Opening the Bible as a Book of Life in the German RE Classroom: Can Bibliolog Offer an Access?
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Introduction
The school subject “Religious Education” has a unique status in Germany. It is enshrined in the constitution, article 7, paragraph 3 and it is designed on mutual responsibility by the government and the Church as a “res mixta”. As a consequence all students have to participate in the Land of North-Rhine Westphalia, Germany, - in which the TU Dortmund University is located – have to participate in RE and to learn about Christianity (Roman Catholic or Protestant) or Islam, unless a written cancellation of their parents is submitted. Sacred Scripture becomes part of their formal education.

In marked contrast to the legal requirements fewer and fewer pupils with a Christian background have interest in the subject of RE due to the fact that many children or teenager have only little or no points of contact to any religion and are not religiously socialized.

It is almost a contradiction that a nation which gradually edges away from religious socialization and living faith with great deal of skepticism, still pays thorough attention to and commits itself in the legal Constitution in which RE plays a crucial role. (cf. Roebben 2012)

As such it comes about that both children with religious backgrounds and those without any religious association are taught together about (religious and non-religious) world views, as well as about the Bible as a cornerstone of Christian faith. It means in effect that teachers are responsible for the religious socialization of their pupils and that they have to bring them into contact with the fundamentals of Christian faith within a legally binding framework. In fact, teachers have to provide religious formation that a secular society does not offer.

The question arises how faith can be revived under the terms of the described educational setting. What would be the consequences for the teaching profession?

As one possible response to the difficult situation I propose Bibliolog as an appropriate method. Bibliolog, in the United States of America called Bibliodrama, allows to reflect on biblical texts starting from the personal live experiences in order to discover the personal story of the reader (i.e. the pupils) in the complex stories of the Bible. (cf. Pitzele 1998)

Main issues
The main question is whether or not Bibliolog can be an appropriate method within an educational process.

A didactical theory which is designed to raise hope and revive faith should be made on the basis of various criteria. Also it has to be examined if Bibliolog is a possible method to apply that could be useful to regard the Bible as a book of living faith and not only as a text book.

However, Bibliolog is a dialogue with biblical texts, in which people of all ages and with diverse religious socializations can adopt. Bibliolog requires identifying and playing a particular role of a certain biblical character in the setting of a biblical text. It is a kind of improvisation theatre using Biblical narratives. This method invites to enter the biblical world referring to the personal living environment (cf. Pitzele 1998, Pohl-Patalong 2013).

In order to frame an answer to the question if Bibliolog can be a possible applicable method, two issues have to be addressed: Firstly, the preconditions for RE as they are legally binding in the education law and in the curriculum provide the required basis. (cf. Ministerium für Schule und Weiterbildung 2012) Secondly, it is of special significance to look closer at the way in which teachers use the Bible and apply it to RE classes. Both issues have to be
associated and evaluated with the requirements of Bibliolog. This analysis is necessary to answer the initial objective / research issue if Bibliolog can be applied to the current conditions of RE or not. Thirdly, Bibliolog has to be studied according to a serious of set criteria. It has to be asked if this method of interpreting the Bible regards the text as a mirror in which the personal life experiences can be observed. Is the personal life an appropriate context for biblical hermeneutics from the pupil’s point of view? And the other way round: Is the personal life experience within another time and culture other than the biblical world an appropriate biblical hermeneutic?

Methodology
The issue of preconditions is explored through a textual analysis of the relevant legal texts, the current school curriculum and official writings of the German Bishops. My empirical survey about the biblical usage in RE classes was conducted in 2015 (forthcoming under the title “Zur Verwendung der Bibel im Religionsunterricht an Grundschulen in Nordrhein-Westfalen” (VeBiG)). The design of the study follows a replication study of Horst Klaus Berg dated from 1989. (cf. Berg 1989, Bröcking-Bortfeld 1989) VeBiG was designed as online-survey and sent to 868 selected primary schools. Its focus has been merely on primary schools because most of the pupils initially are in touch with religious contents in their first school years. Over a period of three month a total of 265 teachers have participated in the survey.

Poster Description
The poster provides an overview of the legal foundations and the precise application to the curriculum of RE as a subject in primary schools in the federal state of NRW. The presented text analysis on the poster focuses on Bible references in the relevant legal documents. Additionally, study results on the usage of the Bible in RE are portrayed. As a second important issue the method of Bibliolog is presented on the poster. In the first instance the requirements of this method are evaluated (setting, skills, material etc.). Additionally, the starting conditions and methodological steps of Bibliolog are described. Secondly, Bibliolog is evaluated according to a serious of set criteria. By this means the teaching profession and the formation of the teacher are considered. Which skills teachers do have to learn to use methods like Bibliolog in classes to develop an appropriate view of the Bible for the next generation?

Bibliography