education in primary schools in the future and represent the source of religious education teachers' satisfaction, as well. In the performed factor analyses, we identified the latent determinants of teachers' considerations of quality. Underlying dimensionality forms a solid base for teacher opinions, expectations and satisfaction.

Two general factors influence the current quality of Catholic religious education in Croatian primary school. We named them as the *quality of teacher competences* and the *quality of teaching practice*. When rating the specific factors that influence the overall quality of religious education in today's schools, the teachers find the personal spiritual life of the teachers a characteristic of the strongest importance in the school context. Other studies have also to a degree indicated that characteristics of religious education teachers, such as a good initial and permanent education, or personal quality of the teacher, largely contribute to the recognition of Catholic religious education in the school curriculum (Malizia, Trenti & Cicatelli, 2005; Mandarić, Hoblaj & Razum, 2011).

Findings that place strong emphasis on teacher integrity are in line with relevant church's documents which provide the general frame of religious education teachers' formation inside the Catholic Church. Within them, is clearly outlined that religious education teachers are, in their service, not only the intermediaries of content but primary trustworthy witnesses (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). The outcomes of this study indicate that religious education teachers in Croatian primary schools are quite committed to Church's doctrine on integrated learning, which includes religious content, as well as the indispensable spiritual and moral content (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2002).

The results can be compared with other studies (Ciriello, 1990; Cho, 2011) in which participated religious education teachers in public schools but, at the same time, it's also possible to compare the outcomes of the present study with the some studies where participated teachers who teach exclusively in Catholic schools. Thereby, studies consisted of a group of teachers in Catholic schools are more frequent and common idea of these studies deals with the teacher commitment as a crucial factor influencing the effectiveness of the Catholic schools (Cho, 2011; Hackett, 2009).

Bryk, Lee and Holland (1993) concluded that teachers in Catholic schools are guided primarily with the idea of commitment to a common vision and with a strong sense of

community and religiosity. Religious education teachers in this study hold a similar views and opinions like teachers in Catholic schools. Empirical studies involving religious education teachers in public schools are not numerous. Sikes and Everington (2004) stated that, in the comparison with other school–teachers based studies, in existing educational research literature religious education teachers represent to some degree a marginalized group. The exception represents the three–year European research project “Teaching Religion in a multicultural European Society” (TRES) realized between 2006–2008 , in which participated more than 3400 religious education teachers from 16 European Countries (Ziebertz & Riegel, 2009). In this context, religious education teachers in Croatian primary schools to some degree share common practice with other European religious education teachers. The results of the present study suggest that their primary educations goals is closest to perspective labeled as “teaching religion” or what Ziebertz and Riegel (2009) called “religious education in religion”. For comparison, Räsänen and Ubani (2008) presented results from the Finnish education system, which is considered as one of the most respected educations system at level of primary education, 99.6 percent of religious education teachers agreed that “teaching about religion” is the most important goal of religious education in schools. However, a very high of two–thirds of very same religious education teachers (62.7 percent) also states an importance of “teaching religion” in religious education.

Interesting finding of this study concerns the relationship between the existing determinants of current quality of religious education in the school and expected determinants of religious education quality in the future. From religious education teachers’ point of view, they are almost the same. In both cases, teachers expect that quality of their own behavior in the school is a feature of crucial importance. A considerable importance should also be given to curricular requirements as a prerequisite for education in the school at the top level. This represents the valuable empirically driven insight regarding the Catholic religious education in the Croatian schools. Which to some extent contradicts the expectation is that the religious education teachers as relatively less important perceive “the teachers’ continuing professional development” as a factor that will affect the religious education quality in future. Such expectations are contrary to the clear beliefs about the importance of teacher professional development in contemporary educational practice (Rymarz, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999).

In this study, religious teachers’ satisfaction was also of interest. The results clearly show that religious education teachers’ satisfaction is the outcome of *satisfaction with curricular conditions* and *satisfaction with the climate* toward religious education teachers

and Catholic religious education in the Croatian school environment. The most influential specific sources of satisfaction in teachers' school life stem from Catholic religious education curriculum contents. Teachers are also highly satisfied with the existing school climate toward Catholic religious education in the schools. At the same time, it is also an indication that the Catholic religious education in Croatia has formed its own identity as a school subject in comparison to situation of (re)introduction (year 1991), when religious education in public schools faced with a discussion about the name of the school subject, with a lack of qualified teachers, with doubts about the future professional development of teachers and the shortage of textbooks and didactic manuals. Since religious education in Europe will develop in accordance with social, cultural and religious changes (Loobuyck & Franken, 2011), the Catholic religious education in Croatia will permanently facing the challenges of reflection and evaluation of their own objectives and content of teaching, in order to be fully adjust to the current school system.

An intriguing finding of the present study is that religious education teachers are less satisfied with the relationship of school-based Catholic religious education and the parish-based catechesis. This attitude about the relationship of school-based religious education and parish-based catechesis is in line with the existing debates about the optimal forms of religious education. The debate goes back to the occurrence of Catholic religious education in the Croatian educational system in the 1990s, when quite opposed ideas about the primacy of parish activity or the schools activity primacy occurred.

Relevant Church institutions have clearly emphasized that the fundamental religious upbringing will exists in parish communities while school-based religious education should represent a complementary enrichment. It could not represent a substitute for parish-based activities (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997; Hrvatska biskupska konferencija, 2003; Razum, 2009; Šimunović, 2011). Findings of the present study suggest that this ambiguity and misunderstanding still exist in the contexts of religious education. The existence of the Catholic religion education in public schools, in some European countries create the impression that the parish catechism should be on the margins of pastoral action of the Church and should be reduced only to prepare to receive the sacraments (Conferenza episcopale italiana, 2008; Catterin, 2013). In addition, due to insufficient or inadequate information many parents and students perceive the parish catechesis as a duplication or as a repletion of school based religious education. This impression is probably enhanced by the practice from last decades where stronger focus by all involved stakeholders was given to

religious education in public schools than to parish catechesis. All these point to the need for comprehensive discussion about the identity of the parish catechesis as well as its specific objectives and content in the future.

What is especially significant, this obviously has an adverse effect on teacher satisfaction. Regarding this issue, the current situation is not in accordance with the expectation that the Church “is bidden to offer catechesis her best resources in people and energy, without sparing effort, toil or material means, in order to organize it better and to train qualified personnel” (John Paul II, 1979, 15).

To some degree, this might have influenced the relationships between the latent determinants of Catholic religious education quality, as well. The teachers’ satisfaction was, in fact, not statistically significantly related to other underlying determinants of religious education quality. It can also be assumed that the determinants of teachers’ satisfaction are somewhat distinctive, than the features that underlay the perception of current quality of religious education and influence the expectations about religious education quality in the future. Other studies also showed that teachers’ satisfaction represents a significant construct in prediction of behavior of religious education teachers (Cook & Engel, 2006).

The calculations of a series of regression analyses, in which we examined how well the obtained quality determinants can be explained by certain status-related attributes of religious education teachers, have also yielded useful insights for better understanding of the religious education quality. Among six identified determinants of religious education quality, the retained regression models were statistically significant only in the case of two determinants, with, in fact, an unusually small amount of explained variance. This indicates that teachers do not differ significantly. According to findings, religious education teachers are quite coherent and uniform in their views. Since we considered influential teachers’ status-related individual attributes, the outcome of the analyses calls for future verifications.

Finally, when considering the overall scope of the present study, certain factors of organization of the study should be taken into account. The religious education teachers who participated in this study come from primary schools and belong to one Catholic Church province: the Archdiocese of Zagreb. Since it is not possible to offer any rational expectations why religious education teachers from other Croatian provinces would differ in their opinions, attitudes and expectations, the influence of this factor is probably insignificant. The second limitation may result from the methodological reasons related to the

type of questions used in the study, where teachers answered closed questions. It is possible to expect that in open-ended questions others determinants of religious education quality might occur, besides those suggested in this study. Such an effort would represent valuable broadening of insights acquired in the present study.

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Appendices

Table 1

Importance ratings of determinants of current Catholic religious education quality

<i>Determinants</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teacher's own spiritual life	225	3.69	0.54
Cooperative relationship between teacher and students	226	3.66	0.48
Teacher's professional education	226	3.61	0.54
Quality of class preparation	226	3.56	0.54
Teaching practices enhanced by modern instructional technology	226	3.28	0.64
Quality of relationship between religious education teachers and other teachers	226	3.18	0.61
Readiness of Catholic religious education for acceptance of social changes	226	3.15	0.66
Teacher's continuing professional development	225	3.09	0.62

Note: Cronbach's alpha = 0.63

Table 2

Factor analysis of current determinants of Catholic education quality

<i>Determinants</i>	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>
Teacher's own spiritual life	0.80	
Teacher's professional education	0.75	
Teacher's continuing professional development	0.67	
Cooperative relationship between teacher and students	0.45	0.33
Teaching practices enhanced by modern instructional technology		0.73
Quality of relationship between religious education teachers and other teachers		0.72
Readiness of Catholic religious education for acceptance of social changes		0.54
Quality of class preparation	0.45	0.50
<i>Eigen value</i>	2.06	1.73
<i>Total variance</i>	47.28	

Note: F1= *Quality of teachers' competence*; F2 = *Quality of teaching practice*; Cronbach's alpha (F1) = 0.63; Cronbach's alpha (F2) = 0.55; Extraction method: principal component analysis; Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization; Factor loadings greater than ± 0.30 are only presented.

Table 3

Teachers' satisfaction with some elements of Catholic religious education curriculum

<i>Source of satisfaction</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Catholic religious education curriculum contents	226	2.80	0.52
Status of Catholic religious education and their acceptance within the school	226	2.65	0.68
The interrelationship between CRE and other school subjects	225	2.61	0.62
Catholic religious education textbooks	226	2.57	0.69
The general attitude towards profession of religious education teacher	225	2.36	0.77
The relationship between school-based CRE and parish-based catechesis	223	2.33	0.73

Note: Cronbach's alpha = 0.70; CRE – Catholic religious education

Table 4

Factor analysis of teachers' satisfaction with some elements of Catholic religious education curriculum

<i>Source of satisfaction</i>	<i>F1</i>	<i>F2</i>
The general attitude towards profession of religious education teacher	0.82	
Status of Catholic religious education and its acceptance within the school	0.71	
The relationship between school-based CRE and parish-based catechesis	0.69	
The interrelationship between CRE and other school subjects	0.50	0.34
Catholic religious education curriculum contents		0.85
Catholic religious education textbooks		0.82
<i>Eigen value</i>	1.94	1.52
<i>Total variance</i>	57.70	

Note: F1= *Satisfaction with status*; F2= *Satisfaction with curricula conditions*; Cronbach's alpha (F1) = 0.66; Cronbach's alpha (F2) = 0.60; CRE – Catholic religious education. Extraction method: principal component analysis; Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization; Factor loadings greater than ± 0.30 are only presented.

Table 5

Teachers' expectations about the influence of some quality determinants on the status of Catholic religious education in the future

<i>Expected determinants</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Teacher's spirituality and moral behavior	226	3.62	0.59
Quality of teacher's initial education acquired during the study	226	3.46	0.65
Ability to meet students' demands and inquiries	226	3.45	0.54
CRE openness to societal changes	226	3.38	0.56
CRE curricular commitment to the fundamental truths	226	3.02	0.62
Teachers' continuing professional development	226	2.97	0.65

Note: Cronbach's alpha = 0.49; CRE – Catholic religious education

Table 6

Factor analysis of teachers' expectations about the influence of some quality determinants in the future

	F1	F2
Teacher's continuing professional development	0.78	
Quality of teacher's initial education acquired during the theological study	0.75	
Teacher's spirituality and moral behavior	0.73	
CRE openness to societal changes		0.80
Ability to meet students demands and inquiries		0.76
CRE curricular commitment to the fundamental truths		0.46
<i>Eigen value</i>	1.70	1.49
<i>Total variance</i>		53.20

Note: F1 = *Teacher future practice*; F2 = *Curriculum quality in the future*; Cronbach's alpha (F1) = 0.62; Cronbach's alpha (F2) = 0.44. Extraction method: principal component analysis; Varimax rotation with Kaiser Normalization; Factor loadings greater than ± 0.30 are only presented.

Table 7

Intercorrelations of latent determinants of religious education teachers' opinions, expectations and satisfaction with quality of Catholic religious education in primary schools

	2	3	4	5	6
1. Quality of teacher's competence	0.25**	0.09	0.07	0.24**	0.45**
2. Quality of teaching practices		0.13	-0.02	0.23**	0.27**
3. Satisfaction with status			0.38**	0.13	0.10
4. Satisfaction with curricula conditions				-0.01	0.23**
5. Teacher's future practice					0.07
6. Curriculum quality in the future					

Note: **p <.01

Table 8

Results of stepwise multiple regression analyses of the latent determinants of religious education teachers' opinions, expectations and satisfaction on status-related attributes of teachers

	Quality of teacher's competence			Quality of teaching practices			Satisfaction with status			Satisfaction with curricula conditions			Teacher's future practice			Curriculum quality in the future		
	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p	β	t	p
Gender	0.17	2.36	0.02	0.15	1.98	0.05												
Age	0.25	2.75	0.01															
Clergy/lay status							-0.2	-2.95	0.01									
Professional university affiliation										-0.2	-2.66	0.01						
Working experience	0.17	2.03	0.04															
R	0.265			0.186			0.237			0.197			0.132			0.155		
Adjusted R ²	0.048			0.012			0.034			0.016			-0.005			0.001		
F	3.207			1.539			2.503			1.728			0.764			1.049		
p	0.008			0.179			0.032			0.129			0.577			0.390		

Note: Non-significant standardized regression coefficients are omitted from the table.

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