

**Theo-Web. Academic Journal of Religious Education**  
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**Editorial and Summary in English**  
by  
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*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@ewf.uni-erlangen.de](mailto:manfred.pirner@ewf.uni-erlangen.de)).*

*This issue of Theo-Web consists of two major parts:*

*Our Thematic Issue addresses the question of how religion and religiosity are perceived in current childhood and youth research with six contributions.*

*In the section 'Research and Discourse' there are five texts that deal with an interesting variety of topics from competence-oriented RE (Sajak & Feindt; Kruhöffer) and the didactics of the question (Horstmann) to Bible teaching between orality and literacy (Büttner) and narrative religious education (Gennerich).*

## **Thematic Issue: Religiosity in current childhood and youth research**

### **Introduction to the thematic issue**

by MANFRED L. PIRNER, MARTIN ROTHGANGEL & MARTIN SCHREINER

Mainly three observations have inspired us to publish a thematic issue on this topic. The first one is our impression that in the field of childhood and youth research significant progress has been made over the recent years. New theoretical perspectives have been developed, especially in the field of social childhood studies, and numerous research projects have produced findings that can be illuminating for the field of religious education. The second observation is that in academic religious education also remarkable progress has been made in empirical research on the religiosity of children and young people that has materialized in several comprehensive publications that are worth intensive discussion. The third observation, however, is that still, the two areas – general childhood and youth research on the one hand and research on the religiosity of young people in a religious education context on the other – mostly remain separated from each other. Religion or religiosity seem to remain marginal in the main stream of social or educational childhood and youth research, and the new approaches there do not seem to be widely adopted in the field of religious education studies. We have therefore tried to bring authors from the two academic areas together in order to promote exchange and mutual enrichment.

### **Social childhood studies – approximations to a complex field of research**

by FRIEDERIKE HEINZEL, RENATE KRÄNZL-NAGL & JOHANNA MIERENDORFF

This contribution offers some insight into the perspectives, concepts, and major areas of social childhood research that has developed into a complex field recently. Focusing on the so-called '(new) social childhood studies' it addresses the question of how the scientific look at childhood and children has changed, what is significant about present subjects of research, which theoretical and methodological approaches there are, and finally, which fields of research can be identified. In the conclusion, a summary and an outlook on future challenges of social childhood studies are given.

### **Social childhood studies and the children's theology approach**

by KATHARINA KAMMEYER

This contribution argues that the children's theology approach as an emancipatory theological approach, as pedagogical approach and as research perspective can profit in respective different ways from social childhood studies. The common task concerning all these aspects is to perceive the perspectives of children, to reconstruct them and productively integrate them into doing theology and religious teaching. Social childhood studies can help to better perceive the contexts of children and to reflect more deeply on the relationship between children and adults implied in diverse concepts of the child or of childhood. In this way, the aim of a contextual children's theology can be achieved that really draws on the children's own theological contributions and not so much on theological projections by adults. As a consequence, religious education requires a reconceptualization in which diagnostic aspects gain a more important role. Finally, the question is addressed in how far the children's theology approach can be an inspiration to social childhood studies.

### **Youth and religion. Sociological approaches and research outcomes**

by RENÉ GRÜNDER & ALBERT SCHERR

This contribution offers an overview of questions and results of social science research on the significance of religions and religiousness for young people in Germany. A first tendency that is pointed out is that the diagnosis of the 1970s – that adolescents increasingly distance themselves from religion – can no longer be retained. Secondly, the change of form and function of adolescent religiosity is characterized. And thirdly, the effects of the evolving pluralistic immigration society on adolescent religiosity are analyzed.

### **Youth and religion. An international perspective**

by SYLVIA COLLINS-MAYO

***(Original in English)***

The sociological study of youth religion is a growing field of research. This article is concerned with the nature of young people's believing and belonging and its place in their everyday lives. It begins by considering the growth and sociological significance of increased religious diversity among young people. It goes on to explore the nature of belief and practice among young people who have a nominal or no religion identity. Significant in shaping both religious and non-religious young people's attitudes and approaches to religion is the cultural trend towards individualization and subjectivity. In this context the shift from religiosity to spirituality is considered.

**The 'religiosity' of young people: What, actually, is the question? A sociology of knowledge analysis of prototypical studies and a sketch of a theoretically based concept of empirical research**

by ANDREAS FEIGE

This contribution addresses the fundamental question of in how far the academic disciplines that deal with 'religiosity' – the social sciences and educational science on the one hand and theology and religious education studies on the other – have understandings of 'reality' and corresponding research questions that are compatible with each other. Firstly, in a historical perspective some exemplary influential and theoretically interesting studies are analyzed under the sociology of knowledge perspective of which explicit and implicit notions of 'religiosity' they used. Secondly, Joachim Matthes' discursive approach of a sociology of religion is sketched. It has the capacity to illuminate the sociological as well as the theological research interests concerning 'religiosity' and places the role of (the question for) reality in the centre of its theoretical framework. In a concluding evaluation, consequences are indicated for an empirical research of 'religiosity' that goes beyond collecting agree-disagree-statements on pre-fixed traditional and theoretical wordings.

**The religiosity of young people in a competence-theoretical perspective: The concept of self-regulation and the central category of 'law and gospel' as heuristic aspects of an empirically based teaching of religious competences**

by CARSTEN GENNERICH

Concerning the topic 'religiosity of young people', the present challenge can be seen in the integration of empirical findings into a competence-oriented theoretical perspective. This means to perceive young people's religiosity as contextual problem-solving activities. In the following, the attempt is made to develop a theoretically derived and empirically backed theory of competences that helps to theologically grasp and educationally develop the empirical phenomenon of young religiosity. This will be done in four steps.

Firstly, the problems of competence discourse in religious education and its empirical as well as theoretical challenges will be explored. Secondly, a synthesis of the social-psychological concept of self-regulation and the theological concept of 'law and gospel' as models of competences will be sketched. Thirdly, exemplary findings will be presented and interpreted with the help of the developed competence-theoretical perspective. Fourthly and finally, consequences of the presented insights are developed. For example, to enhance the probability of sense-making out of different experiences and life contexts in heterogeneous learning groups requires different theological interpretations as well.

## Research and Discourse

### **Creating space for self-directed acquisition. On the characteristics of competence-oriented teaching in religious education**

by CLAUß PETER SAJAK & ANDREAS FEINDT

In the two research projects 'KompRU' and 'KompKath' teachers were accompanied by the researchers in their endeavor to direct their religious education lessons to the development of religious competences, to evaluate and discuss these attempts. In the projects the approach of teacher research was combined with methods of student research and resulted in a co-operation between university researchers, teacher training professionals, and practicing teachers. Preliminary results can provide information about the didactical-methodical form of a competence-oriented religious education whose major aim is to promote self-directed acquisition and development of competences through phases of training and experimenting under diagnostic support.

### **The profile of ethical learning in Protestant Religious Education**

by BETTINA KRUHÖFFER

By promoting ethical competence Protestant Religious Education provides an essential contribution to the students' general education. It gains its specific profile through its denominational reference and its corresponding theological perspective which sees the justification of the sinner as the basis of a theological ethics of responsibility. In this view, evaluative competence is promoted not so much by taking the biblical texts directly as ethical norms, but rather by the critical discussion and evaluation of biblical sources. Thus, ethical learning in Protestant RE is characterized on the one hand by learning about the biblical foundations as starting points of rational argumentation, and on the other by learning to understand the moral implications of the Christian faith in the sense of a descriptive ethical approach.

### **'You'll never know unless you ask.' Theology and the didactics of the question**

by KAI HORSTMANN

This contribution recommends Hans-Dieter Bastian's approach of a theology and didactics of the question for addressing the current challenge to argue for religion as a subject in schools. The didactics of the question aims at a discursive way of teaching that takes the questions of the learners seriously and places them at the centre of the learning process. By doing so, Bastian succeeds better than many current attempts in doing justice to the scientific propaedeutical task of RE at school that distinguishes it from religious education in congregational contexts. After a 'reload' of Bastian's theology and didactics it is updated with reference to the constructivist approach of religious education (Hans Mendl) and the approach of empirical dogmatics (Carsten Gennerich).

## **From orality to literacy and return. The Bible as spoken word and written text in religious education and beyond**

by GERHARD BÜTTNER

Recent developments in academic religious education and their perception of perspectives from cultural studies draw our attention to the fact that the question of orality and literacy has been significant for dealing with the Bible's contents and texts since biblical times. The history of RE concepts in Germany reveals that since the times of a kerygmatic RE ('Evangelische Unterweisung'), there has been a tendency from orality to literacy that was also promoted by the availability of certain media. Recently, in the context of the performative approaches of RE, this trend seems to go into reverse.

## **Narrative Religious Education: approaches, empirical foundations and perspectives for development**

by CARSTEN GENNERICH

This contribution sketches the state of research in narrative approaches to religious education and reports about new studies on the development of autobiographical perspectives in RE. After an introduction to the focus of the analysis, different theoretical approaches are presented in section two and three that try to explain the effects of narrations in RE, and conventional strategies of true-to-the-text or recipient-oriented biblical story-telling are explicated and empirically assessed. In the fourth section, conventional attempts to work with autobiographical narrations in RE are critically evaluated. The criteria developed in this section for an autobiographically accentuated concept of narrative RE are finally, in section five, put into practice by the presentation of teaching examples and empirical case studies. It will be shown that the narrative approaches proposed can meet these criteria. The work with autobiographical stories in RE can be seen as a promising didactic perspective.