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# Politics within Religious Studies in Sweden

What are we teaching our students?

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to investigate, from a Swedish perspective, at what degree, religious studies teachers are incorporating political factors into their classroom instruction and also attempts to measure their personal tendencies. At the same time, it evaluates the students' opinions about this subject, and attempts to use their perspectives to verify their teachers' instructional practices. Furthermore, the present study seeks to identify the sociological aspects which have influenced the religious studies curriculum in Sweden which can be applied to other countries around the world. As a result, it was established that a significant correlation between the teachers' knowledge and interest in the subject matter had a meaningful impact on the inclusion of sociological aspects of the religious studies course during classroom instruction. This was confirmed through the analysis of group interviews and individually completed questionnaires by both teachers and students in a semi-controlled setting.

**Keywords:** religion and politics, religious studies teachers, religious studies students, secularism, religious studies curriculum in Sweden

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## 1. Introduction

Before immersing in the discussion of concepts of theory and research behind this study, it is necessary to illustrate the landscape in which this work was based upon. Sweden, like many other countries, has had varying levels of religious influence throughout history. As researchers such as Jonas Svensson, Stefan Arvidsson, Jan Henningsson and several others have noted, interests/beliefs in religion have progressively declined over the past 150 years or so. In fact, Sweden is identified as one of the most secularized countries in the world.<sup>1</sup> However, this has no effect on the number of religions represented in Sweden. Concurrently, many people believe that religion and secularism are antithetical and hostile to each other. Strictly speaking, in my opinion, this is not quite correct. Rather than being antagonistic, the relationships between the two are mutually exclusive, yet have developed parallel to each other. In taking the perspectives of Daniel Andersson & Åke Sander, they quote Ronald Inglehart by writing:

Economic development tends to push societies in a common direction, but rather than converging, they seem to move on parallel trajectories, shaped by their cultural heritages. We doubt that the forces of modernization will produce a homogenized world culture in the foreseeable future.<sup>2</sup>

Contrariwise then, religion is not as insignificant as it may seem and is now competing for a more conspicuous place in social activities. Additionally, as Alessandro Ferrara states, it is:

[...] demanding that the received wisdom surrounding the implementation of the separation from politics, not the principle of separation itself, be reconsidered<sup>3</sup>

In other words, arguing secularization should be done on the basis of democratic reasoning, not in an effort to simply separate religion from state because it is “politically correct”.

Sweden is both secular and multi-religious. Its multi-religious atmosphere, in a secularized setting, has only increased its appeal to those wishing to live in a country where they can practice their religion as individuals. In this sense, secularization involves the change of religion, not its disappearance. This position, however, should not overshadow the fact that there is, to an extent, an inbuilt tension between religion and secularism. Multiple religions will most certainly lead to multiple social challenges. This is why many countries such as Sweden have purposefully included politics and religion within their religious studies curriculum’s core content.

One of the most valuable references a teacher has is the course curriculum’s syllabus. It affirms ‘what’ knowledge content should be taught within the Religion course and this is based on the purpose of the course; the ‘why’. It provides the base in which the entire course is grounded upon, so naturally, planning begins here and all aspects of the lessons should be constructed upon the course’s

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<sup>1</sup> Arvidsson & Svensson, 2008; Eilert, et al., 1998

<sup>2</sup> Andersson & Sander (Red.), 2009, p. 79

<sup>3</sup> Ferrara, p. 77

core content. For example, the Swedish National Agency for Education's curriculum for Religious studies asserts that in the area of religion and society, education in years' seven to nine should cover:

- Christianity in Sweden from the unified church to religious diversity and secularism.
- The relationship between society and religion in different times and in different places.
- Religions role in some recent political developments and conflicts from a critical perspective.
- Conflicts and opportunities in secular and pluralistic societies, for example in matters of religion, sexuality and the perception of equality.<sup>4</sup>

The importance of these points is evident when observing how often educators in the field refer to them, and specifically, in the case of this study, *religions role in some recent political developments and conflicts from a critical perspective*. During lesson planning, course conferences and development counseling, educators should constantly be referring to these resources. As the current study has proven, this is often easier said than done.

In the midst of education reform, teachers are challenged with the task of interpreting and executing teaching practices in a variety of school subjects. These include ethics, theology, sociology, history and science. Due to the broad nature of this subject, teaching aids, traditionally in the form of textbooks, are most often the preferred sources for many lesson plans used by teachers all around the world. According to journalist, Anders Calderan, research studies conducted in Norway and Sweden support this claim by stating that “very few teachers choose to work entirely without textbooks”.<sup>5</sup>

Another important tool used by teachers, and often overlooked by many pedagogic theorists, is the *self-efficacy* theories presented by researchers such as Gian Vittorio Caprara et al. Self-efficacy is the measure of the confidence in one's own ability to accomplish assignments and reach objectives. Capara et al used hypothesis developed by J. Bradley Cousins & Christofer Walker et al who believed that a teacher's self-efficacy beliefs influenced a student's achievement. Their theory demonstrates that teachers with:

[...]high self-efficacy beliefs are more likely than teachers with a low sense of self-efficacy to implement didactic innovations in the classroom and to use classroom management approaches and adequate teaching methods that encourage students' autonomy which reduce custodial control.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Skolverket, 2012

<sup>5</sup> Calderon, 2012

<sup>6</sup> Caprara, Barbaranelli, and Steca, p. 474

In other words, we teach what we know, and in the case of religious studies education, I was curious to see how these teachers measured up to this theory.

The current study was conducted at a local Middle and Upper Secondary school with the task of evaluating the perspectives of both teachers and students within the religious studies subject involving politics, religion and their representations in the classroom. Additionally, it briefly evaluates the availability of teaching material to aid in educating students in this subject.

### 1.1. Aim and purpose

The goal of this study was to evaluate how religious studies teachers are incorporating political factors into their classroom instruction and also attempts to measure their personal tendencies. Additionally, the students' opinions about this subject were considered in order to verify the responses of their teachers. The following questions then form the foundation of this study:

- How does defining secularization assist in teaching of political matters within the religious studies course?
- What connections can be drawn between politics and religion to make its inclusion in the curriculum relevant?
- How and to what extent is politics included in religious education within Intermediate level schools in Sweden?
- What are some of the challenges educators are faced with in achieving the goals of the course curriculum?

Firstly, a description of the elusive term, secularization will be defined in order to provide a means of categorization for this complex phenomenon. Secondly, this analysis attempts to bridge the gap between politics and religion by illustrating concrete examples in secularized societies today. Thereafter, specific issues of teaching these 'real time' occurrences of political and religious affairs in the classroom will be discussed. Next, I will map the methods used in this study, including materials used, participants interviewed, and challenges identified in reliability/validity. Finally, the results of this study will be presented, highlighting those aspects mentioned in the literature review which fulfill the goals of this study.

## 2. Secularization & Globalization – The Bridge between Politics & Religion

In this segment, a short description of some of the most relevant literature, terms, arguments and theories are presented. This information highlights specific issues which motivate a part of the purpose of this analysis including the definitions of secularization used in this study, examples of political influences on religion and vice versa, and religious studies curriculum challenges.

### 2.1. Defining secularization

Before this discussion can go any further, the term secularization should be defined, as several researchers have described it in various ways depending on which perspective is taken. For the sake of simplicity, Ferrara's definitions were used because they illustrate two definitions which clearly distinguishes these different perspectives and works well within the current study; *political* and *social* secularization.

*Political secularization*, as Ferrara defines it, exercises:

legitimate state power, what we might call the coercive dimension of law, [which] takes place in secular terms, the fact that all citizens can freely exercise their religious freedom and worship one God, another God or no God at all, and the fact that the churches and the state are neatly separated.<sup>7</sup>

In other words, religious organizations are able to practice their faith without the support or influence from state affairs and vice versa. For example, no sin is interpreted directly as being something illegal and nothing deemed by the state to be illegal should be considered a sin. This 'religious neutrality' can be seen, for instance, in the first clauses of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution which states that; "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof".<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, with liberal association, the Religious Communities Act in the Swedish Code of Status states; "No one is under any obligation to belong to a religious community and that any agreement or promise contrary to this provision is invalid".<sup>9</sup> The relevancy here is Swedish law initially did not recognize a Swedish citizen as a member of any religious organization that was not approved by the state and therefore did not qualify them for certain civil liberties such as legal marriage under the church.

The second definition takes on a more social aspect and is therefore called 'social secularization'. In this designation, secularist affairs involve the cessation of the religious communities influence on politics, education and other social activities. It also perceives less people as using "religious rituals and symbols to mark significant moments of their lives" and essentially sees religion as irrelevant to the everyday life of the community. A clear indication of social

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<sup>7</sup> Ferrara, 2009, p.79

<sup>8</sup> Cornell University Law School, 1992

<sup>9</sup> Government of Sweden, 1998; translated by the author

secularization can be seen within the arts, for example, music, paintings, sculpture, theatre, etc., as a lack of religious subjects is apparent. This is quantified most eloquently by Ferrara as she uses modern western society as an example; “How many 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup> century paintings, sculptures, musical compositions have at their center religious subjects?”<sup>10</sup>

In this discussion it is important to understand the distinction between these two definitions, as it will allow us to focus upon certain characteristics of societies which can be difficult to quantify in a secular perspective due to *local historical contexts*. For example, in Sweden, social secularization may be seen as proceeding at a faster pace than political secularization because religious symbols are almost never seen in State-owned buildings. However, although there was an official split between church and state in 2000, the *Burial Act* and *Monuments & Finds Act*, which allocate responsibilities to the Swedish Church, funerals and religious historical architecture deemed culturally significant, are actually regulated by the State.<sup>11 12</sup> Likewise, the teaching of religion in schools continues to be focused on comparing other religious faiths to the confessional faith of Christianity. Evidence of this can be seen in the Swedish National Agency for Education’s curriculum for Religious studies, which specifies that the teaching of the course should include; “Christianity, the other world religions and different outlooks on life, their characteristics and how they are expressed by individuals and groups in the present, in Sweden and the world”.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, an awareness of these categories of secularization will later prove to be useful during the analysis stage of this study.

## 2.2. Examples of relations between religion and politics

Sweden, and most of Europe, is becoming more and more divided between political party lines, with the emergence of nationalist parties such as the Swedish Democratic Party called Sverigedemokraterna, SD<sup>14</sup>, and the repositioning of parties such as the Liberal Party of Sweden called Folkpartiet Liberalerna, FP<sup>15</sup>. For example, both parties have strong views in regards to Immigration/Integration Politics, yet contrasting methods of reaching a similar goal; a better Sweden. For instance, the SD is the only party in the Swedish Parliament without an official integration policy and believes that integration involves “meeting in the middle” and do not think that the Swedish people should have to bear the burden of what they see as a reckless immigration policy. The FP believes Sweden should “throw open its doors” and support more open immigration combined with measures to help new arrivals to integrate into Swedish society. According to Peter Simpson,

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<sup>10</sup> Ferrara, 2009, p.80

<sup>11</sup> Government of Sweden, 1998 (SFS1990:1144); translated by the author

<sup>12</sup> Government of Sweden (SFS1998:950); translated by the author

<sup>13</sup> Skolverket, 2012, p.3; translated by the author

<sup>14</sup> Sverigedemokraterna, 2012; translated by the author

<sup>15</sup> Folkpartiet Liberalerna, 2012; translated by the author

journalist for *The Local*, “until 2000 the church was considered a state church but on January 1st of that year this relationship was changed with a formal separation of church and state”.<sup>16</sup> Supposedly, this would leave political and church matters within separate arenas. However, in September 2013, political factions coordinated their forces to confront their opponents in the Church of Sweden elections, which would strengthen or weaken their parties’ influence over church activities. “With over 6.6 million baptized members, the Church of Sweden is the largest Lutheran church in the world” and although only about 12% (up 8% from 2009 elections) of its members actually voted this year, this still represents a significant number of people considered to be ‘involved’ with the church (approximately 792,000 voters), which is currently being controlled by Social Democrats.<sup>17</sup>

This is significant within this dialog due to the fact that the Church of Sweden, which represents the Lutheran denomination of Christianity and the beginnings of the modern day Swedish culture, arguably “created the idea of a spiritual citizenship in which individualism was tempered by a clear notion of the Church as a congregational democracy”.<sup>18</sup> In turn, our society coexists with the ideologies of both religious and political factors steering our life outlooks. By no means is this relationship between religion and state an efficient one and Sweden is not alone.

Another perspective can be seen in the United Kingdom recently. Journalists at the Observer wrote about a heated debate concerning the “‘voluntary’ gender segregation at non-religious meeting in publicly funded institution”.<sup>19</sup> In short, due to the religious beliefs of a speaker, who was Muslim, scheduled to give a lecture at one of Universities UK, UUK, facilities, they requested that the audience be divided between males and females sitting in segregated sections of the hall. The legal requirement on UK universities under Section 43 of the Education Act 1986 states that “they take such steps as are reasonably practicable to ensure that freedom of speech [is] secured for... visiting speakers”. However, it also breaches the rights of those individuals in the audience who see this separation as prejudice on the grounds of gender bias. The law was quickly modified in this situation to favor human rights in a secular society. What the controversy has exposed is this:

[...] a profound concern about interpretations of Islam that conflict with a modern civil liberties agenda. Further, political correctness, sensitivity to charges of Islamophobia and commercial considerations (it has been suggested that segregated meetings appeal to overseas Muslim students vital for university finances) block discussions about what should and shouldn't be inviolate in British society. In a multicultural society, what is the "norm"?<sup>20</sup>

In contrast, during a public debate *Islam or Atheism: which makes more sense?*, held at University College of London by the Islamic Education and Research Academy, IERA, the audience was

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<sup>16</sup> Simpson, 2011

<sup>17</sup> Simpson, 2011

<sup>18</sup> Turner, et al., 2003, p. 356

<sup>19</sup> The Observer, 2013

<sup>20</sup> The Observer, 2013

segregated, and those who objected were ordered to leave. One of the speakers, a scientist and self-proclaimed atheist, refused to participate until the integration of the audience was permitted. Afterwards, the IERA was banned from the university. A spokesman for the IERA later appealed the university's decision, claiming unjust "extremist Islamophobic action", citing that "a number of ladies used their free will and didn't want to sit with the opposite sex." Unmistakably, these women implemented their free will and to deny that marginalized their independence; A dubious relationship between state and religion in my opinion.

These situations are not presented in this discussion in an effort to debate the issues surrounding secularization. They are purely given as examples of the significance of having some knowledge of the religious/political aspects of the pluralistic society. Furthermore, these are just two of many events that "give students the opportunity to both broaden and deepen their knowledge of religions and philosophies, and develop the ability to analyze them from different perspectives".<sup>21</sup>

### 2.3. Religious Studies curriculum challenges and globalization in Sweden

As mentioned in the introduction, *Religious Studies* is a course structured to, not only give the students the ability to analyze different religions, but also to broaden their personal outlooks involving ethical matters including religious politics. The Swedish Education Agency has set clear goals for what skills should be developed by the student within the course; however, the specific content needed to achieve these goals has been a subject for deliberation. One factor which debatably contributes to this challenge is a social one and influences the overall attitudes of individuals towards religion in general. For instance, Swedes generally think that religion is important in daily life, yet they are also characterized as having a conventional belief in the values of liberty, a positive view of truthfulness, tolerance, trust, and respect for other people. As a result, this has produced a secular society which displays characteristics of both political and social ideologies which can be difficult to represent in the classroom.

Another factor can be attributed to globalization and advances in technology. As stated by Andersson & Sander, "globalization and the information technology revolution have radically increased our potential to compare ourselves with others".<sup>22</sup> Satellite-TV and the internet have exposed us all to individuals from all over the world. Suddenly, a person with dark skin does not automatically mean that they are Muslim, African, uneducated, or poor. We see that others in this small world have the same fears, joys, aspirations, and sorrows that we have. Furthermore, it becomes challenging when, for example, using the perspectives of the SD political party supporters.

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<sup>21</sup> Skolverketinspektionen, 2012, p. 6; translated by the author

<sup>22</sup> Andersson & Sanders (Red), 2009, p. 209; translated by the author

The definition of *immigrant* is redefined in the case of an immigrant from America or any other ultra-developed country. Ultimately, a student holding these principles is then faced with the fact that immigration issues should not be connected to ethnic, belief, or social status issues. The target then is learning more about people through their beliefs in as many aspects as possible. However:

When one studies religious tradition, it is important to think that one can approach them from an abundance of different perspectives...the one you choose and what questions you ask, influences...the answers you get.<sup>23</sup>

The question then becomes, how does a teacher bring all these different perspectives into the classroom? The Swedish National Agency for Education's quality review report for religious studies at the Upper Secondary school level answers this question directly by stating:

Many schools emphasize that a lack of resources and long distances make it impossible to go on field trips and similar events, which could complement their teaching. Increased use of IT tools can be an opportunity to virtually undertake a similar visit.<sup>24</sup>

Ironically, there are very few courses or books offering religious studies teachers any guidance on what IT source they could be using, nor do many teachers have the knowledge to navigate in the IT world. The scenarios described in the previous sections, represent concrete examples of some politically religious matters students/teachers encounter every day and is what I have used as a point of entry into the current study.

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<sup>23</sup> Andersson & Sanders (Red), 2009, p. 54; translated by the author

<sup>24</sup> Skolinspektionen, 2013, p. 26; translated by the author

### 3. Method

The following sections involve the presentation of the current study. It not only highlights the specific material/procedures used in the implementation of the research but also challenges these procedures in an attempt to identify possible biases in the material itself. It is primarily based upon the mixed methodology of quantitative and qualitative techniques. These are used to describe, predict, find the cause of, and explain why certain behaviors exist within the religious studies teaching circumstance.

First, the materials used in the study will be illustrated in Section 3.1, which account for and describe the primary sources used to collect data for this study; two questionnaires, which were available in both Swedish and English, and observational notes from interviews. Thereafter, in Section 3.2., the data and procedures used for analysis will be explained. Finally, details concerning the participants of this study are presented in Section 3.3, to give a background of the individuals providing the samples, which is critical in identifying any possible influences relating to these characteristics such as the number of years of teaching experience, age of students, number of years of religious studies experience, etc.

#### 3.1. Materials

The first of two materials used in this discussion has a quantitative appeal to it, as it gives the researcher a means of classifying and measuring an item without the stigmatism of internal bias ‘subjectivism’. An electronic survey was specifically designed for both teachers and students within the religious studies course.<sup>25</sup> It should also be noted that the author was present while these surveys were conducted, which will be justified in the next section of this text. Both surveys begin with a brief explanation of the purpose of the survey, followed by questions which require the participant to give some personal and professional information. For example, the teacher’s survey asks for the participant’s gender, years of teaching experience in the religious studies field, the region in which they have taught the most, for example North America, Europe, Middle East, etc., and the grade levels they have taught in. The student’s survey asks for gender, the number of years they have received formal religious studies education, the region in which they received the majority of this education, and highest level of education they have completed. This gives the surveys the flexibility to categorize certain characteristics of participants into specific groups in order to measure any tendencies displayed by these groups.

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<sup>25</sup> See Appendices 1 & 2

Both surveys are then proceeded by six questions chosen to rate the participant’s levels of agreement to statements regarding religion and politics. These ranked responses used a five-point Likert-type scale requiring, for example, the respondent to answer “very frequently”; “frequently”; “sometimes”; “seldom”; and “never” in response to a question such as: *How often do you discuss the influences of politics on religious affairs in your classroom lectures?* For example, Figure 1 illustrates that the teacher “seldom” discusses the influences of politics on religious affairs during their classroom sessions. Further information will be presented in the proceeding sections about how these responses were analyzed.



Figure 1. Example of rated response to questions using a five-point Likert-type scale

The second primary source used has a more qualitative characteristic as it observed and took into consideration the social phenomena of discussing the responses of participants during group and individual interviews. After respondents completed the survey, I randomly selected several of them to discuss the reasoning behind some of the responses they had made. In this context, it was possible to pin-point the casual opinions of respondent’s attitudes about the question at hand. For example, one student’s response to question #10 (See Figure 2), was “neither agree nor disagree”.



Figure 2.

Example of response to question #10 and later qualified in an interview

When later asked why they had no opinion in regards to the question, they explained that do to the fact that they had no recollection of previous experiences where politics was including in their religious studies classes, they could not honestly say that the inclusion would make the course more interesting or not. This would later clarify the reason why such a large majority of students may have responded in the same manner.

### 3.2. Procedures

My motivation behind using the mixed methodology of qualitative and quantitative research methods was inspired by T.L. Brink, who writes; “the solution for social science research is a commitment to use both”.<sup>26</sup> These two fundamentally different techniques give both a ‘subjectivist’, or *qualitative*, and a ‘positivist’, or *quantitative*, perspective to the study. Details of the advantages of the use of these approaches are argued a bit further in section 3.4.

As mentioned previously, the surveys were administered by the author of this discussion directly so that any questions about the questionnaire could be answered accurately without disrupting the integrity of the respondents’ answers, as certain supervision could influence the students’ responses. For example, due to the nature of some of the statements, for instance, negative responses towards their interests in the subject, students were advised that participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous. Allowing the teachers who were being evaluated in this study to monitor its implementation could have been regarded as unethical and biased.

### 3.3. Participants

The respondents of the current survey totaled 100 participants; 95 students and 5 teachers in Sweden. As illustrated in Table 1, 58% of the student respondents were female and 37% male. These students had varying levels of religious studies experience and differing levels of completed education levels. The majority of them, 58 students, had completed education through year seven to eight. All of these respondents received their education in Sweden.

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<sup>26</sup> Brink, 1995, p. 461

*Table 1. Student respondents' characteristics*

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	37	38.9
	Female	58	61.1
	Total:	95	100
Number of years of Religious Studies completed	3 to 4	11	11.6
	5 >	84	88.4
	Total:	95	100
Region in which the majority of studies were conducted	Europe (Sweden)	95	100
	Total:	95	100
Highest level of education completed	5 - 6 years	12	12.6
	7 - 8 years	58	61.1
	9 - 10 years	13	13.7
	11 - 12 years	12	12.6
	Total:	95	100

As illustrated in Table 2, three female and two males with varying levels of teaching experience were evaluated. None of which had ever taught at the Elementary School level, however four had taught at the Intermediate School level. Only one had given instruction to Upper Secondary School students.

*Table 2. Teacher respondents' characteristics*

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	2	40
	Female	3	60
	Total:	5	100
Number of years of teaching experience in Religious Studies	< 1 year	2	40
	1 - 2 years	1	20
	3 - 4 years	0	0
	5 years >	2	40
	Total:	5	100
Region in which the majority of teaching was conducted	Europe (Sweden)	5	100
	Total:	5	100
Class level/levels taught	Elementary school	0	0
	Intermediate School	4	75
	Upper Secondary	1	25

### 3.4. Reliability & Validity

The hypothesis of reliability is defined as “yielding the same or compatible results in different clinical experiments or statistical trials”.<sup>27</sup> For example, it refers to the ‘reliabilities’ of the data, rankings and examinations conducted in a specific report. Validity refers to “the entire experimental concept and establishes whether the results obtained meet all of the requirements of the scientific research method” which insures that the most suitable measuring tools are used in the correct manner.<sup>28 29</sup> However, we learn from Dörnyei that it is the “quality of the interpretations and not of the test or the test scores” which is crucial in this situation. This dissertation primarily focuses on two singular validities: Internal and External.<sup>30</sup> Dörnyei describes Internal Validity as the ‘approximate truth’ about conclusions one comes to in the causes of certain outcomes, while External Validity examines the extent to which we can generalize our findings to a larger group, to other contexts or different times.<sup>31</sup> It should also be noted, the results of a study are ‘internally’ undesirable if influences other than those expected to affect them are the reason for a particular response and ‘externally’ invalid if the results are only relevant in the environment they were tested in.

The current study has chosen a relatively small but similar group of respondents. However, there are signs of external invalidity due to the fact that this study could not be confirmed outside of Intermediate and Upper Secondary school students outside of Sweden. As the sample size is quite small, and no similar studies could be found, the study requires a broader sample size in order to qualify it as completely valid. There are several other factors which could have influenced these results, including, the secular nature of the Swedish society itself. These environmental factors could reasonably account for the seemingly lack of interested respondents in religious studies. This is just one of several issues that may have affected the studies internal validity because the outcomes could differ if this environmental factor was relevant. One of the methods used to address this issue was the decision to design the questions to be less subjectively motivating and easier to qualify. To subjectively motivate, for instance, means that certain statements could assume that respondents prefer studying politics over religion, therefore soliciting a response that may or may not be relevant to the individual student’s perceptions about politics or religion. For example, if questions 6 and 7, on the students’ surveys were combined to read; *Overall, do you consider politics more important to learn than religion*; in the context of this study, this may have led respondents to assume that they should prefer politics over religion. The student is also forced to choose between one or the other,

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<sup>27</sup> Farlex, 2013

<sup>28</sup> Shuttleworth, 2008

<sup>29</sup> Bailey, 1994, p. 67

<sup>30</sup> Dörnyei, 2011, p.5

<sup>31</sup> Dörnyei, 2011, p. 52

when realistically their preference may be more complicated than the question allows them to express. By dividing it into two separate questions gives both politics and religion equal merit and a means to answer each more objectively.

The Likert-type scale used in this study is designed to measure rated responses of each question.

In psychometric terms this means that each [statement] on a multi-item scale (1-5 in this study) should correlate with the other [statements] (which have been grouped in the current study)...referred to as Likert's criterion of 'internal consistency'.<sup>32</sup>

Internal Consistency Reliability then estimates the responses of the students in this study to estimate reliability. This study effectively judges the reliability of the questionnaire by estimating the consistency of responses of all the participants in the study where similar questions led to similar responses. The results gave a measurable unit which has been shown to be a reliable tool in the measurement of students' perceptions about religion and politics. This was ideal for this study and a prime example of good internal validity. The next section will look more closely at these results and provide a more detailed analysis of the statements themselves.

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<sup>32</sup> Dörnyei, 2011, p. 206

## 4. Results and Discussion

In the following sections, the results of the survey will be presented along with an analysis of the data using the methods mentioned previously. Certain statements/answers were more relevant to the goal of this study than others and are discussed in more detail. First, Section 4.1 focuses on responses of the teachers and categorizes these responses in blocks which were most relevant in distinguishing similar perspectives of individual teacher characteristics. Next, Section 4.2 a comparison of student responses are categorized and analyzed in blocks where tendencies of similar responses show interesting correlations. Lastly, Section 4.3 cross-tabulates teachers' responses with students' responses to either confirm or deny responses which should have been universal to both groups. Tables 3 & 4 illustrate the objective responses of teachers and students in the latter portion of each survey respectively. The most frequent number of responses is illustrated in **bold** print. As mentioned previously, these questions have been grouped into separate categories and will be analyzed in their respective blocks.

**Table 3. Religious Studies & Politics Survey (Teachers)**

6. How often do you discuss the influences of politics on religious affairs in your classroom lectures?					
Very frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Response Count
0	0	2	<b>3</b>	0	5
7. Overall, how important are politics to you?					
Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important	Response Count
<b>2</b>	1	1	1	0	5
8. How important is the role of politics in religion?					
Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important	Response Count
0	<b>3</b>	0	1	1	5
9. How often do you compare the influence of religious beliefs to political ideologies in current world events within your classroom discussions?					
Very frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	Response Count
0	<b>2</b>	2	1	0	5
10. Overall, how important is religion to you?					
Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important	Response Count
0	1	1	<b>2</b>	1	5
11. Overall, how satisfied are you with teaching material available to help in discussing the relationship between religion and politics?					
Quite satisfied	Satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Response Count
0	1	<b>4</b>	0	0	5
12. How knowledgeable are you in regards to political affairs?					
Very knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Not knowledgeable	Response Count
1	<b>2</b>	1	1	0	5
13. How knowledgeable are you in regards to religious affairs?					
Very knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Not knowledgeable	Response Count
1	<b>2</b>	1	1	0	5
14. In general, do you approve or disapprove of the political affiliations seen within religious organizations?					
Very much approve	Approve	Neither approve nor disapprove	Disapprove	Very much disapprove	Response Count
0	1	<b>3</b>	1	0	5
15. In your opinion, does including politics in a religious studies curriculum make your students more interested in the subject?					
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Count
0	1	<b>3</b>	1	0	5

*Table 4. Religious Studies & Politics Survey (Student)*

5. How often do you talk about the effects of politics on religious activities in class?					
All the time	Alot	Sometimes	Rarely	Never	Response Count
0	5	32	<b>53</b>	5	95
6. Overall, how important is learning about politics to you?					
Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important	Response Count
8	26	<b>34</b>	24	3	95
7. Overall, how important is religious studies to you?					
Very Important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important	Response Count
7	<b>34</b>	31	15	8	95
8. How much do you feel politics effects your life?					
Extremely much	Alot	I don't know	A little	Not at all	Response Count
14	<b>33</b>	28	13	7	95
9. How much do you feel religion effects your life?					
Extremely much	Alot	I don't know	A little	Not at all	Response Count
5	23	<b>26</b>	24	17	95
10. In your opinion, would including more information about politics in your religious studies class make you more interested in the subject?					
Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Response Count
1	24	<b>37</b>	30	3	95

#### 4.1. Analysis of teacher responses

The first block in the teachers' responses focuses on the relation between teaching experience, frequency of the use of politics in religious studies during class sessions and personal views on politics (see Table 5). In this module one gets a sense of how a teacher's experience level and views about politics could influence how often these issues are presented in class.

Table 5. Teaching experience, frequency of the use, and personal views on politics

<b>6. How often do you discuss the influences of politics on religious affairs in your classroom lectures?</b>					
Responses from teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience in religious studies					
Very frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	
0	0	0	3	0	
Responses from teachers over 5 years teaching experience in religious studies					
Very frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never	
0	0	2	0	0	
<b>7. Overall, how important are politics to you?</b>					
Responses from teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience in religious studies					
Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important	
0	1	1	1	0	
Responses from teachers with over 5 years teaching experience in religious studies					
Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important	
2	0	0	0	0	

Although the differences between teachers with two years or less experience, and those with over five years' experience are slight, there is an interesting correlation between the two. All three of the teachers with two years or less responded that they “seldom” discuss the influences of politics on religious affairs during their classroom sessions. Additionally, these same teachers thought that politics to them ranged from “slightly important” to “important”. Contrastingly, not only did there more experienced colleagues use political issues in class more, they also consistently responded that politics were “very important” to them.

These findings seem to support Cousins & Walker et al theories of self-efficacy presented in the introduction. Teachers who have a personal interest in the subject matter in which they are instructing are naturally more likely to do this consistently and more motivated to do so. Of course, it was not clear whether the more experienced teachers included political issues in their religion classes due to other psychosocial factors that would affect their motivation, such as more knowledge and life experience. Further studies are required to validate this claim.

As Table 6 illustrates, these results were not isolated to merely the views on politics, but also perspectives about religion. The respondent's answers to these questions were consistent with the previous category.

Table 6. Teaching experience, frequency of the use, and personal views on religion

<b>6. How often do you discuss the influences of politics on religious affairs in your classroom lectures?</b>					
Responses from teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience in religious studies					
<b>Very frequently</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>	
0	0	0	3	0	
Responses from teachers over 5 years teaching experience in religious studies					
<b>Very frequently</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>	
0	0	2	0	0	
<b>10. Overall, how important is religion to you?</b>					
Responses from teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience in religious studies					
<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Slightly important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	
0	0	0	2	1	
Responses from teachers with over 5 years teaching experience in religious studies					
<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Slightly important</b>	<b>Not important</b>	
0	1	1	0	0	

As the issue of knowledge has been suggested as an additional influence on the response variables seen in questions #7 and #10 in the first module, it seemed only logical to evaluate the responses to questions #12 and #13 in the second module.

The next group of questions highlights those outlooks relating to the teachers’ personal assessment of their knowledge about politics and religion (see Table 7). Their response gives a feel for how a teacher’s experience level could affect their perspectives of self-efficacy from a self-knowledge view point.

Table 7. Teaching experience, self-prescribed knowledge of politics and religion

<b>12. How knowledgeable are you in regards to political affairs?</b>					
Responses from teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience in religious studies					
Very knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Not knowledgeable	
0	1	1	1	0	
Responses from teachers over 5 years teaching experience in religious studies					
Very knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Not knowledgeable	
1	1	0	0	0	
<b>13. How knowledgeable are you in regards to religious affairs?</b>					
Responses from teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience in religious studies					
Very knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Not knowledgeable	
0	1	1	1	0	
Responses from teachers with over 5 years teaching experience in religious studies					
Very knowledgeable	Knowledgeable	Somewhat knowledgeable	Slightly knowledgeable	Not knowledgeable	
1	1	0	0	0	

Again, we see a slight variation in replies between the two groups. The less experienced teachers considered themselves “knowledgeable” to “slightly knowledgeable” in regards to both political and religious affairs. Concurrently, the more experienced educators rated themselves between “very knowledgeable” to “knowledgeable”. These findings, in many ways seem logical; however one cannot help reflecting on current teacher training curriculum compared to older ones.

As a means of addressing some of the challenges that future religious studies teachers will be facing in their new professions, the Religions’ courses at the university level have evolved considerably in the last thirty years to address sociological concerns in today’s society. For example, as Ingrid Gilhus & Lisbeth Mikaelsson discuss in their book, *Nya perspektiv på religion*, before the 1970’s there was virtually no mention of:

[...] female religious historians asking critical questions, for instance, why their own sex was made invisible in the subject... Criticism from women scientists in religious science should be seen against the background of the whole picture, politically and factually.<sup>33</sup>

Within the past ten years, this criticism has been answered with exceptional clarity with religious studies grounded in gender norms, gender roles, gender hierarchies, and gender symbolism. All of which have strong political undertones. Furthermore, as mentioned previously, the Swedish National Agency for Education’s curriculum for religious studies has written specifically into the course’s core content that the subject should include “religions role in some recent political developments and

<sup>33</sup>Gilhus & Mikaelsson, 2003, p.231; translated by the author

conflicts from a critical perspective”.<sup>34</sup> One would think that the newly graduated teacher would have the strongest grasp of these and other politically religious concepts.

Finally, the last module in this segment is presented only to further qualify what has already been presented. When asked: *How often do you compare the influence of religious beliefs to political ideologies in current world events within your classroom discussions*, teachers with two years or less teaching experience responded that they “sometimes” to “seldom” did. Teachers with five years or more teaching experience answered that they “frequently” did so.

*Table 8. Teaching experience and real-time comparative studies of politics and religion*

**9. How often do you compare the influence of religious beliefs to political ideologies in current world events within your classroom discussions?**

Responses from teachers with 2 years or less teaching experience in religious studies

Very frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
0	0	2	1	0

Responses from teachers over 5 years teaching experience in religious studies

Very frequently	Frequently	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
0	2	0	0	0

#### 4.2. Analysis of student responses

The first block in the student’s responses highlights the students’ views about politics. Specifically, Table 9 illustrates their reactions to questions #6 and #8 which solicited answers from the students’ measuring their opinions on how important they thought learning about politics was and how much they thought politics influenced their lives. Later, these opinions are linked to the religious outlooks of the respondents in an effort to qualify Andersson & Sander’s theory of a developed pluralistic and anti-homogenized world culture.

*Table 9. Students' perspectives on politics*

**6. Overall, how important is learning about politics to you?**

Very important	Important	Somewhat important	Slightly important	Not important
8,4% (8)	27,4% (26)	35,8% (34)	25,3% (24)	3,2% (3)

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**8. How much do you feel politics effects your life?**

Extremely much	Alot	I don't know	A little	Not at all
14,7% (14)	37,7% (33)	29,5% (28)	13,7% (13)	7,4% (7)

<sup>34</sup> Skolverket, 2012; translated by the author

After reviewing the samples provided by students for question #6, the largest percentage of responses thought that learning about politics was “somewhat important” to them; 35,8%. By using these responses as the median, we see a slightly higher percentage of students rating their answers “important” to “very important” (35,8%) than those rated from “slightly important” to “not important” (28,5%). These results would suggest that the majority of students felt that learning about politics was considerably more important than not learning about it at all. Unexpectedly, these same students when asked: *How much do you feel politics affect your life*; 52,4% rated their responses between “a lot” and “extremely much”. Although the median here represented 29,5% of students not being sure what to answer, only 21,1% rated their responses between “a little” to “not at all”. Overall, it can be deduced that most of them thought that learning about politics was important because it had a considerable amount of influence on their lives. However, due to the relative immaturity of the sample group, ages fourteen to seventeen years old, some group discussions were organized in order to confirm an understanding of what “politics” actually meant to these respondents.

In a group forum designed specifically to address the consensual view of what politics meant to the students, I asked several classes to discuss the subject amongst themselves and then share their opinions with the entire class. The general consensus was that politics includes the debating of important social issues such education, economics, and general freedoms by a group of people chosen to represent a community. Notably, however, many of these students found it difficult to give concrete examples of these phenomena and had little knowledge about the execution of such policies conducted, for example, in parliamentism. This could explain why, although many students viewed politics important, they were unclear about how it applied to their everyday lives.

The next segment focuses on the students’ opinions about religion in general and how it relates to their religious studies. In another group forum similar to the one described in the previous segment, students were tasked with discussing what defined religion and religious studies to them. The general agreement was that religion is a “spiritual” way of looking at the world which involved both believing the fact of and faith in human nature governed by a higher authority than mankind. This higher authority is governed by religious institutions such as Islam and the Catholic Church. This, in my opinion, is a fair definition of religion considering that researchers such as Arvidsson & Svensson et al, admittedly recognize the difficulties in describing the term, stating:

Many are those who have tried to define "religion" - the National Encyclopedia speaks of "numerous attempts" but consensus around a definition has not been achieved ... [however], the concept is a primarily tool for a systematic way to approach and discuss the reality.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Arvidsson & Svensson, p. 6; translated by the author

Satisfied with the outlooks of the respondents in the current study, I continued to analyze their answers to question #7 and #9.

*Table 10. Students' perspectives on religion*

<b>7. Overall, how important is religious studies to you?</b>				
<b>Very important</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Somewhat important</b>	<b>Slightly important</b>	<b>Not important</b>
7,4% (7)	<b>35,8% (34)</b>	32,6% (31)	15,8% (15)	8,4% (8)

  

<b>9. How much do you feel religion effects your life?</b>				
<b>Extremely much</b>	<b>A lot</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>A little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
5,3% (5)	24,2% (23)	<b>27,4% (26)</b>	25,3% (24)	17,9% (17)

As shown in Table 10, their responses were similar to those seen in the previous block with outlooks on politics. A large percentage of respondents believed that religious studies were “important” to “very important”; 43,2%. The median response of “somewhat important” tallied a 32,6% rating. This left 24,2% of students who felt that religious studies were “slightly” to “not important at all”. However, unlike the trend seen in the previous block where students felt that politics had a considerable amount of influence on their lives, in the current block students were not sure about the influences of religion. The median response, “I don’t know” was chosen by 27,4% of the students, while most rated their responses between “a little” to “not at all”; 43.2%. The remaining 29,5% thought that religion affected their lives “a lot” to “extremely much”. Although this does not prove in any way the level of ‘religiosity’ the respondents have, it does demonstrate their indecisiveness when compared to their views on politics.

It is my hypothesis that this indecisiveness is linked to, in part, the secularization models such as *the separation theory* associated with philosophers Charles Taylor, Thomas Luckmann, et al and *the cultural theory* or *socialization theory* presented by Robin Gill.<sup>36</sup> As presented by Andersson & Sander, in the separation theory, individuals must differentiate between formal religion seen in institutionalized religion on one side while on the other side individual, privatized and subjugated religiousness or spirituality dictates how one defines morality. In other words, while some look towards Islam or Catholicism to “guide notions of duties and prohibitions, of norms and values; what you should and should not do”,<sup>37</sup> others look more inward to manage their decisions.

<sup>36</sup> Taylor, 1989; Luckmann, 1967; Gill, 1999

<sup>37</sup> Andersson & Sander (Red), 2009, p. 39; translated by the author

The cultural theory argues that in understanding the consensus of all social change in a religious society, one must understand that changes in religious beliefs, norms and values are strongly connected with religious socialization, and the most important religious socialization agents are the religious institutions. Hence, when the belief in these institutions diminishes, so does the religious influence on the culture. Suddenly, we see a rift between the two and it is now the culture which has more influences over the religious institution.

Concomitantly, it is not such a far stretch to deduce that although the multicultural Swedish students of today have a sense of the importance of religious studies, they themselves have no strong connection to religious institutions. Furthermore, Hartman’s explanation for these results could be attributed to children being raised in a “secularized home where adults do not adhere to any particular belief”.<sup>38</sup> I believe that children are exposed to these things at a very young age via their parents and often adopt the same prejudices, as well as, lenience their parents have. At the same time, however, today’s youth still show an interest in different beliefs and have taken steps towards establishing beliefs systems that are tailored for them personally. Proof of this can be seen in the emergence of progressive religions, such as New Age and Scientology. They do have the capacity to develop their own viewpoints based on the information available to them.

### 4.3. Cross-tabulation of teacher/student responses

In a brief cross-tabulation of all respondents, I attempt to verify the responses given by teachers and students. Table 11 illustrates the comparison in opinions of how often politics is referred to in the religious studies classroom.

*Table 11. Cross-tabulation of teachers'/students' responses regarding classroom discussions*

<b>6. How often do you discuss the influences of politics on religious affairs in your classroom lectures?</b>					
Responses from teachers					
	<b>Very frequently</b>	<b>Frequently</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Seldom</b>	<b>Never</b>
	0	0	40% (2)	<b>60% (3)</b>	0
<b>5. How often do you talk about the effects of politics on religious activities in class?</b>					
Responses from students					
	<b>All the time</b>	<b>Alot</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Rarely</b>	<b>Never</b>
	0	5,3% (5)	33,7% (32)	<b>55,8% (53)</b>	5,3% (5)

<sup>38</sup> Hartman, 2000, p. 88; translated by the author

It is immediately apparent that the majority of both teachers and students agreed that these issues are “rarely” discussed in class. As the teachers were directly responsible for the content of lesson plans, individual interviews were conducted with them in an attempt to understand why this was the case. In short, these interviews revealed that the teachers felt that there just was not enough resources and time for them to include such information, for example, textbooks which provide concrete examples. The textbooks that are available to them, quite frankly do not address issues of current affairs involving politics and religion. In the introduction, studies mentioned by Anders Calderan offered some insight as to why these teachers’ responses were so relevant. Calderan’s article showed that Norwegian and Swedish educators rely heavily on teaching aids such as textbooks. The reasoning is simple and sound, as he writes:

The advantage of following a book is such that it gives students the opportunity to, in a structured way, practice their skills. It would also take a lot of time if the teacher had to plan their own tasks all the time.<sup>39</sup>

If one adds the realities of self-efficacy to the equation, there is no wonder why politics is excluded from much of the religious studies course as teachers are not confident to incorporate them.

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<sup>39</sup> Calderon, 2012

## 5. Conclusions

The ambition of this study was to evaluate how religious studies teachers are incorporating political factors into their classroom instruction and also attempts to measure their personal tendencies. Additionally, the students' opinions about this subject were considered in order to clarify the responses of their teachers. The introduction assisted in setting the stage for illustrating the significance of political knowledge within the religious studies course in a multicultural society such as Sweden.

In an effort to account for the significance of an understanding of the pluralistic and secular society in educating students within religious studies, descriptions of the term, secularization, with concrete examples revealed that in order to study the effects of this phenomenon, one must understand the different perspectives it can manifest from. For example, from a social perspective using *the cultural* theory, the researcher would only see those characteristics which stem from a lack of religious influence in a society that has lost its faith in religious institutions. Consequently, they could be missing the political aspects steering state legislation through *the separation theory* which would divide the decisions of individuals into two separate groups; one side with a sense of duty, prohibitions, norms and values stemming from their religious institutional faiths, while the others rely on their own personal beliefs to traverse through political issues. By looking at these issues from several different perspectives, we can begin to understand the complexities of a secularized society such as Sweden and realize that there are several factors which have contributed and evolved from this ideology. This, I believe has illustrated the importance of a knowledgeable teacher in regards to the sociological aspects of the religious studies course.

Secondly, the connection between politics and religion was illustrated through two current events; the Church of Sweden elections and heated debates in the United Kingdom. From these occurrences, we get a concurrent sense of some of the communal challenges that threaten peace and solidarity in our societies based upon issues of religious influences. This further enhances the importance of having adequate knowledge about current political events which affect us all on one level or another. For instance, political affiliations which govern the Church of Sweden could influence the way the entire country deals with Immigration/Integration politics, youth organizations, diaconal out-reach programs helping the needy and other mission work that many depend upon the support of individuals with certain political agendas. In cases similar to the events that happened in the UK, basic civil liberties are exposed to bias during incidences where the democratic process should be uniting a society, not splitting them further apart.

After confirming the Swedish National Agency for Education's curriculum for Religious Studies' assertion that *religions role in some recent political developments and conflicts from a critical perspective* should be covered within the course, a study was designed to analyze how and to what extent politics is included in religious education within Intermediate level schools in Sweden. The methods and procedures performed in this study were designed using the mixed methodologies of both quantitative and qualitative research approaches. This approach was taken due to its advantages of cross-calibration, which proved to be effective in the study of the sociological complexities of religion in a secularized culture. While the advantages of quantitative research allowed for reasonably precise hypothesis testing with minimal theoretical bias in the sampling, qualitative research took into account the 'human' aspect of the social phenomena. In essence, the quantitative portion of the current study, which categorized student/teacher responses, gave an accurate account of 'what is' the reality of actual classroom sessions. The qualitative portion accounted for answers to responses to questions which could have been interpreted subjectively wrong and challenged the researcher to think, 'it may be, because...'. For example, the current study makes good use of questionnaires to rate responses of teachers and students, however it was necessary to qualify some of these responses through direct dialogue with the respondents. This proved to be exceptionally beneficial in the analysis of some of the data presented in this study. Furthermore, in my due diligence to provide proof of validity and reliability, the current study was admittedly externally invalid due to the relatively isolated and small sample size collected. Further studies focusing on a broader range of respondents is encouraged in order to validate my findings.

Finally, the results and analysis of the current study show that both teachers and students agreed that political issues in religious matters, and vice versa, are not discussed very often in the classroom. Although, as stated previously, it is a part of the courses' core curriculum, some individual teaching challenges were identified as possible contributors to the lack of achieving these goals. Namely, the teachers' experience level and *self-efficacy* had some correlation to how much they planned and reviewed politics in their classrooms. Less experience and personal interest equated to less discussion of these topics. This was further verified after group forums were conducted. Additionally, it can be argued that students could acceptably define what religion and politics were individually, yet found it challenging to give examples of *religions role in some recent political developments and conflicts* in their everyday experiences. I maintain that their indecisiveness is linked to the social environment they had been exposed to, including classroom instruction, secularization and parental influences.

In light of this study, and the literature review, I claim that the majority of our religious studies students have little knowledge of the importance of understanding the relationship between religion

and politics. I based my reasoning for these phenomena on the *cultural and socialization theories* of Taylor, Luckmann, Gill et al, which explains how individuals differentiate the ideologies of formal religion and private moralities. The teachers' deficiencies in including politically motivated material in their lesson plans were attributed to Cousins & Walker's *self-efficacy theory*, which supports my findings that *teachers who have a personal interest in the subject matter in which they are instructing are naturally more likely to do this consistently and more motivated to do so*. Additionally, it was argued that a lack of teacher support in the form of teaching aids and training may also have been a contributing factor. In response, the Swedish National Agency for Education makes a valid point in suggesting that the use of more IT resources could fill the gap left by a lack of conventional resources such as class trips and insufficient textbook information, but little has been done to support this recommendation. In closing, a quote by Mark Twain: "We despise all reverences and all the objects of reverence which are outside the pale of our own list of sacred things. And yet, with strange inconsistency, we are shocked when other people despise and defile the things which are holy to us." With or without a 'God', we must learn to live with one another in peace and I believe this starts with equipping our students with tools that will assist them in their dialectical reasoning of this sociological phenomena we call principles.

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## Appendix 1. Teacher Questionnaire (refer to this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RDMKWWG> to view the actual survey)

### Religion Studies and Politics Survey

Proponents argue that religious beliefs have historically socialized people's behavior and morality. This survey is being conducted to evaluate, at what degree, religious studies teachers are incorporating political factors into their classroom instruction and also attempts to measure their personal tendencies. Your sincere input is important and much appreciated. Thank you for your participation.

Please provide one answer for every question (except question #6).

**\* 1. What is your gender?**

Male

Female

**\* 2. How many years have you taught religious studies? (Religious studies refers to teaching about religions in general)**

< 1 year       1 - 2 years       3 - 4 years       5 years >

**3. Are you currently teaching religious studies?**

Yes

No

**\* 4. What region are you (or were you) teaching religious studies most in?**

North America       Europe       Southeast Asia

Central America       Asia       Oceania/Australia

South America       Middle East

Arctic Region       Africa

**\* 5. What grade levels have you taught in religious studies? (You have the option to choose more than one)**

Elementary (years 1-5)       Upper Secondary (years 9-12)

Intermediate (years 6-8)       Undergraduate or higher (years 13 or more)

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**Appendix 2. Student Questionnaire** (refer to this link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/M66YKJJ> to view the actual survey)

**Religious Studies & Politics Survey**

Many would argue that religion and politics (a form of the government) should be kept separate (this is called secularization). However, even in the most secularized societies, religion has always been used for political purposes by leaders and politicians. This survey is being used to evaluate your opinion about this subject, and how much you are taught about the relationship between religion and politics. Your honest input is important and much appreciated. Thank you!



**\* 1. What is your gender?**

Male

Female

**\* 2. How many years of religious studies have you had?**

< 1 year       1 - 2 years       3 - 4 years       5 years >

**\* 3. What region are you (or have you) received religious studies most in?**

North America       Europe       Southeast Asia

Central America       Asia       Oceania/Australia

South America       Middle East

Artic Region       Africa

**\* 4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?**

Did not attend school       3 - 4 years       9 - 10 years

< 1 year       5 - 6 years       11 - 12 years

1 - 2 years       7 - 8 years       13 years >