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Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of (religious education) teachers. Research findings on their relationship and conclusions for teacher training

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(Download of handout and Power Point slides at www.manfred-pirner.de > Papers)

Introduction – illustrating the research perspective

Passage from the interview with an RE lady-teacher in a Northern Bavarian primary school from 2017

'This [achievement assessment of pupils] is sometimes difficult. In RE I don't do that so much really. Also, I don't give bad marks. Everyone who does not fool around or severely misbehaves gets their "two" [the second best grade after grade one]. In this respect I am …, if somebody follows the lesson and contributes to it …, it's important for me that somebody engages in RE class and not the written papers he produces. […] I sometimes do a little learning revision with the pupils, but I don't directly give marks on it; I rather assess the creative things they have produced, for instance a foldout leaflet or a poster. That's also what I tell my pupils that this is the freedom that I have in RE. I don't want to destroy the beautiful and valuable things that I convey to the pupils by grading them. But it's not only in RE. For me, it's also important in other subjects. I mean, from my Christian view and as a primary school teacher I want to make clear to my pupils: I don't see you as a mark. The kids know that with me they will not be judged by a grade, so that I say, you are a bad child now or you are a good child now. I try to value them as persons. […] We also talk a lot about this in class. What am I good at, and how can I do better? And sometimes, when a pupil has achieved a "one" [the best grade] without having worked much for it, I say: You shouldn't perform a dance of joy now; just be glad that God has given you such a smart brain!'

1. The state of empirical research – a brief overview
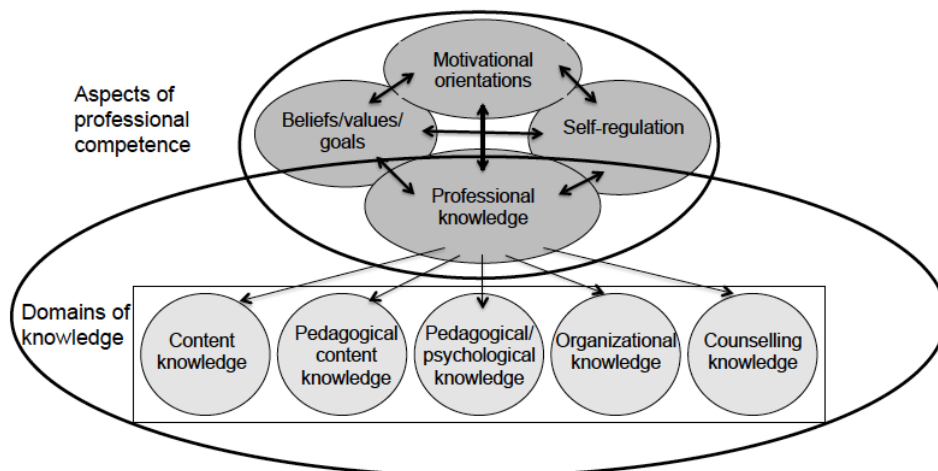
2. Teacher beliefs – theoretical perspectives

Figure 2 Model of teachers' professional competence (Baumert & Kunter, 2013, 29), slightly modified
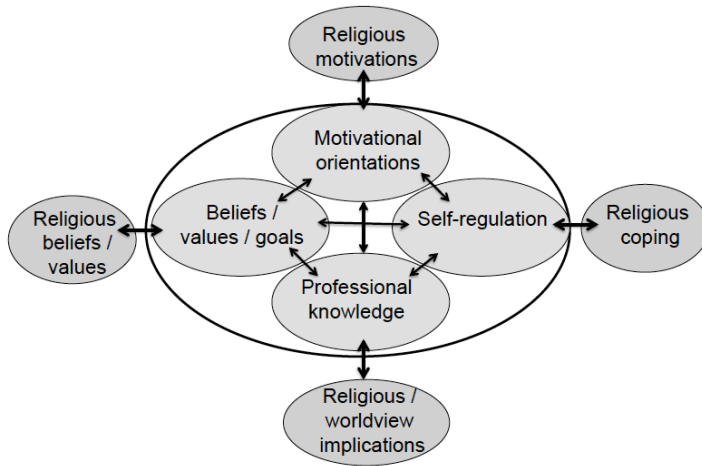
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Figure 3 Possible impacts of religiosity on aspects of teacher competence (own graph)
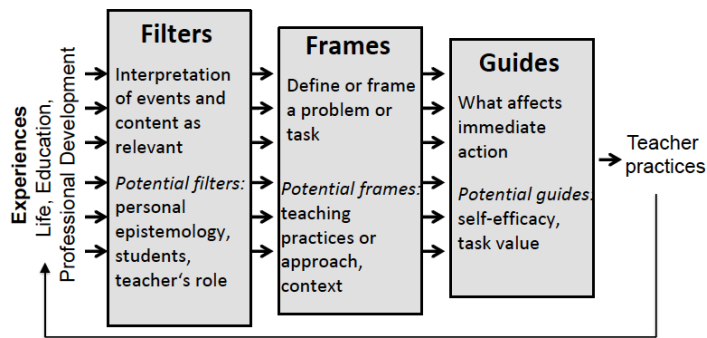

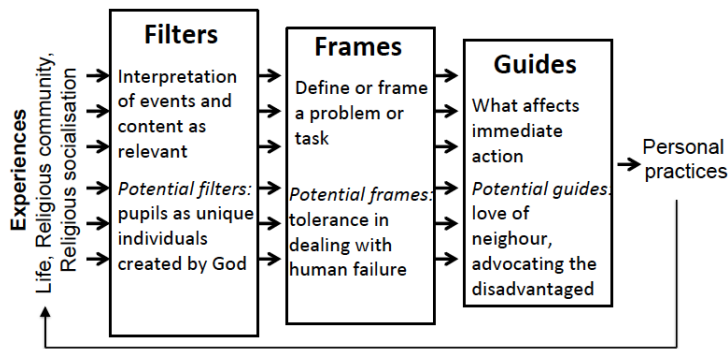*Figure 4* Model of Fives & Bühl (2012) on how teacher beliefs act

Figure 5 How religious beliefs act, in analogy to Fives & Buehl's model (own graph)
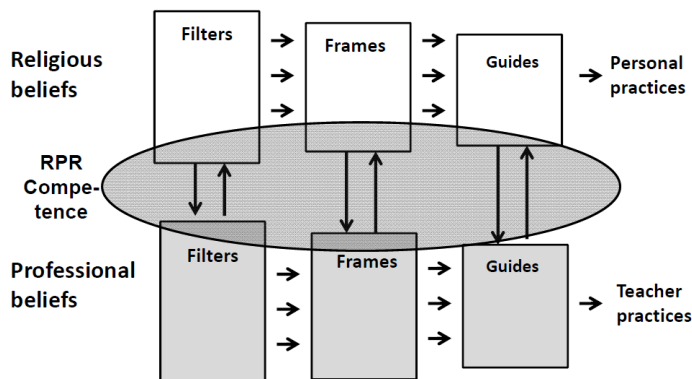

Figure 6 Relating religious beliefs and professional beliefs by RPR Competence (own graph)

Table 1 Structural model of the teachers' competence to reflect on and responsibly construct links between religious/worldview beliefs and professional beliefs (RPR competence; own model; see also Pirner & Wamser, 2007)

Dimensions	Subdimensions (scales)	Exemplary items
Reflexivity	Personal reflexivity	How often do you think about (possible) links between religions/worldviews and pedagogy?
	Social reflexivity	How often do you talk with colleagues about (possible) links between religions/worldviews and pedagogy?
	Reflexivity in teacher education and training	How often have (possible) links between between religions/worldviews and pedagogy been addressed during your teacher education or training?
Epistemological beliefs	Relationship between religions/worldviews and pedagogy (factual)	There is no pedagogical concept without references to worldviews or religions. (agreement?)
	Relationship between religions/worldviews and pedagogy (normative)	Pedagogy must be based on the specific insights from educational science and not on religious or worldview perspectives. (agreement?)
	Compatibility between religion and education (normative)	Well-educated people need no religion. (agreement?)
Person-related beliefs	Influence of religious/worldview beliefs on teachers (general, factual)	Some teachers are influenced by religious or worldview beliefs in their professional practice. (agreement?)
	Influence of religious/worldview beliefs on teachers (general, normative)	Teachers should make every effort to keep their religious or worldview beliefs apart from their professional thinking and acting. (agreement?)
	Supportive influence of religious/worldview beliefs on teachers (personal, factual)	My religious or worldview beliefs are a source of motivation for my teaching profession. (agreement?)
	Conflict-generating influence of religious/worldview beliefs on teachers (personal, factual)	How often do you experience a conflict between your religious or worldview beliefs and the requirements of your teaching profession?
	Practical influence of religious/worldview beliefs on teachers (personal, factual)	How often do you pray for your pupils or colleagues or for school affairs?
Context-related beliefs	Religious and worldview-related neutrality of public schools (normative)	Faith-based schools do not fit any longer into a liberal pluralistic society.
	Spiritual education and the school subject of Religious Education (RE)	The school subject of Religious Education could be abolished without any disadvantage for the pupils.

3. Teachers' religious and professional beliefs – some research findings and consequences for teacher training

Table 2 Stage model of the ability to relate pedagogical and religious rationality (RPR competence; Pirner & Wamser, 2017)

Level 0: Teacher shows no awareness of possible links between religious/worldview and peda- gogical rationality nor between personal spirituality and professional thinking and acting. Both areas are intuitively and unreflectedly separated.
Level 1: Teacher shows awareness of relations or tensions between religious/worldview and pedagogical rationality, but does not understand them as a challenge for his/her professional thinking and acting.
Level 2: Teacher shows awareness of relations or tensions between religious/worldview and pedagogical rationality and addresses it, but responds with one-sided solutions leading to a dom- inance of either the religious/worldview or the pedagogical perspective.
Level 3: Teacher shows awareness of relations or tensions between religious/worldview and pedagogical rationality and offers reasonable solutions that relate both rationalities while respect- ing their own right. These solutions, however, remain incomplete and not continuously convinc- ing.
Level 4: Teacher shows awareness and finds solutions that combine the two rationalities in a consistent and well-reflected way.
Level 5: Teacher is able to reflect on a meta-level the convincing solutions to relate the two ra- tionalities he/she has found, for instance by referring to theoretical models on either side or from an integrative meta-perspective.

Selected Literature

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