

Outline poster presentation.

Title: Imagining the Possibilities. Religious Education and Diversity in Merged Schools.

1. Main concepts/issues

During the moment of contemplation in religious education religious content can be discussed and contemplated. This moment is seen as a way of marking the formal identity of a cooperation school. By doing so we regard the moment of contemplation as an example of a religious activity that can express the school identity: an identity marker.

Its formal identity states equality as a key value. But how is dealt with religious diversity in this practice and what we can say about this practice and the way teachers give meaning to it in relation to the formal school identity? To answer these questions we look for social and religious aspects of this moment. This social and this substantive perspective are key concepts in both the theoretical and the empirical research.

The social perspective concentrates on the practice of dialogue in the didactics of religious education of the cooperation school: does this practice express equality and encounter as key values of the school? And what motives do teachers mention for these (absence of) didactics? The substantive perspective makes clear what religious sources and what religious issues the teachers address in the moment of contemplation: what is the role of the Christian tradition in the line of the merged former Christian school and how can a diversity of religious traditions be discussed?

Both the empirical and the theoretical research lead to several conclusions and questions for further research. These conclusions and questions concern issues about religious diversity in education, the value of dialogue and the place of religious traditions in religious education. A central and fundamental underlying question of this research is how we can imagine practices of religious education in religious diverse classes and what obstacles are to be removed in order to realize these practices.

2. Description of methodology for addressing the topic

In our research we center the teacher as the one who propagates and creates the school identity. Following this approach, religious school identity is constructed and expressed by concrete, everyday activities organized by teachers. Hence in this research we concentrate on choices made by teachers and their motives underlying these choices. Analyzing these choices and motives we explore an educational practice of dealing with religious diversity in a cooperation school and we formulate fundamental questions in order to imagine possibilities for religious education in such a religious diverse school setting.

By using and analyzing three methods we conducted source triangulation: we studied school documents, we recorded and analyzed moments of contemplation and, third, interviewed the teachers and analyzed these interviews. Leading perspectives in this empirical research were the social and the substantive.

The analysis of the recordings of the moments of contemplation was done by paying attention

to the two perspectives. Focusing on the social perspective we analyzed the way organization and didactics stimulate the dialogue between the participants. By analyzing religious sources and themes we focused on the substantive perspective.

We interviewed the teachers in three separate groups using a topic interview. Guideline for this interview were questions that were based on the video data and the theory. The interviews were semi-structured. The interview transcriptions were coded and analyzed in a data analyzing computer program.

A theoretical study of the social and the substantive perspective of education in religious diverse classes underlies the empirical research.

3. Sources grounding the presentation

This research studies the views and the religious practice of teachers of one cooperation school. It is their practice and their views that will ground the presentation.

In the presentation an outline of the empirical research will be discussed: outcomes of the analysis of the school documents, of the video recordings and of the interviews will be articulated.

These findings will be discussed in the line of theoretical sources about diversity and religious education.

4. Status of the research at the time of the presentation

The presentation will show findings of phase two of my PhD-research. Phase 1 was presented two years ago in Boston and the article that goes with this first phase will be published in Religious Education in 2016. An article describing the second phase is ready to be published. Another one and a half year is left to conduct following research.