Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of (not only RE) school teachers.
Research findings on their relationship and conclusions for teacher training

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Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers
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On your handout

From an interview with a lady teacher in a Northern Bavarian primary school (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 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!’
Analyzing the interview

The teacher's religious and professional beliefs interact with one another.

This interaction is promoted by the context of RE, but extends beyond RE to other school subjects.

This interaction between religious and professional beliefs can be judged differently – it raises normative questions.

1. The state of empirical research – a brief overview
2. Teacher beliefs – theoretical perspectives
3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training
1. The state of empirical research

United States, quantitative studies


Significant correlations between degree of spirituality and professional beliefs

![Figure 4. Percentages of High and Low Scorers on Spirituality Who Have High Scores on Each of Six Scales](chart.png)
1. The state of empirical research

United States, quantitative studies

Most teachers view their teaching as a ‘calling’

- e.g. Wisconsin sample (Hartwick, 2009)
  59 %: ‘God has called me to teach’
  25 % (strongly agreed): ‘teaching is a personal calling’
- positive correlation with teachers’ self-reports of more warm and personal relationships with students
United States, qualitative studies

For numerous teachers their experience of God's love and grace motivates them to be empathic and helpful against their colleagues and students


“ Teachers overwhelmingly mentioned positive effects of their personal religious lives on their professional lives, though a few males did mention that their religious commitments lead to feelings of anger, guilt, and conflict with their professional role.”

(Sikkink, 2010, in Pirner, 2010, summarizing a number of qualitative studies)
1. The state of empirical research

United States

Distinction is necessary

The Catholic teacher
The Fundamentalist teacher
The Evangelical teacher

(Sikkink, 2010)

Beyond the U.S.

Research deficit!

(English) publication deficit?

No transfer of U.S. results possible!
1. The state of empirical research

Beyond the U.S.

Some studies on the effect of religious or worldview beliefs of science teachers on their teaching about science, especially about evolution theory:

e.g. Ayala 2000; Francis & Greer 2001; Graf 2008; Graf & Soran 2011;
Lovin & Foster, 2000; Mansour, 2008; Reiss, 2000; Stolberg, 2007;
Summary: Pirner, 2013

Studies on faith-based schools in Britain, The Netherlands and Germany: stronger emphasis on school climate, ethical education and personality development, partly: instructive methods:

e.g. Standfest, Koller & Scheunpflug, 2005; Scheunpflug, 2011;
van der Zee, 2010; Francis & Robbins, 2010; Pirner, Scheunpflug & Holl 2010.
1. The state of empirical research

Germany

Research on RE teachers:
Teachers bring in their own religious beliefs into their teaching – but mostly not in a direct, but pedagogically reflected way

Feige et al., 2000; Dressler, Feige & Schöll, 2004; Feige & Tzeetzsch, 2005; Feige et al., 2006; Biesinger, Münch & Schweitzer, 2008; Heimbrock, 2017

2. Theoretical perspectives

Aspects of professional competence

Domains of knowledge

Beliefs/values/goals

Motivational orientations

Self-regulation

Professional knowledge

Content knowledge

Pedagogical content knowledge

Pedagogical psychological knowledge

Organizational knowledge

Counselling knowledge

The COACTIV Model of Teachers’ Professional Competence (Baumert & Kunter, 2013, 29, slightly modified; orig. in German: Baumert & Kunter, 2006)
2. Theoretical perspectives

Motivational orientations

Beliefs / values / goals

Self-regulation

Professional knowledge

Religious motivations

Motivational orientations

Beliefs / values / goals

Self-regulation

Professional knowledge

Religious coping

Religious / worldview implications
2. Theoretical perspectives

Fives, H., & Buehl, M. M. (2012). Spring cleaning for the “messy” construct of teachers’ beliefs. ‘Despite the widespread agreement that teachers’ beliefs exist in a system, few empirical investigations have examined beliefs as complex systems’ (p. 477)

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

On your handout

Teacher practices

Frames
- Define or frame a problem or task
- Potential frames: teaching practices or approach, context

Guides
- What affects immediate action
- Potential guides: self-efficacy, task value

Filters
- Interpretation of events and content as relevant
- Potential filters: personal epistemology, students, teacher’s role

Experiences
- Life, Education, Professional Development

Life, Education, Professional Development

Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers

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2. Theoretical perspectives

Religious beliefs, in analogy to Fives & Buehl (2012)

Filters
- Interpretation of events and content as relevant
- Potential filters: pupils as unique individuals created by God

Frames
- Define or frame a problem or task
- Potential frames: tolerance in dealing with human failure (sin)

Guides
- What affects immediate action
- Potential guides: love of neighbour, advocating the disadvantaged

Experiences
- Life, Religious community

Filters
- Interpretation of events and content as relevant
- Potential filters: pupils as unique individuals created by God

Frames
- Define or frame a problem or task
- Potential frames: tolerance in dealing with human failure (sin)

Guides
- What affects immediate action
- Potential guides: love of neighbour, advocating the disadvantaged

Personal practices

Correlating teachers' religious beliefs and professional beliefs

Religious beliefs

Filters

Frames

Guides

Personal practices

Professional beliefs

Filters

Frames

Guides

Teacher practices
Correlating teachers' religious beliefs and professional beliefs

Theological rationale
Religious ethos should guide your whole life

Psychological rationale
Humans have a desire for consistency (e.g. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, 1957)

Martin Luther's two kingdoms doctrine:
You cannot rule a state only by Christian love; theological social ethics; public theology

Compartment theory of the human brain: Humans tend to be 'consistently inconsistent' (Kurzban, 2010)

No direct interaction between religious beliefs and professional beliefs

Key competence of teachers:
Ability to reflect on and responsibly construct possible (and maybe hitherto unconscious) links between their religious or worldview beliefs on the one hand and their professional thinking and acting on the other hand

Relating-Pedagogy-and-Religiosity Competence = RPR Competence
Correlating teachers' religious beliefs and professional beliefs, using the model of Fives & Buehl (2012)

Religious beliefs

RPR-competence

Professional beliefs

On your handout

Personal practices

Teacher practices

2. Theoretical perspectives

On your handout

A Structural model of the teachers' competence to reflect on and responsibly shape links between religious/worldview beliefs and professional beliefs (RPR competence; Pirner, 2017)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Subdimensions</th>
<th>Exemplary items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal reflexivity</td>
<td>How often do you think about (possible) links between religions/worldviews and pedagogy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social reflexivity</td>
<td>How often do you talk with colleagues about (possible) links between religions/worldviews and pedagogy?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflexivity in teacher education and training</td>
<td>How often have (possible) links between between religions/worldviews and pedagogy been addressed during your teacher education or training?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2. Theoretical perspectives

On your handout

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions</th>
<th>Subdimensions</th>
<th>Exemplary items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological beliefs</td>
<td>Relationship between religious/worldviews and pedagogy (factual)</td>
<td>There is no pedagogical concept without references to worldviews or religions. (agreement?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship between religious/worldviews and pedagogy (normative)</td>
<td>Pedagogy must be based on the specific insights from educational science and not on religious or worldview perspectives. (agreement?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Compatibility between religion and education (normative)</td>
<td>Well-educated people need no religion. (agreement?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers

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2. Theoretical perspectives

On your handout

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<th>Exemplary items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context-related beliefs</td>
<td>Religions and worldview-related neutrality of public schools (normative)</td>
<td>Faith-based schools do not fit any longer into a liberal pluralistic society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual education and the school subject of Religions Education (RE)</td>
<td>The school subject of Religious Education could be abolished without any disadvantage for the pupils.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

Pilot Study 1: 294 FAU students training for school teacher
Pilot Study 2: 202 school teachers around Nuremberg (partly divided up into two samples)
ReliBa: Quantitative study among 800 RE teachers in Bavaria (partly divided up into two samples)
ReliBa-Q: Qualitative interview study with 20 RE teachers in Bavaria (in process)
Dissertation Study (mixed methods): 215 teachers at evangelical private schools in the state of Baden-Württemberg (in process)
ReBeL: Quantitative DFG-funded study among about (envisaged) 5,000 school teachers in North-Rhine-Westfalia and Saxony (in early process; Pirner, Kröner & Scheunpflug)
3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

Religiosity / spirituality

Pilot Studies:
Students and teachers (convenience samples) are significantly more religious than comparative groups from representative population polls

Relations between religiosity and professional beliefs

Bivariate correlations (Pearson)

Pilot Study 1 (students)
• Study motivation ‘idealism’: $r = .17^*$
• Study motivation ‘time for social engagement’: $r = .27^*$

Pilot Study 2 (teachers)
• Focus on discipline: $r = -.14^*$
• Sense of self-efficacy: $r = -.14^*$

Not satisfactory
3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

Relations between religiosity and professional beliefs

Pilot Study 2 (teachers) – Results of cluster analysis (hierarchical c.a., Ward- and k-Means-methods, tested by discriminant analyses and cross-validation)

Type 1: high religiosity + high idealism, pupil-centred values
Type 2: low religiosity + high idealism, pupil-centred values
Type 3: low religiosity + high idealism, subject- and achievement-centred values
Type 4: medium religiosity + resignative / indifferent attitude

3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

Calling

Frequencies from pilot study 2, teachers without RE, subsample (n = 55)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘I feel called to be a teacher.’</th>
<th>frequencies</th>
<th>percentages</th>
<th>cumulated percentages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I completely agree</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32.7</td>
<td>32.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rather agree</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>81.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am uncertain</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>94.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I rather disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I completely disagree</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

Calling

*Frequencies from dissertation study on teachers at evangelical private schools in percent (n = 215) (Röhl & Pirner, submitted)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>'I feel called by God ...'</th>
<th>completely agree</th>
<th>partly agree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... to work as teacher.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>62,8</td>
<td>25,1</td>
<td>8,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... to work at this school.</td>
<td>57,7</td>
<td>27,9</td>
<td>11,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers

3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

RPR Competence

Pilot Study 2 (teachers without RE as subject)
### Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers

**Response format: 5-point Likert scales (1 = very often / I strongly agree)**

**Selection: teachers without RE as subject (big sample)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scale</th>
<th>exemplary item</th>
<th>results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPR reflexivity (4 items)</td>
<td>How often do you think about possible links between religions/worldviews and pedagogy?</td>
<td>N = 148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>α = .86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This item: (1 + 2 = 18% (30/166))</td>
<td>SD = .78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1 + 2 + 3 = 60% (100/166))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR epistemological beliefs (6 items)</td>
<td>There is no education without links to religious or worldview perspectives.</td>
<td>N = 158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>α = .86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This item: (1 + 2 = 45% (113/164))</td>
<td>SD = .82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR person-related beliefs - influence (4 items)</td>
<td>I make an effort to separate my religious or worldview beliefs from my professional thinking and acting as a teacher.</td>
<td>N = 107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>α = .88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This item: (1 + 2 = 40% (51/166))</td>
<td>SD = 1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Response format: 5-point Likert scales (1 = very often / I strongly agree)**

**Selection: teachers without RE as subject (small sample)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>scale</th>
<th>exemplary item</th>
<th>results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RPR person-related beliefs - support (4 items)</td>
<td>My religious or worldview beliefs are a source of motivation for my teaching profession.</td>
<td>N = 55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>α = .97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This item: (1 + 2 = 31% (14/55))</td>
<td>SD = .97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR person-related beliefs - conflict (4 items)</td>
<td>I sometimes experience a conflict between my religious or worldview beliefs and the requirements of my teaching profession.</td>
<td>N = 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>α = .80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This item: (1 + 2 = 25% (14/56))</td>
<td>SD = .68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR person-related practice (4 items)</td>
<td>I sometimes or regularly pray for my pupils, my colleagues or school affairs.</td>
<td>N = 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>α = .81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This item: (1 + 2 = 14% (8/56))</td>
<td>SD = .89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

RPR Competence

Comparison Pilot Study 2 (teachers without RE)

ReliBa Study (RE teachers in Bavaria)

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<table>
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<th>results</th>
<th>results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PS 2</td>
<td>ReliBa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR person-related beliefs -</td>
<td>My religious or worldview beliefs are a source of motivation for my teaching profession.</td>
<td>N = 55</td>
<td>N = 417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>support</td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 3.6</td>
<td>M = 1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD = 1.2</td>
<td>SD = 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR person-related beliefs -</td>
<td>I sometimes experience a conflict between my religious or worldview beliefs and the requirements of my teaching profession.</td>
<td>N = 54</td>
<td>N = 415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conflict</td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 3.6</td>
<td>M = 3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD = 1.2</td>
<td>SD = .98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>PS 2: 1 + 2 + 3 = 34 % (19)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>ReliBa: 1 + 2 + 3 = 42 % (176)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RPR person-related practice</td>
<td>I sometimes or regularly pray for my pupils, my colleagues or school affairs.</td>
<td>N = 73</td>
<td>N = 399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>M = 4.3</td>
<td>M = 3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>SD = 1.1</td>
<td>SD = 1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

RPR Competence

ReliBa-Q (Qualitative interview study with RE teachers)

One major research question:

How do RE teachers deal with the tension between religious beliefs and professional beliefs, Christian-theological rationality and school-teaching rationality?

See also: Heimbrock, 2017

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

Partly inspired by:

3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

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

Productive dimension:
religious or worldview beliefs as a resource

Preventive dimension:
against problematic influences of religious or worldview beliefs on teachers’ thinking and acting
3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training

Conclusion

Promoting the development of RPR competence is a vital task for teacher education and further training that has hitherto been neglected.

This goes for RE teachers, but also, and maybe more challenging, for teachers without RE.

It needs theoretical deliberation, knowledge of empirical findings, and practical, evaluated training.