

A critique of the competence model and of the morality laid out in religious education, and how we can get over it.

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Current approaches to dealing with the climate crisis aim to motivate action by teaching skills for sustainability or teaching material on this topic, which in turn should motivate pupils to live according to the SDGs. Our study asks whether the focus of teachers and of young people alike should rather be on moral qualities than on measurable skills. We criticize the meaning of measurable competences within ESD, and, by using Michael Roth's narrative ethics, we attempt to initiate a different solution process based on compassion.

1. Criticism of the competence model

We consider the relationship between the self-design of young people and normative implications of the climate discourse. Young people in school are supposed to achieve certain skills, which can be evaluated from a general perspective. However, the measurability of actions - in contrast to the measurement of natural events - can only be achieved, if it results in certain behavioural patterns. Teachers certainly always have the option of individually shaping the requirements that are introduced into lessons. However, we would like to point out the tendency of turning towards fixed competencies to focus on rule-based behaviour (cp. Anselm 2022, pp. 115-118).

2. Critics of moral thoughts

According to Michael Roth, the moralizing of a so-called moral apostle is an abuse of morality, because moral justification figures are formulated from an asymmetrical perspective (cf. Roth 2017, 110). In contrast, narrative ethics aims to visualize actions in a concrete situation from the perspective of faith. This can result into an identification with ethical challenges of others and a deeper understanding of the complexity of moral decisions – the opposite of a moral apostle. Compassion (cf. Metz 1996, p. 3f) can be outlined regarding to Roth's narrative ethics, as it not only functions as an ethical principle, but also makes a concrete contribution of promoting social cohesion for the people involved.

3. The spiritual significance of ritualized sustainability rhetoric in ESD

If the focus is not on skills but on moral qualities, then ESD neither means the teaching of competences nor morality as a moral apostle would understand it. Rather, it is about creating a bond with others. Since solidarity with all people is neither a realistic nor practicable option,

it is about symbolizing one's own being-in-the-world. ESD is therefore a religious-pedagogical task that cannot be dissolved into ethics, because the focus needs to be on the perception of the world. The prototype of such a new perception is the Good Samaritan: when he saw the man who fell among thieves, he was moved with compassion (Luke 10:33). Compassion is understood not as an action-limiting identification with others, but as an active power of getting in touch with others. Therefore, skills are still necessary, but the decisive factor for a successful ESD is the (biblical) spirit in which we are to act.

Literature

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