

**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 seemed to the editors 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)).*

The major part of this issue of "Theo-Web" is the documentation of the annual conference of the German Association of (Protestant) Religious Education Scholars "Arbeitskreis für Religionspädagogik e.V." (AfR). It took place from 10 to 12 September 2010 in Bad Alexandersbad, Bavaria and dealt with the topic "Religious Education inside and outside school". As in Germany Religious Education (mostly Catholic or Protestant) is an ordinary subject at all public state schools, a considerable part of the academic discipline of "Religious Pedagogy" (Religionspädagogik) at German universities concentrates on teacher education. However, there are many fields of religious education beyond school, primarily in the church communities (such as confirmation classes, children and youth work, courses for adults on Christian themes) but also in the public realm (such as regional Protestant Educational Centers for adults or Academies that offer a variety of themes in the fields of religion and politics). In the following, only the thematic papers of the conference are summarized, without the introductory speech: the spiritual meditations, the more personal biographic review by Professor Fraas, the short theses by Karl Ernst Nipkow and Hans-Bernhard Kaufmann and the conference review.

Beside the thematic part there are two articles under the general category of "Research and Discourse".

### **Thematic Issue: Religious Education inside and outside school**

#### **"Systemic perspectives as framework for a new way of defining the relationship between school-related and non-school-related Religious Pedagogy"**

by MICHAEL DOMSGEN

'Systems theory' is a collective term used for a variety of significances and analytical levels. Its productivity could be proved through pedagogical reception of systemic perspectives. Concerning religious education, two theoretical approaches are of particular importance: On the one hand, the system-theoretical perspective in terms of a general systems theory which allows us to trace back the internal logic of a system

and also to appreciate different places of learning in their own right, and on the other the perspective of systemic coaching, which focuses on the learning subject and its construction capacity. Drawing on these two theoretical roots, the systems theory perspective is able to consider a different context of socialization while simultaneously including the emotional dimension. Because of this, it is much easier to describe religious education inside and outside school in their respective peculiarity but also in their relatedness towards each other.

### **“Christian Congregational Pedagogy and school-related Religious Pedagogy – a plea for a new partnership”**

by PETER BUBMANN

In Germany, Religious Pedagogy as a school-related academic discipline has historically developed its autonomy in emancipation from church-dominated catechetics, giving educational perspectives their own right beside theological perspectives. On the other hand, educational aspects tended to be neglected in church-related theological disciplines. This effected in a ‘hermeneutics of suspicion’ on either side and an estrangement of the two academic fields. However, the current educational crisis changes the relationship between school and church community and opens up new chances of cooperation. In this light, it is not incidental that recent concepts of religious education such as ‘theological conversation with children’, ‘church room pedagogy’ or ‘performative religious education’ build bridges between the two learning venues, school and congregation. The same can be said for concepts of congregational pedagogy, so that the differences as well as the commonalities of the two settings should be re-analyzed on the basis of a new partnership between the respective academic disciplines.

### **“The nation-wide study on confirmation work. Main findings and consequences for church and RE at school”**

by FRIEDRICH SCHWEITZER

The paper reports the main findings of the first ever representative empirical study among participants in Protestant confirmation classes in Germany. It builds on a regional study, done in the German state of Baden-Württemberg, and is situated in the context of an international study on “Confirmation Work in Europe”. The study’s background is marked by an intended change in Germany’s Protestant churches from confirmation classes (resembling school teaching) to confirmation work (emphasizing open youth work activities). Such a transformation seems necessary because the life context of confirmation education has significantly changed. As the study shows, young people are in high danger of developing a negative attitude towards church and especially church services in the setting of traditional confirmation classes. Beyond the consequences which can be drawn for confirmation work, the paper argues that the young people’s religious attitudes and ideas should in general be taken more seriously and as the starting point of any efforts to promote religious learning. Also, the isolation of RE at school, confirmation work and (church) youth work should be overcome while at the same time taking into account the specifics of every learning venue.

**“Connections between school-related and non-school-related Religious Pedagogy and consequences for university programs”**

by CHRISTIAN GRETHLEIN

From its reformation roots, Protestant theology has always included the impetus to pass on religious truth by correlating it with people's life world. In the present university reform process (the Bologna reform), it encounters a programme which on the one hand sees itself in the humanistic tradition, but on the other de facto excludes the questions of truth and justice which belongs to the core of this tradition. At the same time changes at different learning venues create new problems which challenge a theology sensitive of its own inherent educational tasks. Against this background, religious-pedagogical reflections gain importance in all theological courses of study and cannot be limited to RE teacher or minister training.

**“Religious learning as sense-making – preconditions in school and church community”**

by CARSTEN GENNERICH

The different social structures of school and church community exert different influences on religious learning as a process of sense-making. In order to achieve a sharper analysis of these differences, the systematic theory of sense-making of organizational theorist Karl E. Weick proves helpful. Weick distinguishes between the belief-based processes of 'argumentation' and 'expectation' as well as between the action-based processes of 'commitment' and 'environment modelling'. In all four of these categories differences between RU at school and congregational youth work can be discovered, partly supported by empirical evidence. They give hints how to improve the quality of religious learning in both settings.

**“Encouragement as pastoral dimension of both school-related and non-school-related Religious Pedagogy”**

by MATTHIAS GÜNTHER

Tentatively, 'encouragement' is defined as central pastoral dimension of school-related as well as non-school-related Religious Pedagogy. Theory and practice of encouragement as described by individual psychology (Robert F. Antoch, Oskar Spiel) is evaluated in the search for stimuli for the practice of religious education. In six theses the concept of an encouraging pastoral care for young people inside and outside school is advanced and discussed.

**“Learning venues inside and outside school on the topic ‘Church in the former German Democratic Republic’. An RE lesson in systemic perspective”**

by DAVID KÄBISCH

The possibilities and chances of a systemic Religious Pedagogy have up to now mainly been discussed on the theoretical level. By reporting an RE lesson which conceptually integrated learning venues outside school, the paper tries to enrich this discussion with observations from the practice of religious learning.

### **“Pedagogical Days as a pilot project of encounter between Religious Education and Congregational Pedagogy”**

by JENS KRAMER AND HENNING SCHLUSS

In the German states of Berlin and Brandenburg, the situation concerning RE at school differs from most of the other states. Here, RE is an optional subject and completely in the responsibility of the church, however often taught by teachers with a certain distance towards the church. While respecting the differences between school and congregation as religious learning venues, the Protestant Church of Berlin and Brandenburg has for a decade been offering regular ‘pedagogical days’ for religious educators from both fields. A great number of participants used the chance to learn together and learn from each other.

### **“Artefacts in church buildings. Reflections on church pedagogy”**

by ANTJE ROGGENKAMP-KAUFMANN

‘Church Pedagogy’ (Kirchenraumpädagogik) was at the centre of a cooperative seminar between students from the universities of Göttingen and Oldenburg. The lecturers had developed a concept concentrating on artefacts, which can be expected to add new impulses to the Church Pedagogy approach in RE. The concept is introduced and the practice of the seminar sketched and evaluated. In the evaluation, the (traditional but also manifold) use of the artefacts emerged as one of the most important factors to be taken into account.

### **“From TEO lino to TEO classic. Ten years of school-cooperative work in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern”**

by ROLAND ROSENSTOCK

The paper reports about a project called “days of ethical orientation” (German abbreviation: TEO). Guided by the insight that school has become more and more a place of living for the students and thus a venue of socialization, the two Protestant churches in the north German state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern together with state authorities established a project of ethical learning at the end of the 1990s. TEO combines elements of school teaching and outings with elements from youth work in an effort to promote situated learning. In this effort various teachers, youth workers, church persons and ministers have been working together and complementing each other for the sake of the students.

### **“Godly Play at school? – Aporia and chances”**

by MARTIN STEINHÄUSER

Although the concept of Godly Play comes from the American Sunday School, it shows some aspects which may fit in the German state school context of Religious Education as well, if it is perceived as an approach that wants to give children time, space and relationships to address basic existential questions of humanity with the

help of the Christian tradition. The paper explores the critical discussion of Godly Play in Germany and discusses main aspects of the concept.

## **Research and Discourse**

### **“Transparent transcendence. The painting ‘Moses in front of the burning thorn-bush’ (1956/57) by Ernst Fuchs and its Old Testament references”**

by THOMAS MEURER

Can the uniqueness and evasiveness of religious experience and of aesthetic experience be conveyed to a wider ‘audience’? In what way can that which is not representable be represented in artistic work? These are the questions that become particularly challenging in regard of Ernst Fuchs’ painting of Moses in front of the burning thorn bush. Drawing on Fuchs’ own archetypical aesthetic theory of ‘phantastic realism’ and on Martin Seel’s aesthetic of reception the paper argues for a revision of standard procedures of dealing with pictures in religious education.

### **“Vegetarianism as a topic in Religious Education”**

by PATRICK DIEMLING

The paper primarily gives concise background knowledge about vegetarianism in the history of religions for the context of religious education. The roots of vegetarianism as a spiritual attitude can be traced back to ancient India as well as to ancient Greece. Vegetarianism cannot be directly deduced from the Christian bible, but apart from the church main stream it partly had an important role in Christianity, for instance as a symbol of protest. At the end of the paper, impulses for the treatment of the topic in RE from philosophy, nutritional science and pedagogy are offered.