

## **Theo-Web. Academic Journal of Religious Education**

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### **Editorial and Summary in English**

by  
Manfred L. Pirner

This Editorial is intended to make the major contents of the contributions in German known to an international readership. It is based on the supposition that such an additional overview of the journal's articles is more profitable to international English-speaking readers than just additional English abstracts at the beginning of each German article.

We appreciate any reactions and comments by readers from outside the German language context and are grateful for suggestions that can help us to further improve our journal's accessibility and attractiveness for an international readership.

(You are invited to e-mail your comments to [manfred.pirner@fau.de](mailto:manfred.pirner@fau.de)).

As usual for the autumn edition, **the thematic part** of this issue of Theo-Web presents the keynotes and papers from the annual conference of the German Association of (Protestant) Religious Education Scholars ('Gesellschaft für wissenschaftliche Religionspädagogik e.V.' GwR) which took place from 11 to 13 September 2015 in Oppurg Castle near Jena, Thuringia. This year the conference dealt with the challenges of teacher education for RE (which in Germany is an ordinary school subject at public schools in almost all German states, with an opt-out possibility).

After the 12 contributions of the thematic issue there are also seven contributions in the section "**Research and Discourse**" that successfully passed our double-blind peer review process.

### **Thematic Issue**

#### **Challenges and desiderata of teacher training for Religious Education**

##### **The status quo of RE teacher training – aspirations and reality**

by Christian Grethlein

Over the past twenty years important changes in the framework of RE teacher training has taken place. They are mirrored in official documents by state as well as church institutions. In addition, schools are facing new challenges such as the transformations within families or the task of inclusive education. Also, new approaches in religious pedagogy have emerged that require a critical revision of framework theories and guiding concepts. According to empirical studies most students of RE teacher training are rather satisfied, but yet point to the necessity of reform of study programs. In order to theologially conceptualize such a reform it may be helpful to remember the reformation concepts that Melanchthon once formulated for the universities.

## **Introducing RE approaches at the university – the performative approach**

by Silke Leonhard and Florian Dinger

In a situation in which, on the one hand, it becomes increasingly difficult to justify RE at public schools and, on the other, in which the religiosity of future RE teachers has changed, the performative approach to RE at the university offers a double access to lived religion. From the perspective of teaching religious pedagogy this means: 1) Students are brought into contact with Christian religion in practice by experiencing and trying out selected elements in authentic settings. 2) At the same time the external perspective on religious practice is trained and practiced. 3) In this way, concepts of religious pedagogy, too, can be introduced.

## **Children and youth theology in the university context**

by Hanna Roose

The newly introduced ‘practice semester’ – in which teacher students spend most of their time at schools – implies new challenges for teacher training at university. Students are confronted earlier and more intensive with varieties of teaching practice in school that cannot be influenced by university lecturers. In this practice, often theoretical concepts of RE hardly seem to be relevant at all. Under this condition, how can a fruitful dialogue between RE concepts and every-day practice in schools be initiated? The author advocates for an encounter on equal footing. On the one hand RE can be analyzed from the conceptual perspective of children and youth theology. On the other hand, the concept of children and youth theology can be sharpened through the confrontation with school practice. To this end, the routines that are embedded in every-day practice in schools are described and evaluated from a theory of practice perspective. The norms of children and youth theology can then be related to the rules and norms embedded in every-day teaching practice. In this way, ‘blind spots’ and problems of children and youth theology become visible. On the basis of this analytical approach students in the ‘practice semester’ get the chance of appropriating their teaching to the concept of children and youth theology step by step.

## **Hermeneutics in transition**

by Martina Kumlehn

The article unfolds the fundamental importance of „hermeneutic competence“ in the context of professionalizing future RE teachers in university teacher training. It departs from the assumption that the power of hermeneutical disclosure, which is able to demonstrate the relevance of religious and theological patterns of interpretation for life and for education, constitutes the precondition of all specialized didactic reflection. The students need for themselves a difference-competent university-didactics of perspective change to build up hermeneutically versed religious and theological language competence. The article points to essential elements of such a basic hermeneutical competence within the context of religious hermeneutics, existence hermeneutics, phenomenal, and semiotic hermeneutics. Exemplified by a seminar on the topic of ‚travelling‘, the article shows what a suitable way of learning for the students may look like.

## **No place. Nowhere? Dialogical Religious Education at the university**

by Thorsten Knauth

The article outlines the context and guiding concepts of the dialogical approach to religious education. It explicates and exemplifies how dialogical learning in reference to religion can find its place in RE teacher training.

### **Learning how to teach RE teaching – impulses for university lecturers**

by Norbert Brieden

The article introduces the state of discussion on the concept of competence-orientation in the network 'Theology and University Teaching' from the perspective of religious pedagogy. In this context, the notions of 'learning outcome', 'constructive alignment' and the intertwining of models on the structure, the levels and the development of competencies is explicated, exemplified by the competence-oriented concept of the final module exam at the University of Wuppertal. In this oral exam students are expected to present a medium that is appropriate for stimulating religious learning by criteria taken from the model of elementarization, to answer questions on their presentation and to evaluate their own performance on the basis of the model of competence levels.

### **Between professional context and academic scholarship – RE teacher training in the 'Jena Model of Teacher Education'**

by Miriam Beier, Thomas Heller, and Michael Wermke

The 'Jena Model of Teacher Education', and thus also RE teacher training at Jena University, aims at closely linking the perspectives of the future professional context and of academic scholarship. In this contribution, firstly the concept of RE teacher training according to the Jena Model is outlined (section 1). Secondly, the mentioned linkage between the two perspectives is evaluated drawing on recent recommendations of the Protestant Church in Germany on the reform of RE teacher training as well as on the self-conception of Protestant theology (section 2). Against this backdrop some critical and constructive comments on the concept are made (section 3).

### **Workshop: Working with videos in RE teacher training**

by Hartmut Lenhard

The workshop dealt with possibilities of using RE teaching videos (videos of the recorded RE lessons of other teachers) in teacher training. Exemplified by a project conducted in the second phase of teacher education (which in Germany mostly comprises two years after graduation from university) basic questions of how such teaching videos can be used in seminars and how they can promote the development of professional teacher competencies.

### **On the way to the 'good school'. Form and methods of school explorations in the perspective of religious pedagogy**

by Silke Leonhard

School explorations in the perspective of religious pedagogy are a form of exploratory learning about places of lived religion in the context of school and teaching. Perceiving, encountering and exploring school as a place of the lively organization of reli-

gious education constitutes a counterpoint against a functional concept of teacher training. Such an alternative view can stimulate the development of future-proof ideas of a 'good school'.

### **Travelling in 'learning landscapes'. The Learning Lab Fachdidaktik Religion on the topic of 'creation'.**

by Werner Haußmann and Verena Bedruna

Teacher training has to face ever new challenges. Academic knowledge on subject matters constantly grows more complex and confusing. This fact and the connected radical changes unsettle university students. The concept of 'Learning Lab Fachdidaktik Religion' tries to react to these challenges. It addresses all those sub-topics of the theme 'creation' that are relevant for teaching RE. Diverse ways of learning and various 'learning landscapes' are offered that take seriously the aim to develop competencies. The Learning Lab promotes interlaced thinking, interrelates content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and methodology and thus wants to initiate the acquisition of knowledge and insight by discovery and exploratory learning. The present article contains theoretical foundations as well as a selection of practical examples from the Learning Lab.

### **Workshop 'Exploratory Learning'**

by Monika E. Fuchs, Marlene Sinhuber, and Linda Schwich

Based on a concise overview on the concept of 'exploratory learning', the contribution reports experiences from teaching practice at the universities of Göttingen and Hannover. It outlines different ways how exploratory learning can be put into practice in the context of RE teacher training and discusses the chances as well as the limits of the concept. These deliberations are complemented by reports in which two former students give an account of their personal experiences with this kind of exploratory learning and reflect on the concept from their perspectives as learners.

### **Establishing 'Slow Motion Areas' by the use of online forums**

by Ruth Ziemer

This contribution emphasizes the learning potentials of RE-related online forums. The asynchronous communication in online forums in which users respond time-delayed offers the chance of a 'slow motion area' against the general trend toward acceleration. Communication in online forums is located on the meso level between private and public communication. Students and lecturers can actively and autonomously knit the network of their learning process and reflect on the written result of it. Such potentials for promoting learning enable in particular the communication on individual experiences of faith and their contextualization in theological perspectives.

### **"Research and Discourse"**

**"Getting out of Qu'ran schools". The relationship between catechesis in mosques and Islamic Religious Education in public schools. Why a public and inner-Islamic debate is necessary**

by Rauf Ceylan

After the reunification of guest workers' families in the 1970s the mosques in Germany have concentrated on the religious education of Muslim children and youths. Up to the present thousands of this target group attend the catechetical education at weekends. It is true that many Muslim families also attach great importance to Islamic education within the family. But because of their high trust in the integrity and competencies of the mosques and their imams, Islamic communities are of special significance to them. However, in recent years Islamic Religious Education at public schools has step-by-step been established, with academically trained teachers as new religious authorities and with new contents and objectives that enrich the religious field. The big challenge to clarify the relationship between catechesis at the mosque and RE at school has widely not been tackled, but has rather led to conflicts. Drawing on the author's theoretical and empirical research the background and reasons for this conflict-laden situation are explicated and concrete recommendations for practice and further research are offered.

**“With a super RE group, religious education touches the heart.”  
Analyzing a section of group discussion by use of the ‘documentary method’**

by Philipp Klutz

In the context of the 2013 study of RE teachers in the Rhineland a qualitative sub-study was conducted in which group discussions of Protestant RE teachers at primary schools were analyzed. The study poses the question of how group members perceive religious education, how they justify their teaching practice, which attitudes they hold toward a multi-faith approach in RE and by what these attitudes have been shaped. This contribution introduces the intention and the methodological steps of this sub-study and outlines how group discussions have been analyzed by use of the ‘documentary method’.

**Values education through working on relations.  
Why relationships and attachment are substantial for values education**

by Kathrin Kürzinger

Good personal relationships and secure attachment are the keys to success in the opinion of youths concerning the development of their values and ethical attitudes. This is the result of a qualitative empirical study in which for the first time young people were explicitly interviewed on their own views on the factors that have influenced their value development. The study tried to find out, for example, whether or not religion and / or the church are still being perceived as such factors. At the same time the study identifies and analyzes the conditions that promote or obstruct the process of value development. Consequences of the study's results for concepts of value education are discussed and finally current social challenges are pointed out that suggest focusing on value education through working on relations.

**Art as a vehicle of educational objectives at school?  
On the educational problem of dealing with works of art in (RE) lessons**

by Karlo Meyer

Many RE teachers like working with pictures of renowned artist in their RE lessons. When doing so, mostly the pictures are not considered in their own right, but are rather instrumentalized for educational ends. There are, however, various ways to use works of art for teaching that imply diverse degrees of convergence with the original intention or 'setting in life' of the art work. For the case of divergence this contribution suggests to be transparent about it in teaching, because in this way the educational opportunities can be taken advantage of and at the same time the art work can be granted its own right.

**“Nowadays this is a hot topic” (female, 18 years old)  
An evaluation among German-speaking Swiss high school students on their wishes concerning the shape of multi-faith RE in their country**

by Andreas Kessler and Carsten Ramsel

The present evaluation in multi-faith RE among German-speaking Swiss high school students shows that, on the one hand, learners want to know a lot about religions to get a better orientation in their life worlds, but on the other hand they expect to be promoted in their ability to discuss religious questions and take a stance in the spirit of openness, empathy and tolerance. With such opinions the learners themselves situate religious education within the guiding educational principles of high school formation and thus challenge a corresponding non-confessional religious didactics to develop a specific, context-sensitive theory of religious learning at high schools.

**Fictional spacecrafts and their missions as a chance for religious education – sensitizing for ideologies and utopias and enabling to 'discern the spirits'**

by Ulrich Kumher and Florian Wille

Spacecrafts in fictional stories challenge religious education, inter alia, in regard to political education. The presence of war spacecrafts (e.g. in Star Wars) demands criticism of ideology. And the presence of utopian and dystopian motives in spacecraft stories (e.g. Star Trek) calls for criticizing problematic developments in real life and for providing impulses of hope for a more humane world. This contribution advances stimulations for a kind of religious education that aims at developing a well-reflected and well-balanced view of the educational potential of popular culture and making it fruitful for religious teaching and learning processes. This implies both to sensitize for the 'objects' and 'phenomena' of popular culture as well as to enable students to 'discern the spirits'.

**Joy and frustration in the first years on the job. Religious Education teachers in their initial professional phase**

by Andrea Schulte, Tobias C. Stubbe and Jennifer Lorenz

Despite the increasing significance and growing number of research projects on the professionalization and professionalism of RE teachers the initial phase on the job has not yet been investigated. But it is exactly this decisive phase in the development to professionalism that deserves special attention. This contribution introduces an interdisciplinary project on RE teachers in their initial professional phase that is conducted in cooperation between the University of Erfurt (Protestant Religious Pedagogy) and the Georg-August-University Göttingen (School Pedagogy/Empirical

School Research). The project also documents the empirical context and the teachers' motivation as well as the methods and interpretations of the first inquiry. Preliminary observations and tendencies are presented, and critical questions as well as problems are pointed out that challenge RE teacher training. For example, one of them is how the building up and promotion of personal as well as professional competencies of RE teachers can be improved.