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Religious Diversity
and Education in Europe



Ursula McKenna, Julia Ipgrave, Robert Jackson

Inter Faith Dialogue by Email in Primary Schools

An Evaluation of the Building E- Bridges Project

Münster/New York/München/Berlin, 2008, 136 pages, pb., 19,90 €, ISBN 978-3-8309-1980-3

This innovative and stimulating book marks yet another important contribution to religious education research by the WRERU team at the University of Warwick, and is a creative development of the interpretive and dialogical approaches pioneered there. The book is a systematic evaluation of the Building E-Bridges Project, which linked children from primary schools in the multicultural city of Leicester in the English Midlands with children from East Sussex in the south of the country.

In a process-oriented way, teachers in schools situated in quite different contexts – urban as well as rural – have a role in the evaluation as well as themselves being subjects of research. The competence of the pupils is taken seriously and provides the basis for a well-structured analysis of different levels of learning via email contact. The voices of the pupils, cited from interviews and their email conversations, provide fascinating research data. In a fresh, direct and non-discriminatory way, they ask themselves questions about their different daily life experiences and their religious backgrounds. The report shows the capacity of pupils to combine a dialogue of life with a dialogue of faiths. A growing familiarity with their partners facilitates explanation of their own religious practices and sometimes enables theological reasoning. The authors' systematic evaluation of Building E-Bridges points to strengths and weaknesses in the project and leads to careful recommendations for future developments of the approach. Although the book will be of immediate value to the participants in the UK and to others who might develop the approach, it will also inspire international researchers and curriculum developers concerned with children's dialogue. The findings of the study contribute valuable data to the European Commission research project 'Religion in Education: A contribution to dialogue or a factor of conflict in transforming societies of European countries?' (REDCo), to which the authors of this report are contributors.

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and Co-ordinator of the EC research project REDCo



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