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## **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 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!’

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## 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.

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## Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers

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

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## 1. The state of empirical research

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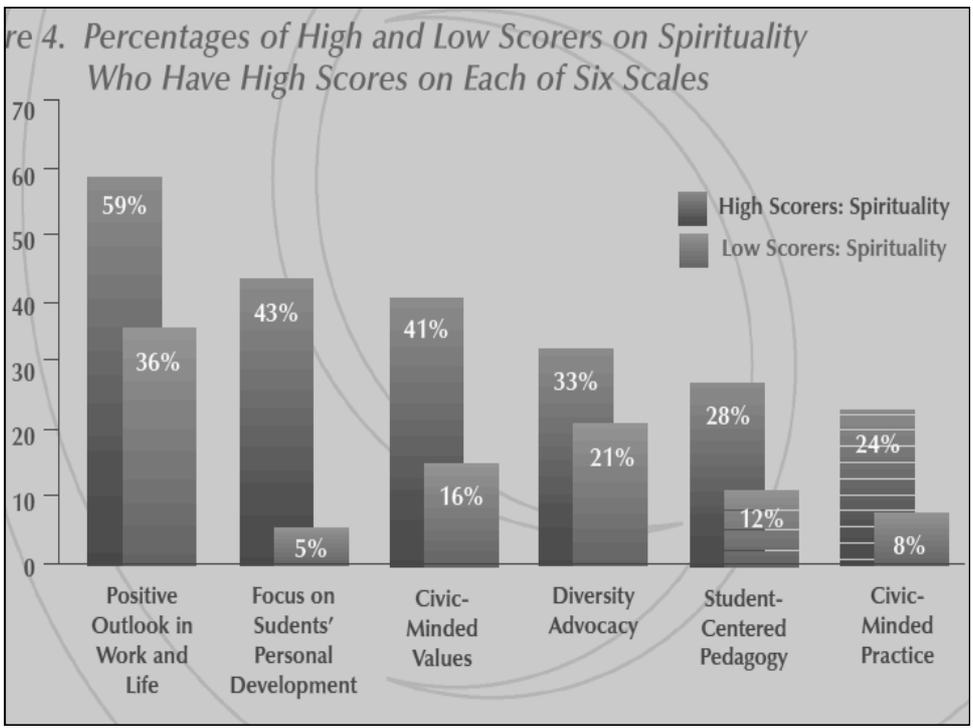
### United States, quantitative studies

*Higher Education Research Institute (2006), Spirituality and the  
professoriate. A national study of faculty beliefs, attitudes, and behavior.*

### Significant correlations between degree of spirituality and professional beliefs

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**1. The state of empirical research**

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**United States,  
quantitative studies**

Most teachers view their teaching as a 'calling'

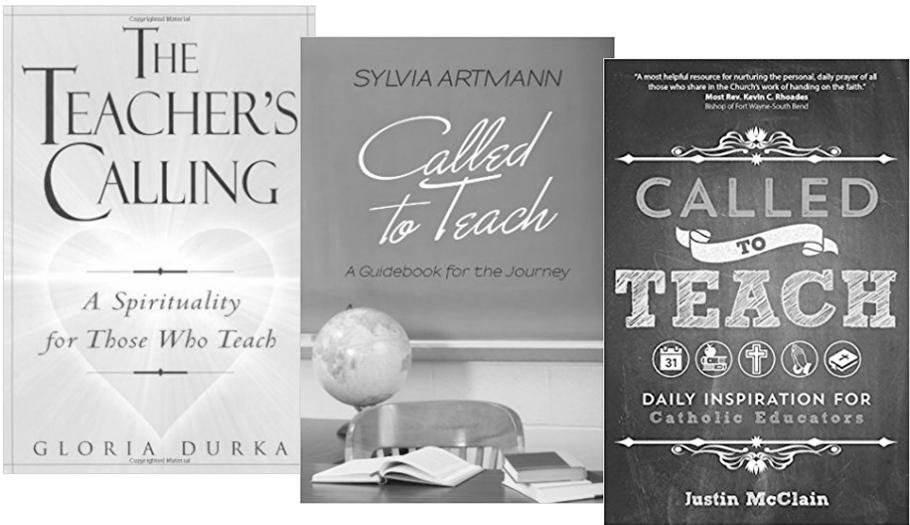
- e.g. Wisconsin sample (Hartwick, 2009)  
59 %: 'God has called me to teach'  
25 % (strongly agreed): 'teaching is a  
personal calling'
- positive correlation with teachers'  
self-reports of more warm and personal  
relationships with students

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**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

(Kang, 2009, Nelson-Brown, 2007; Pajak & Blasé 1989)

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**United States,  
qualitative studies**

“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)

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**United States**

Distinction is necessary

The Catholic teacher  
The Fundamentalist teacher  
The Evangelical teacher

(Sikkink, 2010)

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**Beyond the U.S.**

Research deficit !

(English) publication deficit ?

No transfer of U.S. results possible!

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**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

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**Beyond the U.S.**

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.

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## 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

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**2. Theoretical perspectives**

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On your handout

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

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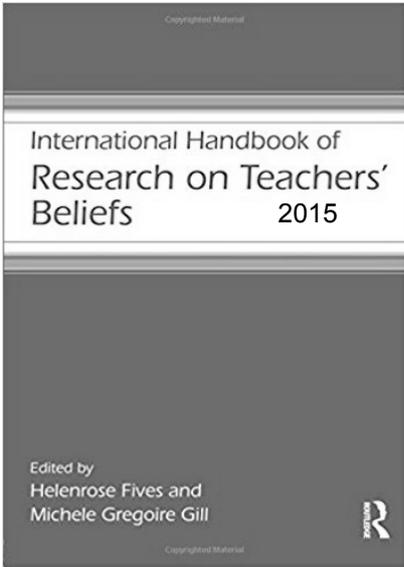
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Fives, H., & Buehl, M. M. (2012). Spring cleaning for the “messy” construct of teachers’ beliefs.

‘Despite the widespread agreement that teachers’ beliefs exist in a system, few empirical investigations have examined beliefs as complex systems’ (p. 477)

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

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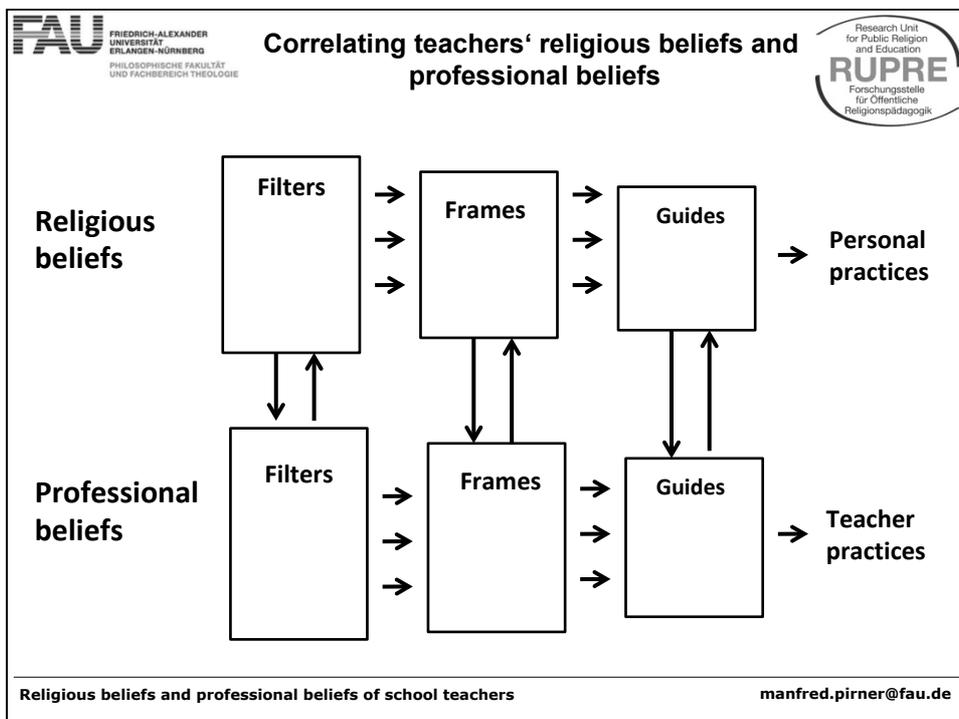
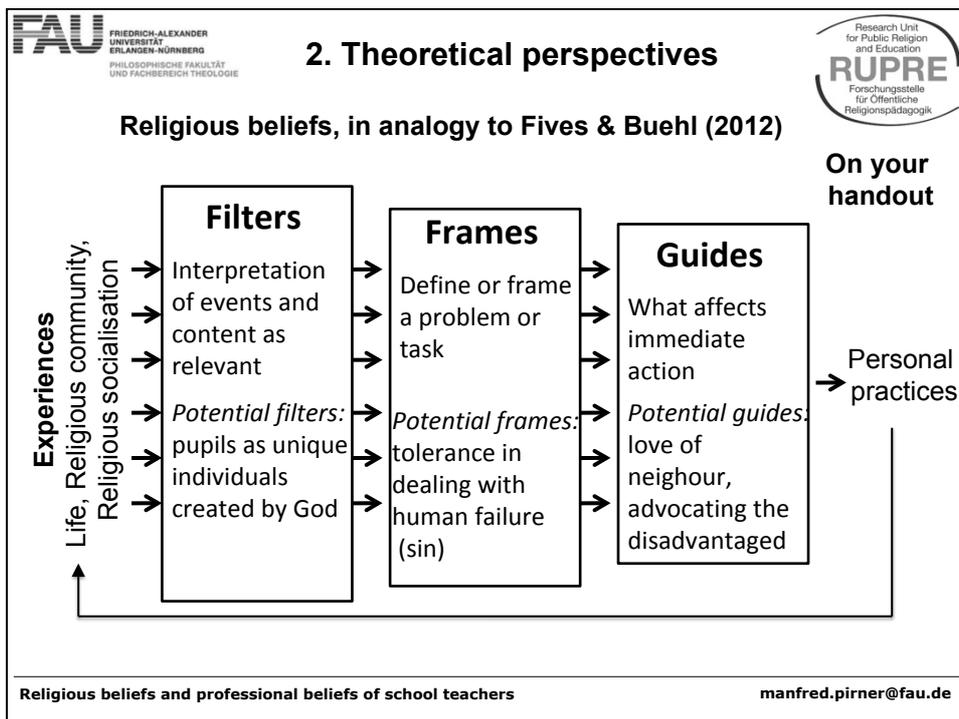
**Experiences**  
Life, Education,  
Professional Development

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Filters</b></p> <p>Interpretation of events and content as relevant</p> <p><i>Potential filters:</i> personal epistemology, students, teacher’s role</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Frames</b></p> <p>Define or frame a problem or task</p> <p><i>Potential frames:</i> teaching practices or approach, context</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Guides</b></p> <p>What affects immediate action</p> <p><i>Potential guides:</i> self-efficacy, task value</p>
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**On your handout**

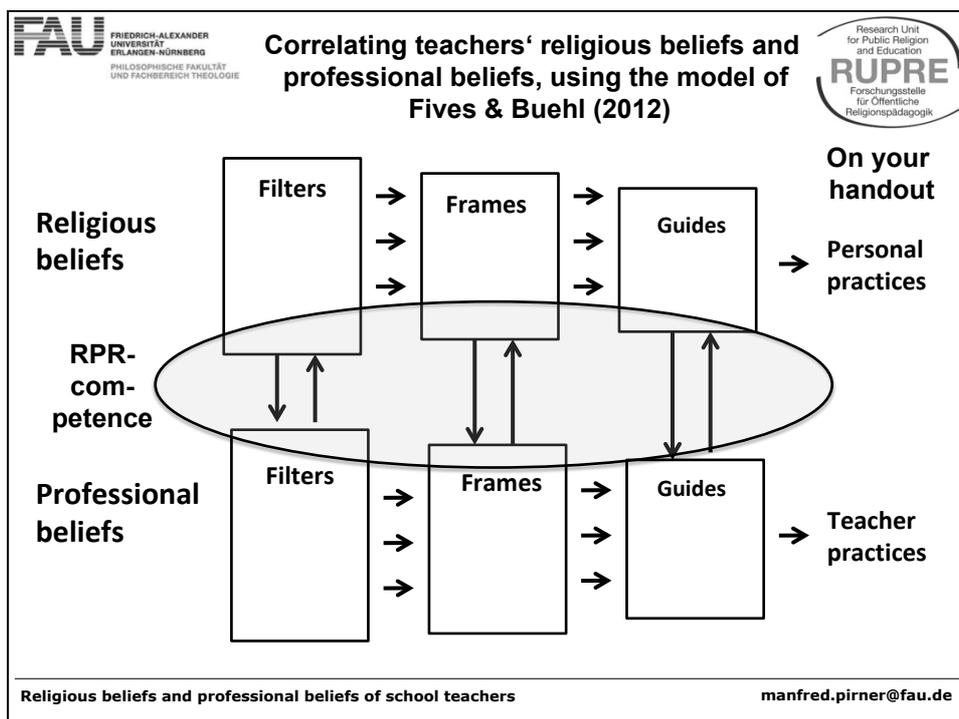
→ Teacher practices

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<p><b><i>Theological rationale</i></b></p> <p>Religious ethos should guide your whole life</p> <p>Martin Luther's two kingdoms doctrine: You cannot rule a state only by Christian love; theological social ethics; public theology</p>		<p><b><i>Psychological rationale</i></b></p> <p>Humans have a desire for consistency (e.g. Festinger's theory of cognitive dissonance, 1957)</p> <p>Compartment theory of the human brain: Humans tend to be 'consistently inconsistent' (Kurzban, 2010)</p>			
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<p><i>No <b>direct</b> interaction between religious beliefs and professional beliefs</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Key competence of teachers:  <b>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</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Relating-Pedagogy-and-Religiosity Competence = RPR Competence</p>					
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## 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)

<i>Dimensions</i>	<i>Subdimensions</i>	<i>Exemplary items</i>
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 religions/worldviews and pedagogy been addressed during your teacher education or training?

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

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

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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

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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

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Calling

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

‘I feel called to be a teacher.’	<i>frequencies</i>	<i>percentages</i>	<i>cumulated percentages</i>
I completely agree	18	32.7	32.7
I rather agree	27	49.1	81.8
I am uncertain	7	12.7	94.5
I rather disagree	3	5.5	100.0
I completely disagree	-	-	-
total	55	100.0	

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Calling

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

	<i>com- pletely agree</i>		<i>partly agree</i>		<i>dis- agree</i>
	5	4	3	2	1
'I feel called by God ... ... to work as teacher.'	62,8	25,1	8,4	2,8	0,5
'... to work at this school.'	57,7	27,9	11,6	1,4	1,4

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RPR Competence

Pilot Study 2 (teachers without RE as subject)

Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers manfred.pirner@fau.de

*Response format: 5-point Likert scales (1 = very often / I strongly agree)*  
*Selection: teachers without RE as subject (big sample)*

<i>scale</i>	<i>exemplary item</i>	<i>results</i>
RPR reflexivity (4 items)	How often do you think about possible links between religions/ worldviews and pedagogy? <i>This item: 1 + 2 = 18 % (30/166)</i> <i>1 + 2 + 3 = 60 % (100/166)</i>	N = 148 $\alpha = .86$ M = 3.6 SD = .78
RPR epistemo-logical beliefs (6 items)	There is no education without links to religious or worldview perspectives. <i>This item: 1 + 2 = 45 % (113/164)</i>	N = 158 $\alpha = .86$ M = 2.4 SD = .82
RPR person-related beliefs – influence (4 items)	I make an effort to separate my religious or worldview beliefs from my professional thinking and acting as a teacher. <i>This item: 1 + 2 = 40 % (51/166)</i>	N = 107 $\alpha = .88$ M = 2.8 SD = 1.0
Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers		mantred.pirner@fau.de

*Response format: 5-point Likert scales (1 = very often / I strongly agree)*  
*Selection: teachers without RE as subject (small sample)*

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



Research Unit  
for Public Religion  
and Education  
**RUPRE**  
Forschungsstelle  
für Öffentliche  
Religionspädagogik

RPR Competence

Comparison Pilot Study 2 (teachers without RE)

ReliBa Study (RE teachers in Bavaria)

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Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers

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*Item-level; response format: 5-point Likert scales (1 = very often / I strongly agree)*

scale	exemplary item	results	
		PS 2	ReliBa
RPR person-related beliefs – support	My religious or worldview beliefs are a source of motivation for my teaching profession.	N = 55 <b>M = 3.6</b> SD = 1.2	N = 417 <b>M = 1.9</b> SD = 1.2
RPR person-related beliefs – conflict	I sometimes experience a conflict between my religious or worldview beliefs and the requirements of my teaching profession. <i>PS 2: 1 + 2 + 3 = 34 % (19)</i> <i>ReliBa: 1 + 2 + 3 = 42 % (176)</i>	N = 54 <b>M = 3.6</b> SD = 1.2	N = 415 <b>M = 3.6</b> SD = .98
RPR person-related practice	I sometimes or regularly pray for my pupils, my colleagues or school affairs.	N = 73 <b>M = 4.3</b> SD = 1.1	N = 399 <b>M = 3.2</b> SD = 1.2

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 <p>FRIEDRICH-ALEXANDER UNIVERSITÄT ERLANGEN-NÜRNBERG PHILOSOPHISCHE FAKULTÄT UND FACHBEREICH THEOLOGIE</p>	<h3>3. Some research findings and consequences for teacher training</h3>	 <p>Research Unit for Public Religion and Education <b>RUPRE</b> Forschungsstelle für Öffentliche Religionspädagogik</p>
<p>RPR Competence</p> <p>ReliBa-Q (Qualitative interview study with RE teachers)</p> <p>One major research question:</p> <p>How do RE teachers deal with the tension between religious beliefs and professional beliefs, Christian-theological rationality and school-teaching rationality?</p> <p>See also: Heimbrock, 2017</p>		
<p>Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers</p>		<p>manfred.pirner@fau.de</p>

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<p>Stage model of the ability to relate pedagogical and religious rationality (RPR competence; Pirner &amp; Wamser, 2017)</p> <p>Partly inspired by:</p> <p>Reich, K. Helmut (2002). <i>Developing the horizons of the mind: Relational and contextual reasoning and the resolution of cognitive conflict.</i> Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</p>		
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<p>Stage model of the ability to relate pedagogical and religious rationality (RPR competence; Pirner &amp; Wamser, 2017)</p>		
<p>Productive dimension: religious or worldview beliefs as a resource</p>		
<p>Preventive dimension: against problematic influences of religious or worldview beliefs on teachers' thinking and acting</p>		
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<p>Stage model of the ability to relate pedagogical and religious rationality (RPR competence; Pirner &amp; Wamser, 2017 – simplified)</p>		<p><b>On your handout</b></p>
<p>Level 0: No awareness of possible links</p>		
<p>Level 1: Awareness of relations, but not understood as challenge</p>		
<p>Level 2: Awareness of relations, response with one-sided solutions</p>		
<p>Level 3: Awareness of relations, reasonable solutions that remain incomplete and not continuously convincing.</p>		
<p>Level 4: Awareness of relations, convincing well-balanced solutions</p>		
<p>Level 5: Convincing solutions, additionally reflected on a meta-level</p>		
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#### 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.

Religious beliefs and professional beliefs of school teachers

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