

NCRE2024

Book of Abstracts

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A1 (Mon, 13:00-16:00)

Understanding educational transfer between non-formal faith education and public RE

Marianne Hustvedt, Volda University College; Anne Grethe Kjelling, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences; [CONTACT] Ole Kolbjørn Kjørven, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences; Larssen, Marianne F., Project assistant, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences; Synnøve Markeng, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences; Thor-André Skrefsrud, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences; [DISCUSSANTS] Jenny Berglund, Stockholm University

Abstract

In this symposium we report from research on three religious education arenas in Norway: non-formal faith education in Quran-schools and Catholic catechesis, and RE in public schools. In different ways the three papers investigate the relationship between the educational arenas and the potential transfer of knowledge, competence, and literacy between them. This includes exploring the experiences of young people involved in faith-based education and public RE. The research also investigates how RE teachers in public schools reflect upon the interface between faith-based education and public schooling, and to what extent and in what way they accommodate for and address the phenomenon of students' dual experiences in the classroom.

An overall didactical theme at the symposium will be to discuss the relevance and the potential challenges and opportunities of seeing faith-based education and public RE as complementary educational arenas. We ask: What is the relevance of bringing student experiences of faith-based education into the sphere of public RE, as a means, with reference to one of RE curricula's core elements, 'to take the perspective of others'? The symposium addresses the call for more empirical data on faith-based education, in particular young people's experiences. Furthermore, we seek to contribute to the ongoing discussion on the relationship and the potential educational transfer between faith-based education and RE in public schools (Berglund and Gent, 2019; Schweitzer et al., 2019).

The presenters at this symposium are all associated with the Norwegian research project Non-formal faith education, the public school, and religious minorities in Norway (FAITHED) <https://www.inn.no/forskn-ing/forskningsprosjekter/faithed/>, funded by the Norwegian research council.

BERGLUND, J. & GENT, B. 2019. Qur'anic education and non-confessional RE: An intercultural perspective. *Intercultural Education*, 30, 323-334.

SCHWEITZER, F., ILG, W. & SCHREINER, P. 2019. *Researching non-formal religious education in Europe*, Waxmann Verlag.

Session A2 (Mon, 13:00-16:00)

Meeting the Majority Religion – Challenges for Inclusive RE in Field Trips to the Majority Church

Gunnfrid Ljones Øierud, University of South-Eastern Norway

Abstract

Field trips to religious communities is recommended by Signposts (Jackson/The Council of Europe, 2014), and previous research indicate that RE field trips are appreciated, enhance student engagement and influence learning outcome positively (Jørgensen 2017, Lundie et al 2021, Britton 2014, Riegel and Kindermann 2016, Beaven 2013). The Norwegian Religious Education subject KRLE is an integrative subject where equal educational principles shall be applied when teaching different religions and world views (Education Act § 2-4). This paper presents a study on field trips to the Lutheran majority Church in Norway for primary school students (ages 9-12) as part of KRLE. Analyzing both observational data and interviews with teachers, students, and pastors, we ask how the majority religion is presented and how the field trips contribute to learning in religiously diverse student groups.

We find differences between how religion is presented in the field trips in our study compared to field trips to minority religions researched in Norway and Sweden (Britton and Jørgensen 2019). The material dimension of religion is emphasized, while student questions and individual or personal aspects of religion are not prioritized, and familiarity with ritual practices and religious holidays is presupposed. In addition, Church of Norway is the only religious community the interviewed students visit in KRLE.

Both students and teachers express that they appreciate the field trips. However, we question tendencies of privileging both the majority church and the students with religious majority background in the field trips, and will discuss whether or how field trips to a majority faith community may avoid these pitfalls and be a constructive part of inclusive RE.

Religious education for Sustainable Social Development: Exploring, experiencing and engaging South African and Swedish stakeholder voice

Kerstin von Brömssen, University West; Caroline Klintborg, Stockholm University; Karin Flensner, University West

Abstract

This paper arises out of work undertaken within the South African Swedish University Forum-project (SASUF) “Religious education for Sustainable Social Development: Exploring, experiencing and engaging South African and Swedish stakeholder voice”. The issue of religion and public education has been widely debated in South Africa as well as in Sweden. We focus in this paper on how national legislation and policies in both countries frame RE in schools at different levels to prepare students to become religious literate citizens in a multi-religiously diverse society. We do this by employing a critical discourse analytical approach (CDA), investigating the framing of RE in national legislation. Moreover, we investigate the national curricula concerning (b) specified knowledge content c) the various forms of competences, and (d) what attitudes the processes of learning aim to develop; together, these can be considered to construct students’ religious literacy in the curriculum. The research shows great similarities in that the RE subject is taking place within national contexts which both safeguards human rights, forbids discrimination on religious grounds and promote diversity by educating students about the religions of ‘others’. However, there has been a large number of cases reported by South Africa’s media that illustrate intolerance and discrimination to religious diversity in the classroom. If this is the case also in a Swedish context will be explored further in the next step of the project.

Theology students’ views on the communication with the ‘other’ during COVID-19 lockdown

Vasiliki Mitropoulou, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; Richard Janus, Paderborn University

Abstract

Within the frame of field research, during the academic year 2022-23, the School of Theology of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and Department of Protestant Theology of Paderborn University, conducted among their students, a survey on their communication with the ‘other’ under the lockdown conditions of COVID19. For everyone, and especially for students, the pandemic was the onset of something else that fundamentally determined their lives from one day to the next. Dealing with that was the big challenge. The students, that participated in the research, belonged to the three denominations (orthodox, protestant, catholic) and they all studied to become Religious

Education teachers. Tool of the research was a questionnaire tool, which investigated the reflections of the students' self-awareness on their communication skills with the others/'others' during the Covid-19 lockdown in their homes. The students from the three different denominations of both universities were asked to answer an open question, whether they believed that "during the lockdown due to COV19 their skills in communication with the 'others' were improved". The problem to be investigated was the students to become self-aware of their feelings during the communication with the 'others', as strangers, as persons, as we all were 'others' isolated in their houses. The tool was based on the theory of credition model which supports that the beliefs are associated with emotions and cognitions in perfect balance. Thus, rational-emotional decisions are considered as a cognitive process, although other processes of "believing" are not conscious. The survey results showed that students reflections on their communication with the 'other' varied providing different views and aspects, as some thought that it offered them an opportunity for enhancing their relationships.

The right to opt-out: a comparative analysis of exemption procedures in Scandinavian public schools

Christian Lomsdalen, University of Bergen; Marie von der Lippe, University of Bergen

Abstract

The relationship between the state, religion and education has been the subject of debate across Europe (Fancourt and Hendek 2022). As societies become increasingly diverse, questions arise as to how the state can accommodate cultural and religious plurality while safeguarding fundamental human rights such as freedom of religion and the right to education. Religious education in schools has been handled differently in different countries, leading to a diverse landscape of different models. This is due to the close connection between religious education, cultural context, historical state-religion relations, and national legislation (von der Lippe, 2018).

This article focuses on the intersection of religion, education, and law in Scandinavian countries, with a particular emphasis on the right to exemption in Norwegian public schools. As the Norwegian state was convicted in 2007 by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) of violating human rights in religious education, the exemption procedure in Norway constitutes an interesting case for closer examination.

However, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the Norwegian exemption scheme, we compare it with the exemption procedures in neighboring countries. Despite striking historical, cultural, and societal similarities, this comparative analysis allows us to explore the specificities of the Norwegian scheme and how it contrasts with the schemes in Sweden and Denmark. Through the lens of “implicit” and “lived religion”, we examine the fundamental notions and understandings of religion that underlie the different exemption schemes and the implications this may have for educational practices in the Scandinavian countries. Our main focus is concerned with the opt-out clause and pupils right (or not) to withdraw from lessons in religious education and/or activities that they, on the basis of their own religion or worldview, perceive to be the exercise of another religion or the endorsement of another life stance.

Understanding complexity - didactical strategies for promoting critical religious literacy among pupils

Malin Löfstedt, Uppsala University

Abstract

Sweden is a complex country when it comes to religion. For a large number of people, traditional religion means relatively little and contact with religion is limited. For other groups, religion is a central part of life, something that affects everyday life in different ways (Lövheim & Nordin, 2022). In this complex societal context, school is an important arena for strengthening knowledge acquisition as well as reflection and communication skills about religion. Above all, this could be done within religious education (Löfstedt & Sjöborg, 2019). According to the steering documents, one of the most important goals of religious education (RE) in Sweden is to promote a deeper understanding of different religions and worldviews among pupils. Another goal is to strengthen their critical ability. In other words, teaching should contribute to increased critical worldview literacy. But how could this be done at a class room level? The purpose of the presentation is to discuss and examine different didactic strategies and their capacity to strengthen pupils’ critical worldview literacy. The material used is teacher interviews and own teaching experiences. Even though the material in the study is limited, a preliminary result show that important ingredients for strengthening pupils’ critical worldview literacy is to ensure that they feel included in the teaching and to promote them to continuously work on their self-reflective capacities, which for instance could be done by using the wider concept worldviews as well as

general existential themes. Another way to strengthen pupils' critical worldview literacy is to use perspectives and methods that contribute to the nuance of religions and religiosity such as the tripartition of believing, behaving and belonging or by continuously working with representations of religions both on the macro, meso- and micro level.

Session A3 (Mon, 13:00-16:00)

Danish students' views about religion - between "us" and "them"

Anna Franzén Johnson, University of Gothenburg

Abstract

In our secular but multi-religious society, the understanding of religion and religiosity is central. The dominating discourses about religion and religiosity influence the learning about religion and religiosity and how students experience and view each other which in turn effects the society. For young people the school is a place where many meetings between religions take place and also a place where education in this field (religious education [RE]) is conducted. Research on religious education show that classroom teaching and classroom communication in religious knowledge give access to a limited repertoire of discourses on religion and risk contributing to an "us and them" perspective where religion is something that concerns the "others" (Cöster, 2012; Holmqvist Lidh, 2016). In Denmark it appears that the RE subject has been involved in a political struggle linked to culture and migration. It is argued that being a Muslim and Danish/Christian is something that is learnt in school and the Danish RE-classroom (Buchardt, 2010).

This paper presents discourses on religion expressed in the interview answers from Danish students in year 9. An abductive analysis of the interview transcripts will be carried out in search for a characterization of the identified discourses. Expected result is that a variety of discourses will be expressed in the answers concerning religion and religiosity. The discourses will be discussed in relation to what they might mean for the individual and the society when it comes to an "us and them" perspective.

Key words

Student, discourse, understanding, religion

Teaching lived religion to post-secular Lutherans and other Swedes

Kristian Niemi, Karlstad university; Sören Dalevi, Svenska kyrkan

Abstract

Education in Swedish religious education is, as argued by Niemi (2018), Berglund (2013), Enstedt & Plank (2018), Halvarson Britton (2019), and others steeped in both the World Religions Paradigm (cf. Owen, 2011; Masuzawa, 2005) and a Protestant, Lutheran perception. It impacts both how religion is perceived, and what is taught about religion. It is furthermore limited by a notion of secularity and a “cramp of objectivity” (Hartman, 2011). This view is articulated in the national curriculum of the school subject of RE, and is enacted by teachers (Dalevi & Niemi, 2016). Research on Swedish RE classrooms has shown, that more often than not religion is depicted as something strange, and adherents as “others” (cf. Kittelmann Flensner, 2015).

The question at this juncture concerns the role of the school and religious education, and, most importantly, what the school, given this context, ought to do. In this article, we will explore what religious education could look like, and what purposes it could fulfil. In our view, the research direction focusing on Lived Religion is of particular significance, where elements such as the student’s own life world, materiality, practices, and access to narratives are utilised in a way that does not see religion as a separate entity, but as an integral part of everyone’s life (Enstedt & Plank, 2018). This bottom-up rather than top-down approach, which has been previously overlooked and even disparaged, has recently undergone a renaissance (cf. Rosa 2023). This way, rather than focusing on “the world religions”, the actual practices and materiality can be focused, on that not only religions share, but secular worldviews as well. Thus, a better understanding of religion as a phenomenon can be fostered, and perhaps of life as well. Making sense of religion, rather than portraying those belonging to religions as “others”.

Finnish educators views on religion & worldviews and religious & ethics education in school. A national survey

Martin Ubani, University of Eastern Finland; Arto Kallioniemi; Jenni Pieniniemi; Matti Suomilammi

Abstract

The purpose of this presentation is to describe results from a quantitative survey on the perceptions of Finnish teachers (N=2753) on religion and religious education in school. The participants included both subject teachers and class teachers. The survey was carried out in Spring 2023 by the Finnish Education Evaluation Centre (FINEEC). The data was collected with a digital questionnaire. It is the

only questionnaire of such extent conducted ever in Finland. The research questions were: 1. How do teachers perceive religion in public education, 2. How do they perceive religious and ethics education, and integrated worldview instruction? These were studied with 33 items. Some of the items were selected from REDCO-project. We included different types of instruction when studying their preferences in the questionnaire. In addition there were open ended questions focusing on for example materials used. In our presentation we will distinguish between subject and class teachers and teachers from larger municipalities and smaller. In addition, we aim to cluster participants or items. However, we are yet to study the material. The preliminary glance shows for example positivity toward integrated instruction ($M=3.82$) and for a new subject altogether ($M=4.06$). The study will provide a general view about the current perceptions of the teachers in Finland concerning religions and religious and ethics education in Finland.

The generalized "we" in Religious Education

Marlene Printz Jellesen, Aalborg Universitet og læreruddannelsen i Aalborg

Abstract

In a non-denominational, secularised school, it can be argued that a generalised 'we' is no longer acceptable in the subject of Kristendomskundskab (litt: knowledge of Christianity). The school of the multicultural society requires a differentiated "we". On the other hand, the public school as a common educational institution requires a common "we". The subject was separated from the Danish National Church in 1975, which naturally means that schools should not contribute to a religious influence on pupils. At the same time, the school must provide knowledge and skills about Christianity, other religions, philosophy and ethics to support and ensure that pupils become "familiar with Danish culture and history" and "gain an understanding of other countries and cultures" and become democratically educated and develop in a versatile way (cf. § 1). What legitimate generalized "we" can be found in Religious Education, and how can the generalized "we" contribute to pupils' opportunities for participation in the subject? These are some of the questions that the presentation will address, which are crucial for developing an inclusive learning environment in the subject. The presentation is based on an ongoing PhD study entitled "Participation opportunities in Kristendomskundskab (Religious Education)", which, based on classroom studies and teacher and pupil interviews, aims to identify and reduce barriers to participation in Religious Education in order to create inclusive learning environments with academic benefits.

New Approaches to Good News: Pupils' reaction to the New Testament via the Bible Adventure

Lars Naeslund, Stockholm University

Abstract

Approximately 20,000 Swedish pupils, 10 to 12 years old, are taught according to a learning tool called The Bible Adventure, presented by licensed instructors from Christian congregations. Grade 4 children receive three 90 - minute sessions on the Old Testament. Next year three sessions on the New Testament are offered. In accordance with Swedish policy, the learning tool is non-confessional, i.e. biblical narratives are presented without doctrinal teaching.

Normally, pupils appreciate The Bible Adventure due to its varied mix of physical activities, illustrations and artefacts. However, some instructors note that the OT part works better than the NT. In this paper, pupils' response to five instructor's different approaches in presenting the three sessions on the NT are explored. The sessions are presented by instructors who are experienced and creative enough to add a personal touch to the learning tool by focusing on one specific aspect to communicate a coherent storyline.

Method: Small group conversations. Scope: 55 pupils.

Findings: (1) Pupils' responses are very positive, except for one pupil.

(2) Pupils' reflections related to each specific approach are summarized below.

The instructor's approach Findings

A Emphasis on magic tricks Theology rather than tricks noticed by pupils.

B Who was Jesus after all? His acceptance/inclusion of everybody affected pupils.

C Meaning of holidays Respectful chats among Christians, Muslims & Seculars.

D Jesus – a security risk? He challenged establishment and rejected worldly power.

E One Bible or two? OT and NT are connected. God is the same in both parts.

(3) Pupil's reactions are classified and considered in relation to policy documents and taxonomies. Many pupils seem to be affected.

Conclusion: Pupils' reactions to the presentations are positive. Neither their age nor the content necessarily presents a problem.

Session A4 (Mon, 13:00-16:00)

Enquiry based teaching and learning using the RE-Searchers approach in practical teaching in different contexts (90+90 minutes)

Oddrun M. H. Bråten, Norwegian University of Science and Technology; Jonathan Doney, University of Exeter; Bert Roebben, University of Bonn; Linda Onarhaim, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences; Øyvind S. Andreassen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology; Gunvor Wendel, Norwegian University of Science and Technology; Bjarte Mongstad, Norwegian University of Science and Technology; [DISCUSSANTS] Inge Andersland, Western Norway University of Applied Sciences; Rob Freathy, University of Exeter

Abstract

Enquiry based teaching and learning (the RE-searchers approach) in practical teaching in different contexts, and two school subjects is central to the the project Deep Learning with Social, Religion and World-views Studies (InDeep). A hypothesis is that Enquiry Based Methods of teaching is suited to address aims in a new national curriculum in Norway, implemented from 2020. In this curriculum ideas of what competence is, are linked to ideas of in-depth learning. In connection with implementation “exploratory methods” have become a buzz word, as it is seen that the way exploring makes the learner central in his/ her own learning, is a means to achieve in-depth learning. While different kinds of teaching methods could be seen as exploratory, we have made use of a specific inquiry-based method, called “The RE-searchers”. It is characterized by 1) students forming questions for exploration, 2) students choosing one of four methods of exploration, 3) students exploring the question using the chosen method, 4) students evaluating findings and 5) forming new question based on findings, not unlike how researchers work. Four cartoon characters, “Debate-it-all-Derek, See-the-story-Suzie, Have-a-og-Hugo” and “Ask-it-all-Ava” represent four sets of methods and values. The RE-searches were developed by Giles and Rob Freathy, Jonathan Doney and others at the University in Exeter, but in InDeep we have developed it further for Norwegian schools and teacher education, not only for RE but also interdisciplinary teaching and Social Science education. In this double symposium we will present and discuss ways of using this method in different educational context in Norway, England and Germany. Rob Freathy from the University of Exeter will act as a discussant.

Session B1 (Tue, 10:00-12:00)

How to Handle Controversial Issues in Religious Education? A proposed Systematic Review

Karin Flensner, University West; Pontus Wallin, Swedish Institute for Educational Research

Abstract

Many teachers face difficult situations when teaching religious education in segregated and/or multi-religious settings. Students who identify with various worldviews can find many issues and topics controversial. Depending on the heterogeneity or homogeneity in student groups teachers face very different challenges and opportunities. To be able to handle such complex teaching contexts and situations it is important for teachers to get access to research evidence from practice-based research.

The aim of this presentation is to report on a study of controversial issues in religious education which will serve as a background for a forthcoming systematic review of international practice-based research to address the needs of religious education teachers in Sweden. We will discuss the background and content of religious education in different contexts and learning objectives in religious education in the Swedish national curriculum in relation to controversial issues, but also report on results from a focus group-interview with four teachers who teach religious education in lower and secondary education in Sweden and how they deal with controversial issues in their teaching. Finally, we propose review questions, selection criteria and search strategy for a forthcoming systematic review.

Epistemic injustice as a blind spot in didactics of religion

Lina Snoek Hauan, University of South-Eastern Norway

Abstract

A secular, integrative religious education (RE) aims to form tolerant and respectful citizens for a pluralist society, but little is known about how or if this is achieved in practice. This paper builds on an empirical inquiry into RE in three school classes in the Norwegian upper secondary school, suggesting attention to power dynamics and epistemic injustice among students as a blind spot in secular didactics of religion. The lens of epistemic injustice is used to shed light on how

religion as a concept is framed and negotiated in Norwegian RE, and how different concepts of religion are given space in class discussions. A central finding is how conversations about religion in the material were dominated by a secularist discourse which narrowed down the specter of voices in the classroom regarded as worth listening to, and made it difficult for students with a religious background to make their voices heard. The RE classroom thus became a space where students sharing the secular normativity of the Norwegian majority group spoke at ease, and students with a religious, minority background were “out of place” (cf Ahmed 2007). This paper argues that a didactics of religion with a narrow understanding of religion and secularity has a blind spot when it comes to including all students and promoting tolerance and respect. If secularity is a too strong social norm, there is a risk that the subject does not become objective, critical and pluralist, but instead adapted only to students from a majority background. In order to create a space where all students can feel listened to and recognized, didactics of religion also needs to treat aspects concerning how students are positioned in the classroom, who has the power to speak and be listened to, and whose knowledge is produced and reproduced in the classroom.

Towards pupil sensitive spaces for disagreement: Nine foundation stones for teaching about sex, gender and gender identity

Øyvind Soltun Andreassen, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Abstract

Teachers who approach issues on sex, gender and gender identity in public schools are obliged on two, often conflicting, considerations: To establish a space for disagreement that work to include pupils with a manifold of worldviews and convictions, and to protect potentially vulnerable transgender pupils who might experience some viewpoints on gender as deeply distressful. The first argument I will make in this presentation is that both these considerations are important, and that teachers should resist temptations to let one of them overturn the other. Secondly, I will argue that the space for disagreement on these issues should be established – most fundamentally - on the way relevant viewpoints are presented in teaching and in schoolbooks. The role of classroom discussions, however, should be seen as secondary, and highly dependent on contextual factors.

Having presented these arguments, I will introduce a tool, called ‘Foundation stones for teaching about sex, gender and gender identity’, which consists of nine statements that are suggested as a basis for pragmatic agreement on how these issues should be approached in public schools. The tool has been both theoretically and empirically formed. Theoretically, through engagement with agonistic political philosophy and controversial issues theory. Empirically, through multiple rounds of presentation to a broad range of stakeholders, who each have had influence on the current version. Together, these foundation stones may assist teachers in the establishment of ‘pupil sensitive spaces for disagreement’.

Session B2 (Tue, 10:00-12:00)

Buddhist children and youth in Europe: a contemporary vignette

Phra Nicholas Thanissaro, Bishop Grosseteste University

Abstract

A review of two sources – the Vienna University Press 6-book series Religious Education at schools in Europe and European researchers working on a forthcoming Handbook of Buddhism in Europe – revealed that only 8 of 47 European countries have ever conducted research on Buddhist children, teenagers or youth they are teaching to. For other European countries adopting Council of Europe recommendations on religious diversity and intercultural education, Buddhism has been included in RE syllabi as an afterthought or as a future provision for Buddhists who may appear in their classrooms. This is not to speak of European countries where Buddhists are such a small minority that they are neither researched nor acknowledged in educational policy. This paper seeks to provide a vignette of the contemporary state of Buddhist children and youth in the countries of Europe, adapting a framework of understanding developed for teenagers in the UK, and exploring (hopefully with the help of NCRE delegates) how the different styles of RE provision across Europe may reflect or support Buddhist religiosity on this continent.

Approaching religious scriptures: Mirroring the Qur’anic education and the non-confessional religious education in Norway

Synnøve Markeng, Inland Norway University of Applied Sciences

Abstract

For decades, religious scriptures have formed an integral part of the curriculum in Norway’s compulsory and non-confessional religious education subject (KRLE), commonly presented through narratives or as references to the content of scripture. The KRLE curriculum aims to impart knowledge about diverse religious traditions, including their scriptures and how religious people engage with them. As the Norwegian society have become more diverse, so has the student group and what religious scriptures they encounter outside the public-school

setting. Students who come from a Muslim background might attend Qur'anic education as part of their leisure activities, for instance learning how to read and recite the Qur'an. Consequently, these students encounter the same religious scripture with different approaches, within different educational contexts. Research from Sweden reveals that students, which engage in similar leisure activities, express reluctance to discuss these experiences with teachers and peers in public schools (Berglund, 2019). In interviews with KRLE teachers in Norway, some express concerns about presenting Qur'an recitation in their lessons, fearing it might appear 'strange' or, in the worst case, 'exotic' to their students (Markeng, forthcoming). This hesitance suggests a potential (double) evasion of topics related to Qur'anic education. This paper reports the primary findings from my PhD thesis. I ask in what way the pedagogical approaches to the Qur'an in Qur'anic education differ from the approaches relevant to encounter the Qur'an in public schools. I connect these varying approaches to three dimensions of religious scripture (Watts, 2019) and the concept of interpretive authority (Grung, 2015). Additionally, by applying the methodological framework of 'mirroring' (Niemi, 2021), I examine how these differences and potential tensions shed light on perceived normative approaches within the non-confessional subject.

What is the idea, what are the permises, of Catholic education today, in the pluralistic reality of Poland, Europe and the modern world?

Jerzy Krol, Akademia Zamojska

Abstract

The paper i san attempt to answer (in its main outlines) the question posed in the topic. The brodest perspective of the study is to show the relationship between Ctholic education and the clasical humanistic concept. Then, defining the main determinants of education and moving from this perspective to the theory and practice of Catholic educatio aimed at educating a person as a member of various types of basic communities and a citizen of the country and the world. The third perspective of the answer is the religious dimension of education considered in the function of shaping a mature human person as a Christian. In this dimension, I will refer to the broader Christian perspective within which Catholic education functions. I would like to present the phenomenon of Christian education and formation, which includes a religious function and moral and social one. I will try to

demonstrate the reason for this integrating, but not integrist, phenomenon. Moreover, here and earlier I will touch on the mutual correlation and complementarity of education determinants determined by the state and by smaller entities that provide the individual with strength and life motivation. It seems that looking at education from these separate perspectives may help answer the question in the title of the paper.

Below I present a three-stage outline of the report

1. Humanistic inspirations of Greek paideia as the broadest basis of Catholic education.
2. The tasks of Catholic education in the formation of citizens of the country and the world,
including smaller entities.
3. The religious dimension of education in the function of shaping a mature person as a Christian.

Session B3 (Tue, 10:00-12:00)

Racism in Norwegian kindergartens?

Therese Bjørnaas, Queen Maud University College

Abstract

Karlstad 17-19. June 2024

This paper presentation is based on an ongoing research. I have interviewed 40 kindergarten teachers, 15 of them are teachers with a minority background and their experiences of and with racism in Norwegian kindergartens. In Norway, 92 percent of children between 1-5 years old attend kindergarten. Norwegian statistics bureau 2021 show that 22\

What happens if ‘tolerance’ disappears from kindergarten? A discussion of the concepts of respect and tolerance in the Norwegian Framework Plan for kindergartens.

Kathrine Moen, Nord University

Abstract

Respect and tolerance are essential when we meet “the other” in a society with complexity and diversity. Hence, respect and tolerance are core concepts in educational settings. In everyday speech, the concepts are used somewhat unconsciously as a pair, while the philosophic tradition defines them with different and almost opposite meanings (cf. Sagberg 2001).

In the Norwegian framework plan for the content and tasks of kindergartens, there has been a shift in the use of these concepts. In the plan from 1996, ‘tolerance’ was used as often as ‘respect’. In the present plan from 2017, ‘respect’ dominates completely while ‘tolerance’ is mentioned only once. An empirical study found that kindergarten staff used the concept of respect much more than they used ‘tolerance’ (Moen 2021). Concepts and different perceptions of concepts may form diverse practices. The research question in this presentation is: How may changes in the use of ‘respect’ and ‘tolerance’ in the Norwegian Framework Plan for kindergartens have implications for practice? This shift in the use of concepts could be interpreted as a tendency toward harmonization, a preferred attitude in

the kindergarten tradition (cf. Emilson & Johansson 2018; Otterstad & Andersen 2012). If the concept of tolerance disappears from educational documents, there is a danger that differences are hidden and not valued as constructive. The presentation introduces a continuum varying from intolerance to love, emphasizing Paul Ricoeur's concept of 'loving battle' (1948; cf. Uggla 1999).

The aim of the presentation is theoretical curriculum discussions with practical implications, and the overall approach is critical-hermeneutical. Former studies of tolerance and respect in schools by Geir Afdal (2006) and Trine Anker (2011) are important as theoretical and empirical backgrounds.

Methodological Issues for Studying Discursive Elements of 'Othering' and 'Belonging' in Relation to Religion and Worldviews in Swedish Preschool Teacher Education

Magdalena Raivio, Kalrstadts universitet; Ellinor Skaremyr, University of Borås; Arniika Kuusisto, University of Helsinki

Abstract

Social and cultural inclusion and a sense of 'belonging' (Yuval-Davis, 2011) are vital aspects of creating social sustainability in educational settings on all levels, including creating 'caring communities' (Raivio et al, 2022) where education is inclusive and just also with regard to religions and worldviews. Here we wish to present and discuss the ongoing project "The Place of Religion and Worldviews in Swedish Preschool Teacher Education (PTE)", and its possible methodological pitfalls and possibilities.

The overarching objective of the project is to enhance intercultural awareness and competence in Swedish PTEs, with the means for developing Religion and Worldview (R&W) literacy (Shaw, 2020) in both teachers and students. The research problem is what norms regarding religion and worldviews are produced in Swedish PTE – and how these can be understood to matter in the discursive construction of a socially sustainable PTE, a preschool teacher-student, and preschool teacher professionalism. This will be answered by analyzing course plans and teaching documents, as well as data from interviewing teacher educators and essays from students.

A combination of CDA (Fairclough, 2001; Wodak & Mayer, 2021) and content analysis will be used, together with what Raivio (2014) describes as intersectional subject-oriented narratological and semiotic

analysis. In addition, a theoretical tool based on critical pedagogy, black feminist and postcolonial theory (hooks, 2003; Spivak, [1987] 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2006; powell, 2012) and feminist ethics of care (Langford & White, 2019; Noddings, 2013) will be used when analyzing and discussing discursive elements of ‘othering’ and ‘belonging’.

Session B4 (Tue, 10:00-12:00)

Reflexivity reconsidered

[CONTACT] Knut Aukland, OsloMet; Anne Siri Kvaa, OsloMet; Martha Shaw, London South Bank University; Jenny Berglund, Stockholm University; Saila Poulter, University of Helsinki; Marjaana Kavonius, University of Helsinki; Ruth Flanagan, Exeter University; [DISCUSSANTS] Kristian Niemi, Karlstad University; Kerstin von Brömssen, University West; Martin Ubani, University of Helsinki

Abstract

Reflexivity and self-reflection are crucial to a variety of aims and goals in RE, ranging from knowledge acquisition, developing values and attitudes, reflection on one's own learning (metacognition), and personal/worldview development. Becoming reflexive can also be a goal in itself. For teachers and teacher education, reflexivity is linked to professional development. As part of ethnography and research, be it academia or classroom, it can be tied to reflections on methodology and positionality. When we encounter the Other, we can also reflexively encounter ourselves.

In the literature, “reflexivity” or “reflexive approaches” are always desired, sometimes presented as a solution or antidote to specific challenges. However: What exactly is reflexivity as a didactical or pedagogical concept? How do we facilitate “it”? And to what end? Empirical studies are scarce, and conceptual clarity wanting. Are we talking about the same thing, or is there a case to be made “against reflexivity”?

In the interpretative approach reflexivity was transformed into a didactical RE concept defined as “the relationship between the experience of students and the experience of those whose way of life they are attempting to interpret”, having three aspects: (a) edification, (b) learners are helped to make constructive critique, and (c) reviewing methods of study. Scholars have criticized this definition, and some have pointed out that the approach is less clear on how reflexivity takes place. Moreover, reflexivity is closely related to other concepts such as self-reflection, self-awareness, edification, metacognition, and self-assessment: How do they relate to reflexivity?

In this symposium we reconsider reflexivity and invite contributors and the audience to critically discuss reflexivity and other related concepts. With a little luck, the symposium will provide some conceptual clarity, raise critical questions, shed light on ways to facilitate reflexivity, and, of course, inspire self-reflection.

Session B5 (Tue, 10:00-12:00)

Fostering inclusivity in education: addressing othering processes and religious diversity

Maike Maria Domsel, Rheinische-Friedrich-Wilhelms University of Bonn

Abstract

In an increasingly diverse society, the sensitivity to othering processes, particularly in the context of religious discrimination, constitutes an indispensable component of professionalizing (religious) educators. This necessitates an integrated approach that amalgamates theory and practice, encompassing the capacity for stereotype identification. A profound understanding of the genesis of stereotypes is imperative, followed by targeted exercises in their management. Especially crucial is the ability for critical reflection on one's habitus and its influence on perception and decision-making in dealing with religious diversity.

Within the educational context, educators bear a "symbolic mandate" (Peter Sloterdijk), signifying ideal authority and implicit rights in specific social positions, entailing a distinct responsibility for imparting values, norms, and knowledge to students, influencing both didactic decisions and attitudes. In sensitizing educators to othering and (religious) diversity, their "symbolic mandate" can prompt a (sub)conscious acknowledgment of their duty to foster inclusivity. This guides their teaching towards goals like preventing bias, reducing discrimination, and encouraging open discussions on (religious) diversity.

The project to be presented and discussed aims to develop a digital training module with the purpose of sensitizing school leaders, educators, and students alike. The primary focus lies in sharpening awareness of the specific needs and challenges individuals of diverse religious and cultural backgrounds face. Furthermore, the project addresses educational othering processes, specifically focusing on examining experiences of discrimination among individuals of Muslim background with migration histories and educational advancement biographies. This involves applying the authenticity principle through interviews to understand resilience and develop tailored coping strategies for educational challenges. Another goal is to raise awareness about the potential reinforcement of othering processes through their discussion. The outcomes are intended to be valorized through integrating the training module into the professionalization of educators.

Interreligious Experiences and Orientations of Islamic Religion Teachers – the Struggle für Acceptance and Tolerance in the Austrian School System

Senol Yagdi, University of Vienna

Abstract

This presentation highlights key findings from my dissertation titled "Religious Pedagogical Habitus of Islamic Religious Educators in Austria: A Reconstructive Study on Collective Frameworks in the Context of (Inter)religious Learning." The research focuses on the experiences and orientations of Islamic religious educators, examining their professional self-perception and fundamental thought and action structures in religious and interreligious teaching/learning processes. The study involved conducting eight group discussions with 41 Islamic religious educators from various Austrian regions, exploring their attitudes, beliefs, and core concerns. Using Ralf Bohnsack's Documentary Method, the material was analyzed and interpreted to reconstruct a collective orientation framework.

During the presentation, two central research outcomes regarding the relevance of interreligious learning will be addressed. Firstly, interreligious learning contributes to fostering acceptance and tolerance in both educational and societal contexts. Efforts are made to create fear-free, non-hierarchical interaction opportunities within religious instruction, emphasizing early training in dialogue and pluralism skills. Interreligious education aims to cultivate empathy through perspective shifts, overcoming apprehensions, and prejudices, guiding the professional practice of Islamic religious educators.

Secondly, questions of interreligiousity become a central component of the orientation framework for Islamic religious educators. Experiences of exclusion, power imbalances, and challenges in the struggle for social recognition shape their conjunctive experiential space. Islamic religious educators aim to reverse Othering processes, perceiving themselves as the center rather than the periphery of society. (Counter-)Othering becomes a strategy in their confrontation for societal positions, where they seek to alter power dynamics in their favor.

Session C1 (Tue, 14:00-16:00)

Spirit of hikesia and education. A contribution to the pedagogical concept of asylum

Rafał Włodarczyk, University of Wrocław

Abstract

In our cultural circle, the right to asylum derives its traditions from both legislation and religion, leads our attention to ancient times and the institutions of the Egyptians, Hebrews and Greeks, and it combines issues of otherness, difference and inclusion, persecution, suffering and fragility, duty, responsibility for the Other and justice, a safe place to stay, hospitality, dialogue and encounter, shelter and holiness. The importance of asylum, the growth of which in the 20th century was related to the European crimes of colonialism, the terror of totalitarianisms, the Holocaust, ethnic cleansing, the fate of refugees and stateless people, does not diminish in the face of the wars and disasters of the 21st century. In this context, the question of how we can link the issue of asylum to education seems legitimate. In relation to this question, the presentation focuses attention on the concepts of Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida and Patrick Declerck, drawing on various traditions of asylum and thinking about hospitality that have contributed to shaping the foundations of European educational and aid institutions. Using the achievements of these important traditions for the Western humanities and the concepts of the above-mentioned philosophers, I would like to point out the need to think about educational spaces in the perspective of asylum pedagogy.

The Other, Popular Culture, and Religious Education

Nicole von Rost Biedron, Linnaeus University

Abstract

This paper explores how teachers use popular culture in their classrooms as a frame to speak of “the Other”, based on empirical data from teacher interviews. It highlights how popular culture impacts society socially and politically, and how it is used as an aid and a reference frame for students inside and outside of school, itself also being a noticeable part of society. Students acquire knowledge in parallel arenas beyond the classroom, including through popular culture. All forms of knowledge mediatization and intermediation are however at

risk of creating stereotypes, which apply to all forms of representation, including “the Other.” Several teachers in this study highlight, among other things, how the Hollywoodification of religions and religious actors generally affects their selection and use of popular culture (question of availability). Another difficulty teachers face is the question regarding using popular culture from other cultures. Due to the students’ lack of cultural context, many classrooms use a predominantly Western selection and thereby marginalize popular cultures from other cultures, including minority cultures. The use of Western popular culture in classes with diverse students raises questions regarding not only the language barrier (students are not always proficient in neither Swedish nor English) but also cultural context, once again affecting the representation of popular culture. These questions highlight continued need for further cultural understanding amongst teachers and representation in regard to what is used and not used in the classroom and also underlines questions of selection and the power in the hands of the teachers.

Irony Religion: Embracing the Other, Exploring the Otherness of Oneself

Milosz Puczydłowski, University of South-Eastern Norway

Abstract

Irony is traditionally believed to be an apt rhetoric figure employed by the external critics of religion. Since the times of Voltaire, it has been discussed where and what the borders are, that the liberal, provocative disparagers of religion should set. However, little has been said about how irony may be employed by the post-Enlightenment religion to forge and understand its own identity.

This paper has three main aims. I want to (1) present the idea of irony religion; (2) elaborate on embracing the other by exploring the otherness within one’s own ironic religiosity, and (3) ask some questions about its consequences for religious education.

The irony religion is characterized as: (i) presenting its beliefs by employing the trope of irony that gives words paradoxically unexpected meanings; (ii) preferring ambivalence to unequivocalness and paradoxes to coherence; (iii) stressing freedom, creativity, and self-distance of believer. Irony is understood not as ‘simple’, but ‘complex’ since ‘what is said both is and isn’t what is meant’ (Vlastos 1991). However, it is a riddle with no definite answer and nor even ironist knows it (Nehamas 1999). Therefore, irony is not a deception, but rather an ‘overt untruthfulness’ (Dyner 2018).

I will demonstrate that irony in religion results in overcoming its dogmatic form and embracing its both non-religious and other-religious critics. My intention is to draw the concept far beyond the ‘mastered irony’ of Kierkegaard, make it ‘unstable’ (Booth 1974), but not necessarily ‘ultimately nihilistic’ (Lippitt 2000). Instead of it I would rather argue that ironic religion, by exploring the otherness of oneself, can genuinely embrace the ‘other’ that awaits it.

In that context I want to ask about non-confessional religious education that gives space to both dogmatic and ironic forms of religion.

Life skills education as part of Norwegian religious education

Geir Skeie, University of Stavanger

Abstract

The paper originates from a newly started research project addressing life skills education in Norwegian schools and reports from early stages of the project. From 2020 ‘health and life skills’ was launched as one of three cross-curricular themes and the project investigates conceptualization, knowledge base and practice on primary, secondary and upper secondary levels of education. In the curriculum of religious education, this cross-curricular theme is focused on existential questions and ethics and the paper examines problems and opportunities coming from this. It is argued that while life skills education is often presented in an individualistic perspective as either dealing with mental health issues or coping with everyday challenges, religious education may offer a different perspective. By focusing on existential questions and ethical reflection, life skills education may become relevant for the individual student, without leaving the individual alone in the face of global and local challenges of today and the future.

Session C2 (Tue, 14:00-16:00)

An examination of how Islam and Muslims are portrayed in Swedish educational films

Danial Ghasempour, Stockholm University

Abstract

This project aims to map the portrayal of Islam and Muslims in Swedish educational films in religion education from 1990-2023. The investigation is conducted from a postcolonial perspective, with Edward Said's Orientalism as the theoretical framework. Several films have been analysed using discourse analysis, with the assistance of artificial intelligence, and film analysis. According to the study's findings, there is a common tendency to depict Islamists as representatives of Islam. The male gender is frequently portrayed in large numbers as fervent supporters of Islam, meanwhile, the female gender is often depicted in relation to the theme of oppression, with a particular emphasis on the practice of veiling. Islam is recurrently portrayed through themes such as terrorism, fundamentalism, and jihadism. In addition, Muslims are depicted as religious and distinct from the majority of society. Thus, the discourse surrounding Muslims is often associated with issues of integration and multiculturalism and the portrayal of Islam relies on dichotomies such as the West, democracy, and secularism in opposition to Islam. In other words, Islam is "othered" as an aggressive religion, posing a threat to the Western world. In conclusion, my study shows that while the portrayal of Islam has improved over time, the findings of this study are consistent with previous research on educational materials such as textbooks, indicating that Islam is often stereotyped and portrayed negatively through recurring themes.

Empirical and comparative perspectives on othering in teaching the topic of Islam in different models of RE in Germany and Switzerland

Benjamin Ahme, Tübingen university; Rafaela Estermann, Zurich university

Abstract

The issue of othering is well known and has been described in various contexts by authors such as Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, among others. But it only recently became prominent concerning RE. In

the German speaking countries there have been a few studies that suggest, othering might pose a considerable risk for RE, especially concerning the topic of Islam. However, these studies are mainly based on theoretical considerations and textbook analyses. Empirical studies on othering as a dimension of teaching and learning in RE are still a desideratum.

In our paper we will shortly outline the existing literature from the German speaking countries on othering in RE and offer empirical insights into aspects of othering as conveyed by teachers of Protestant RE in Germany (Baden-Württemberg) and the non-denominational “Religions – Cultures – Ethics” in Switzerland (Zurich). Based on 23 semi structured interviews on how and why they teach the topic of Islam, we can compare whether othering manifests itself in similar ways in the teachers’ statements about their lessons in the context of denominational or non-denominational RE. Among others we will address the following questions: Is there evidence of othering in the teachers’ statements about their attitudes and goals in teaching the topic of Islam or the didactic realization of their lessons? How and where do the interviewed teachers address and identify something or someone as “the other”? Do teachers show a sensibility for the issue of othering? What strategies do the teachers mention in the interviews in communicating about “the other”? Is othering focused specifically on Islam and Muslims or also on religion per se?

Religious literacy as sense-making, communication, and the understanding of others

Fredrik Jahnke, University of Gävle

Abstract

Literacy is a popular concept in many different fields of research. To name but a few: Health, food, media, and biological literacy. The field of religious education is no exception; religious literacy has been a very fashionable concept, and still is. However, there is no common understanding or use of religious literacy. Instead, it has become more of an open signifier that can be applied for various research purposes. This is problematic. In this paper I will discuss a new framing for religious literacy and argue that a narrower understanding of the concept would be preferable. One step, and perhaps the first, in doing this is to demarcate religious literacy from, for instance, learning about religion (regardless of how wide we interpret the latter).

Further, I suggest that religious literacy should be closer connected to its original meaning in New literacy studies. Simply put, New literacy studies focus on how individuals acquire and master a language, let's say Spanish, and under which social contexts and power relations this takes place. Analogically, I would tentatively think about religious literacy as an ability to "speak religion". In combination with perspectives of sense-making, cognition, negotiation, and interpretative repertoires this approach opens to study as well as to improve pupils' capacity to apprehend – and communicate – their own everyday life experiences in relation to religion and their ability to understand others.

Using my rich empirical material from interviews with pupils in the Swedish compulsory school, I will show how this might be practiced in school as well as elaborate on the theoretical and analytical perspectives outlined above. In conclusion, I will discuss how religious literacy could be reconstructed as a stronger and more fruitful analytical tool to study how pupils construct and negotiate language to make sense of religion.

Session C3 (Tue, 14:00-16:00)

Religion in Early Childhood Education and Care: Variations of social markedness

Ragnhild Iversen, University of South-Eastern Norway

Abstract

How are variations of social markedness influencing children's processes of belonging and learning in Early Childhood Education (ECE) in relation to religion?

In this presentation I will use Brekhus' (1998) sociological differentiation between marked and unmarked objects to discuss findings from my PhD-project about children's navigation of religion in ECE. Brekhus' concept of social markedness characterizes how actors notice one part of a contrast, while the other is ignored. While the marked signifies an exception, the unmarked is taken for granted and naturalized. I will discuss how a convivial and culturalized approach to religion contributes to contradictory marking processes of children with religious and cultural minority background during Christmas preparations and meals in a Norwegian kindergarten. On one hand, the staff members downplayed differences in children's religious and cultural background, partly restricting marking processes related to generalization and othering. On the other hand, implicit treatment of majority practices as unmarked led to subtle differences in children's opportunities for learning and belonging.

The analysis will be based on empirical material from fieldwork conducted in 2019-2020, previously published in two different articles (Iversen, 2023b; Iversen, 2023a).

Brekhus W (1998) A Sociology of the Unmarked: Redirecting Our Focus. *Sociological theory* 16(1): 34-51.

Iversen RL (2023a) The convivial concealment of religion: Navigating religious diversity during meals in early childhood education - A Norwegian case. *British journal of religious education* 45(3): 263-276.

Iversen RL (2023b) Identification, Silence, Separation, and Imagination: Children's Navigations of Christmas in a Religiously Diverse Norwegian Kindergarten *Education Sciences*. 13(11): 1077.

From Risk to Opportunity: Religious Diversity in Kindergartens

Ine Bratsvedal, Queen Maud University College

Abstract

This paper delves into my ongoing PhD project, focusing on religious diversity in kindergartens. Earlier research has indicated an avoidance of addressing religion in Norwegian kindergartens, often perceived as a challenging endeavor (Hovdelien & Sødal, 2021: 136). Moreover, when religion is addressed, it tends to reinforce the majority culture while making minority cultures less visible (Krogstad & Hidle, 2015: 14-15). The research question this project is based on is: How can working with religion in kindergartens be used as a resource in promoting cultural diversity?

The project employs action research methods within two kindergartens, currently in its initial stage. This involves mapping existing practices in the kindergartens and getting to know the staff's experiences and reflections on these practices. I use Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (as outlined by Heimburg and Ness (2021, p. 175) which is an approach that progresses through distinct phases and begins with the acknowledgment and appreciation of the current practices. This approach acknowledges the work that is already being done in the kindergartens.

A key methodological approach involves critical reflection, drawing inspiration from fourth-generation action research articulated by Bøe & Thoresen (2017, p. 64). This involves the critical assessment of dominant practices and discourses in the kindergartens through a power perspective. An example of this would be reflecting on and discussing who benefits from how kindergartens work with religion and who does not? Who is included and who is excluded?

Preliminary findings show that working with religious diversity in kindergartens is perceived as a risk. The paper provides insights into overcoming this challenge, drawing on theoretical frameworks concerning power dynamics, lived religion, and diversity. The discussion highlights strategies for navigating these complexities and transforming potential risks into opportunities.

Buddha's Life in Norwegian Children's Books. Exploring the Boundaries of Cross-Cultural Narrative Adaptation in Early Childhood Education

Ann-Kathrin Bretfeld-Wolf, Queen Maud University College

Abstract

The Norwegian «Framework Plan for Kindergartens» emphasizes the use of narratives from diverse cultural backgrounds as a pedagogical

tool to promote and enhance cultural diversity within kindergartens. However, these narratives often undergo adaptations to align with cultural expectations associated with children's literature. This paper explores the intricate process of narrative adaptation, with a specific focus on the representation of the Buddha's life story in Norwegian children's books.

Through this case study, the paper aims to elucidate the guiding principles behind the adaptation of the Buddha's life story in the Norwegian cultural context. Key questions arise: What are the consequences of this adaptation? How does the version of the Buddha's life story conveyed in Norwegian children's books depict Buddhist cultures? Does this adapted narrative still maintain a level of cultural difference that promotes and enhances cultural diversity? The inquiry further explores whether these adapted narratives should emphasize not only narrative motifs and content but also interconnected world-views, values, and aesthetics for educational purposes. This complexity highlights the need to comprehensively assess the impact of adapted narratives on children's cultural awareness.

Using the depiction of the Buddha's life story in Norwegian children's books as an example, this research enriches the discourse on cultural exchange by examining the extent of adaptation required to retain the potential of narratives to serve as cross-cultural bridges. It underscores the delicate balance between adaptation and preservation, recognizing the potential of narratives to nurture cultural diversity and inclusivity in early childhood education.

In conclusion, this paper sheds light on the complex process of narrative adaptation within a pedagogical context. It emphasizes the need for greater awareness of the challenges involved in bridging different cultures and encourages educators, policymakers, and researchers to approach narrative adaptation with heightened sensitivity to the multifaceted nature of cross-cultural encounters.

Session C4 (Tue, 14:00-16:00)

Reflexivity reconsidered

[CONTACT] Knut Aukland, OsloMet; Anne Siri Kvaa, OsloMet; Martha Shaw, London South Bank University; Jenny Berglund, Stockholm University; Saila Poulter, University of Helsinki; Marjaana Kavonius, University of Helsinki; Ruth Flanagan, Exeter University; [DISCUSSANTS] Kristian Niemi, Karlstad University; Kerstin von Brömssen, University West; Martin Ubani, University of Helsinki

Abstract

Reflexivity and self-reflection are crucial to a variety of aims and goals in RE, ranging from knowledge acquisition, developing values and attitudes, reflection on one's own learning (metacognition), and personal/worldview development. Becoming reflexive can also be a goal in itself. For teachers and teacher education, reflexivity is linked to professional development. As part of ethnography and research, be it academia or classroom, it can be tied to reflections on methodology and positionality. When we encounter the Other, we can also reflexively encounter ourselves.

In the literature, “reflexivity” or “reflexive approaches” are always desired, sometimes presented as a solution or antidote to specific challenges. However: What exactly is reflexivity as a didactical or pedagogical concept? How do we facilitate “it”? And to what end? Empirical studies are scarce, and conceptual clarity wanting. Are we talking about the same thing, or is there a case to be made “against reflexivity”?

In the interpretative approach reflexivity was transformed into a didactical RE concept defined as “the relationship between the experience of students and the experience of those whose way of life they are attempting to interpret”, having three aspects: (a) edification, (b) learners are helped to make constructive critique, and (c) reviewing methods of study. Scholars have criticized this definition, and some have pointed out that the approach is less clear on how reflexivity takes place. Moreover, reflexivity is closely related to other concepts such as self-reflection, self-awareness, edification, metacognition, and self-assessment: How do they relate to reflexivity?

In this symposium we reconsider reflexivity and invite contributors and the audience to critically discuss reflexivity and other related concepts. With a little luck, the symposium will provide some conceptual clarity, raise critical questions, shed light on ways to facilitate reflexivity, and, of course, inspire self-reflection.

Session D1 (Tue, 16:00-17:30)

"Effects of Islamic religious education in Austria"

Tamara Nili-Freudenschuss, University of Vienna

Abstract

The ongoing dissertation project "Effects of Islamic Religious Education in Austria", which is currently being carried out at the Institute for Islamic Theological Studies in the Department of Islamic Religious Education at the University of Vienna, will be presented in the form of a poster. The study aims to evaluate the effects of Islamic religious education in Austria on the basis of quantitative research results.

Islamic religious education has existed in Austria since 1982, but has not yet been subject to a comprehensive evaluation. The number of pupils in Islamic religious education has increased and many of them, as well as their parents, seem to be satisfied with the teaching. However, there has also been an increase in the number of students dropping out, particularly Shia students who feel that the classes are too Sunni-oriented. In addition, there are persistent concerns about the quality of education, including inappropriate teaching materials, a lack of professionalism on the part of some teachers, and the neglect of social issues such as sexuality and homosexuality. The dissertation aims to provide a basis for a more objective discussion of Islamic religious education in Austria and to form a foundation for its further development.

With this in mind, the following research question was formulated within the framework of the dissertation project "What effects does Islamic religious education in Austria have on its pupils, both in terms of their knowledge about Islam (and other religions) and their attitudes towards Islam (and other religions)?" Questionnaires were used to assess the knowledge and attitudes of students in grade 9 who participate in Islamic religious education and to compare them with the knowledge and attitudes of students who do not participate in Islamic religious education. A total of about 600 students were interviewed and the results are currently being analysed.

Curriculum Changes and Classroom Realities: Examining the Teaching of Sexuality in Swedish Religious Education

Lydia Heinevik, University of Gothenburg

Abstract

Although “sexuality” has been a component of the subject of religious education (RE) since its inception in the 1960s, the subject can occasionally be perceived as sensitive or even controversial by teachers, parents, and students. In the 2022 curriculum revisions, the domain previously referred to as “sex and relationships” was rebranded as “sexuality, consent, and relationships.” According to the Swedish National Agency for Education (Skolverket), this domain is intended to be integrated across all school subjects.

My doctoral thesis seeks to examine how sexuality is taught by teachers in RE at upper secondary schools in Sweden. The research methods employed in this project encompass long-term classroom observations and focus group interviews involving approximately 30 teachers. The observations have yielded varying perspectives among teachers, with some regarding the inclusion of sexuality in RE as necessary and inherent, while others express more skeptical viewpoints. Furthermore, teachers employ diverse approaches in delivering this content, with some allocating a substantial portion of the curriculum to it, while others only devote a single lesson to the subject matter. The degree of authority over the subject’s instruction varies, as some schools delegate responsibility to individual instructors or organizations like RFSU. In my presentation, I will delve into select findings from the classroom observations.

Keywords: Religious Education, Sexuality, Curriculum Changes, Upper Secondary Schools, Teacher Perspectives

The use of Popular Culture in Religious Education (RE)

Nicole von Rost Biedron, Linnaeus University

Abstract

On this poster I will present my PhD thesis research, wherein I explore how and why teachers employ popular culture in RE in upper secondary school. Popular culture is deeply embedded in society, and today’s youth are constantly exposed to it in numerous forms. Because school is a part of society, popular culture holds influence there as well. At the same time, students learn and gain information from other areas than school, such as popular culture. As a result, studying this connection is both vital and interesting. The dissertation’s research questions are constructed with the four didactic questions how, what, why and for whom, in mind. In the first section of the thesis, active teachers are interviewed about popular culture and how

and why they use it as learning resources and/or reference material. Classroom observations and student interviews will be conducted in the next stage. So far, interviews with teachers have been conducted and are being processed and analyzed. These examples demonstrate that teachers desire to use popular culture for a variety of reasons. Since I am currently gathering empirical data, the poster will provide what I have so far, as well as some reflections on my research topics and methodology.

Religiously motivated requests for exemptions in the norwegian school system

Christian Lomsdalen, University of Bergen

Abstract

In this poster I will present new and unprecedented data on the the religiously and lifestance motivated exemption requests in the norwegian school system. This separates the applicants and their children as others as this right is utilized or requested.

The exemption clause, §2-3a, of the Education Act gives parents and pupils the opportunity to be exempted from activities "that they, on the basis of their own religion or own philosophy of life, perceive as being the practice of another religion or adherence to another philosophy of life, or that they on the same basis find objectionable or offensive" (Opplæringslova, 2023, §2-3a). It is important to note that the right to exemption has a paradoxical quality: It is unlimited since it applies to all activities in basic education, while at the same time it is limited in that the pupil cannot be exempted from learning the knowledge content of the subjects. Within this framework, it is possible for the parents to request an exemption from teaching activities that are experienced as problematic, and that the teaching must therefore be set up by the teacher in a different way. The right to exemption in Norwegian public basic education is a legal attempt to balance a common school for all pupils regardless of religious background or lifestance, with compulsory education about religion. The right of exemption is historically linked to the school's Christianity subjects (Andersland, 2019, pp. 6–7), but today applies to all subjects and all activities in the school (Skeie, 2018, p. 47).

Othering in an RVE classroom and how to combat it

Jasmine Jacques-Butterworth, Aberystwyth University

Abstract

The othering of groups in society is a significant topic that is covered in Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE) in my school. One Programme of Learning (POL) that tackles this as a whole is that of Martin Luther King Jnr that year 8 (12- to 13-year-olds) study, which uses the Baptist preacher as the spine of the work but uses various examples from the \#BLM movement, and psychological studies from Stanley Milgram (The Study on Obedience) and Philip Zimbardo (The Stanford Prison Experiment).

This builds upon a year 7 POL (11- to 12-year-olds) which is based on *The Island* by Sue Phillips, where they begin to build a community and decide how a community works. In this they encounter several obstacles to their community, and they work out a way to stay a community without arguments or schisms. This, as well as the above POL, has been influenced by the works of Johnathan Sacks and his book *Not in God's Name*.

This POL was a study conducted for my MA thesis which looked at a multi-disciplinary, cross-curricular approach to RVE which incorporated various historical and geographical skills as well as improving literacy using a short story to frame the topic, as well as other articles and sources.

The impact on the student has been hugely positive. The awareness of othering of society has been linked to genocides, civil wars, incels and other extremist views has increased, and students have been given the tools to combat this alongside the school's schemes such as KIVA and Wellbeing Champions.

Session E1 (Wed, 10:00-12:00)

Didactics of the study visit in the study of religion

Ann af Burén, Södertörn University

Abstract

In the study of religion as lived experience, field excursions and study visits often aim at an empathetic understanding of religious environments and people. This ambition is complicated by the fact that inhabiting a room is not a universal experience and how we perceive it, and are received in it, varies. This is of crucial importance when thinking about the didactics in relation to study visits, especially if learning is understood from a phenomenological perspective, as something that happens in the encounter with the world. Since both our perception and our space of action are conditional, the students' perception and access to the space and the people there will vary depending on who they are. One religious environment may to one student feel inclusive and comfortable, while to another it is perceived as closed, alienating or even hostile. To ignore this premise is to turn a blind eye to the complexity of the situation.

This presentation focuses on didactic possibilities and challenges in working with sensual and emotional experiences that arise in the encounter with unfamiliar spaces and situations. These are discussed in relation to excursions and study visits as pedagogical elements in teaching about religion. The discussion is based on qualitative research interviews and participant observation in connection with 14 study visits with student groups at a university level and adds to previous research on the study visit as a method by make use of phenomenological theory of intersubjectivity, place and learning.

‘Immigration of the religious other’: Reciprocity and Reform in English Religious Education.

Jonathan Doney, University of Exeter

Abstract

Previous work investigating the provenance, authorship, and consequence of the School Council's Working Paper 36 - Religious Education in Secondary Schools (1971) highlighted that the context in which it was created was a period of expanding encounter with the 'global other', particularly 'through increased travel, through developments

in technology allowing access to other worlds, and through immigration.’ (Doney 2015 p161, 187-8). This earlier work also highlights a discursive reconstruction of the term ‘immigrant’ in the educational policy sphere as being more positive – and nuanced - than in other policy areas at the time, and as attempting to avoid the homogenisation of immigrants into a single group. As well as ensuring that the plurality of geographic origin, or ‘home area’, was reflected in the discourse, the policy-shapers were attentive to a detailed analysis of the children’s faith background. This presentation will explore this divergence from wider political discourse of the time, showing how the rejection of established binary narratives of ‘Christian’ and ‘non-Christian other’ in the education discourses of the 1960s and 1970s can be mapped, using Statement Archaeology (Doney 2015; 2021), onto the developing discourses of the Christian Ecumenical movement in the same period, leading to a new legitimisation of learning about the non-Christian other in religious education classrooms in England during the 1970s and beyond.

Hinduism in 6th grade: Between empathy and exoticism

Ina Marie Ilkama, University of South-Eastern Norway

Abstract

My paper explores how 6th grade primary school pupils (aged 10-11) in a religiously diverse classroom in Norway experience being taught about Hinduism in the subject KRLE (Christianity, Religion, Worldviews and Ethics). This includes an excursion to a Hindu temple in Oslo. Despite questions of involvement (Andreassen 2012), excursions are a much-encouraged method of learning, as they provide opportunities for teaching that the classroom does not (Eidhamar 2009, Jørgensen 2017). Furthermore, they may contribute to understanding and respect, but at the same time, an excursion can lead to alienation and exotification (Nicolaisen 2013, 2016, 2021).

Teaching about Hinduism in primary schools in Norway challenges what Tove Nicolaisen has labeled the “KRLE normality” (Nicolaisen 2013), which includes talking about religions as more or less limited objects with a given content; focus on texts and belief as their core; and a monotheistic understanding of the divine. Facing this normality construction in the classroom discourse, which largely stems from protestant baggage (cf. Markeng 2023), Hinduism is often presented as different, strange, and/or “the other”.

The KRLE curriculum includes a “core element” stating that the subject aim to make pupils “able to take the perspective of the other”

(“kunne ta andres perspektiv”, KD 2020). How can non-Hindu pupils be trained to take a Hindu perspective, and what does this imply? How can teachers avoid exotification and positioning Hindus and Hinduism as “the other” in a religiously diverse classroom, but at the same time build on the pupil’s prior knowledge – which in this case largely comes from secular, Christian, and Islamic traditions? And how does the excursion contribute to the pupils’ understandings and learning outcomes of Hinduism? These are questions I will address in my paper, through analyzing observations as well as interviews with pupils, their teacher and the guide from the Hindu temple.

Fostering human agency and embracing diversity in Religious education: Finnish teachers’ perspectives

Samaneh Khalili, University of Helsinki

Abstract

As a result of the importance of human agency in individual and societal life, as well as the dispute over its role in religious education, this study investigates the main elements of human agency in Finnish religious education in order to strengthen diversity. This aim will be accomplished by interviews with religious education teachers in Finland. Methodologically, deductive content analysis will be employed. The study will take a liberal stance in order to present an analytical framework for human agency. The analysis considers what teachers perceive in their practical situation and whether teacher’s perspectives align with the values outlined in the national curricula. The results show that in the national curricula of Finland, ethics and social values are strongly concerned. According to the teachers, there are some distances between ideal values in curricula and what is actually happening. In Finnish curricula, although multiculturalism is highly considered there are still many debates related to minorities in religious education. The value of this study is to provide more understanding of diversity in religious education in liberal social context. There is more to be said by investigating other important elements, for instance, interviewing students, policymakers and experts and analyzing textbooks.

Session E2 (Wed, 10:00-12:00)

The transformation of what? RE teachers' development of topic specific PCK about religion and science

Tomas Widholm, Linköping University

Abstract

Teachers' knowledge of content is crucial, but also a challenge in as a comprehensive subject as Religious Education (RE). In 2011, a new topic was added to the RE syllabus of Swedish upper secondary education. This topic concern religion and science, and students are expected to learn about different views on the relationship between religion and science. Previous studies have shown that teachers claim 'religion and science' to be a difficult topic to teach and a great challenge for students to learn (Widholm, 2020; Widholm, 2023).

In this study I suggest that teachers understand 'religion and science' as a separate topic in the subject matter of RE, rarely integrated with other content during teaching. For that reason, I use the concept of topic specific PCK to understand teachers' knowledge about content and transformation. The content representation model (CoRe) is used to analyse teachers' development of a topic specific PCK about 'science and religion'.

Preliminary results indicate that the teachers' knowledge about content generally not include academic knowledge about 'religion and science'. Teachers in this study claims that 'religion and science' seldom have been included in their teacher training programs or addressed during in-service training. Instead, teachers draw upon content in students' textbooks and other teaching materials, like TV documentaries and media debates, as important for their own understanding.

Still early, a possible conclusion may be that lack of academic training has affected RE teachers' development of topic specific PCK about 'religion and science'. If valid, the question raises what is transformed to students to learn about 'religion and science in Swedish upper secondary RE?

In search of the good society: Ethics education in times of ecological crisis and climate crisis

Ole Andreas Kvamme, University of Oslo

Abstract

In this paper the aim is to contribute to the reimagining of ethics education in times of sustainability crises. The interest is theoretical, building an argument that is specified in a proposal for educational practices.

Traditionally ethics education, also referred to as moral education, has aimed at developing a sense of individual moral responsibility, placing the concern for the human other in the centre. While this emphasis should not be dismissed, individual actions are in the present embedded in societal structures and practices that often stand out as unsustainable. Here a solely individual responsibility falls short. The situation calls for approaches to ethics education that address a shared responsibility for bringing about necessary changes. As a consequence, ethics education necessarily also should involve a political dimension. In ethical theory such a turn makes the concern for the good society pivotal, alongside the quest for the morally right action.

As educational resources for such a reimagination of the good society, sustainability values embedded in United Nations conventions may be mobilized, there expressed as cosmopolitan claims. The values include the respect for human beings in the present and the future (including global justice and climate justice), the respect for the more-than-human (ecojustice) and the valuing of cultural, human and biological diversity (concerning epistemic injustice, among others). With reference to Levitas (2013), this activity may be conceived of as the practice of utopia as method (title of Levitas' work), carrying out an imaginary reconstitution of society, also opening up for the critique of unsustainable structures and practices in current society. In educational contexts where ethics education is carried out alongside religious education (like Norway and Sweden), resources from religions and worldview may also be brought into this critical-utopian ethics education.

The other as enemy or human being? An assessment of narratives of Israeli and Palestinian conflict

Håkan Bengtsson, Uppsala University

Abstract

How are Israelis and Palestinians respectively depicted in the historical narratives? The obvious answer would imply the depiction of the other as the enemy, related to violent struggle and war. A different inquiry pursues the problem of what is left out in the general narratives on both sides. Investigations show that textbooks in Israeli schools leave little space for the Palestinian trauma of 1948, the

Naqba. Likewise Palestinian textbooks tend to ignore the Holocaust and the persecution of Jews in Europe (Peled-Elhanan 2012). Thus, discussing the features which deliberately are left out of the general narratives will render a different perspective.

Focusing on vulnerability and traumatising of the other in the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, my presentation will suggest a perspective of paralleled narratives in relation to the concepts home, refugees, and diaspora. My presentation will compare these features and discuss narratives of loss and ambiguities which are rather mirrored than contradictory.

An obvious problem both in didactics and historical research on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is that historical events are used on both sides to support superiority or inferiority, respectively. No common history of the conflict has so far been presented in an academic context (Adwan, Bar-On & Naveh, 2012). A different approach in the classroom would be to focus on understanding the human conditions related to the paradigms of home, refugees and diaspora, rather than heroism and violent struggle. Such approach would likely foster identification rather than polarisation.

Peled-Elhanan, Nurit. *Palestine in Israeli School Books : Ideology and Propaganda in Education*, I. B. Tauris & Company, 2012

Side by Side: Parallel Histories of Israel-Palestine, Sami Adwan, Dan Bar-On, Eyal Naveh (eds.), Peace Research Institute in the Middle East, The New Press, 2012.

Who's Christianity – teachers' reflections on majority and minority in RE

Linda Jonsson, Mälardalen university; David Carlsson, Mälardalen University; Johan Liljeström, Högskolan Gävle; Peter Thalén, Högskolan Gävle

Abstract

In Sweden RE education aims to strengthen a sustainable pluralism and social cohesion through a comprehensive study of different religions. On the other hand, representations of religions are never neutral but shaped through certain perspectives. Such perspectives are more or less related to majority conceptions. Based on this, it becomes interesting to scrutinise what and who is represented and what is excluded in RE education. A particular responsibility rests on the teacher when it comes to rendering nuanced representations of religions.

In this study we take a closer look at how teachers in RE education reflect upon the relationship between the content, and the students in

the living classroom. In doing so we will examine RE-teachers approach to Christianity in relation to their students in the classroom. From such a perspective the didactic question of what is taught depends on the didactic question of who is taking part in the teaching at a given time. The student is also, like the teacher, an active subject in the teaching situation since their responses affect not only the teachers' actions, but also the teachers' relation to the chosen content and in this case the content of Christianity.

Our empirical data will be based on interviews with RE education teachers from different programs in upper secondary school about how they consider the subject, its content of Christianity and how this materialises in their teaching.

Session E3 (Wed, 10:00-12:00)

Otherring in Inclusive Models of RE

Oddrun M. H. Bråten, Norwegian University of Science and Technology

Abstract

How ‘othering’ happens in inclusive models of RE, was presented as a main finding in *Towards a Methodology for Comparative Studies in Religious Education* (Bråten 2013, p. 202-206), in an argument for the effectiveness of the suggested methodology. While inclusive ‘multifaith’ RE does create an educational space where integration could happen, this is not secured by the mere organization of educating all pupils together. Integrative RE (Alberts 2006) could also create an arena for construction of ‘otherness’. If so, it will counteract the said integrative function. I looked at how signs of construction of ‘otherness’ could be traced through levels of curriculum. At the societal level both English and Norwegian RE attempting inclusiveness through inclusive models, but what was meant by that differed somewhat. At the institutional level of formal curricula, it is a similarity that Christian religion is the main content, and thus other religions and worldview explicitly ‘othered’. At the same time aims of inclusion are also explicit at this level. At the instructional levels of the teachers, there is a distinct difference in the materials between English teachers, who are clear about a need to counter stereotypes of Christians as white, middle class and British, and Norwegian teachers who worded a need for immigrants to learn about “our” traditions, in their ‘learning to be Norwegian’ (see also Iversen 2012). This difference is mirrored at the experiential level, by pupil’s accounts. English pupils were clear that the aim of RE was to promote tolerance for ‘others’, while this was not clear for the Norwegian pupils. I argued that inclusiveness was imagined differently, reflecting nationally distinct discourses. In this paper I revisit my previous discussion about ‘othering’ while considering some recent developments in English and Norwegian RE, asking who are ‘othered’ now? And (how) can it be avoided?

A methodological turn in RE? The case for “learning how” to explore religion

Knut Aukland, OsloMet

Abstract

The methodological turn in RE refers to the growing interest in bringing academic methods and methodology into the core of public education about religion and worldviews. In short, to argue that students ought not just learn about religion, but also how they can explore and get knowledge about religion. This has also been referred to as a “methodology-oriented RE”. Comparing notes from debates and developments across Norway, Switzerland and England I make the case for a methodological turn in RE.

Bringing this new area of interest into an established conceptual language, I suggest we use the notion of “learning how” to explore religion to designate a third domain of learning, next to learning about and learning from. “Learning how” entails both knowledge and skills related to methods and methodology that learners can use to create knowledge and evaluate representations of religion. It has four components: (1) Knowledge about different academic methods and ways of getting knowledge. (2) The ability to create knowledge with academic methods adapted to the classroom and age group. (3) Understanding how methods and knowledge relate. (4) The ability to evaluate what kind of knowledge different methods would yield in relation to different questions.

To make the case for a methodological turn, I discuss the potential benefits of its inclusion to RE in relation to the challenge of teaching and being an expert teacher, establishing a disciplinary basis for RE, and the overall purpose of RE. A methodology-oriented RE also presents new challenges and questions to theory and practice: How do we meaningfully translate academic methodology to the classroom?

While there are different ways to argue for the inclusion of “learning how” to explore religion, I propose that RE should aim to inspire a lifelong curiosity in the field of religion and worldview.

Between confessional and religious studies education - good practices of education for understanding religion in Poland

Monika Humeniuk, University of Wrocław

Abstract

The White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue adopted in 2008 by the foreign ministers of the Council of

Europe member states, is considered a reference document on issues of democratic governance of

diversity. Its addressees include political decision-making centres, social organisations, religious

communities, the media, social partners, educational institutions and other national and

international institutions.

In 2014, based on the guidelines of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, recommendations for

the design and implementation of policies and education about religions and non-religious

worldviews in intercultural education were developed. The document is „Signposts - Policy and

Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious World Views in Intercultural Education”

(Strasbourg 2014). The publication is dedicated to, among others, teacher training centres and

educators across Europe.

The key issue here is to task educational institutions with organising education about religion and

non-religious beliefs, which would be different from forms of religious education aimed at educating

children and young people in a particular belief tradition. The model of religious studies education

recommended here would complement faith-based education and respond to the challenges of

religious and non-religious diversity and complexity. This kind of education requires specific

knowledge, skills and competences and involves the conscious development of imagination and

empathy. It is not enough to teach about the history of religion or about the external manifestations

of religion. Religious and intercultural understanding of religion cannot be limited to learning about

external forms, customs, practices or artefacts of religion and non-religion. What is needed here is a

sensitive understanding of the meaning of religion for its adherents. Thus, extensive inter-

institutional cooperation, as well as religious studies and pedagogical competences, are needed for

such a task. In this paper, I will present examples of good practice within Polish religious studies

education, i.e. education for understanding religion.

Session E4 (Wed, 10:00-12:00)

The 'otherification' of religion. What about existential issues as a didactical approach to be further explored in RE-education?

Karin Sporre, Umeå university; Christina Osbeck, Gothenburg university; Annika Lilja, Gothenburg university; Katarina Kärnebro, Umeå university; [DISCUSSANTS] Geir Skeie, University of Stavanger

Abstract

In 1969 'livsfrågor' (Eng. existential questions) were introduced in the Swedish RE-syllabus for compulsory school. This was part of a transformation of the RE-subject from having a confessional basis in Christianity to become a subject orienting about religions, ethics and 'livsfrågor'. This theme has since been part of the Swedish RE-subject, however its place and role in syllabi has varied throughout the years. The curricular change of the 1960s can be seen as part of a process of 'otherification' of religion that followed from a secular questioning of the societal role of the Church of Sweden and Christianity at large. The insertion of 'livsfrågor' represented an attempt to capture both the interest of students and open the RE-subject up to a new structure, additionally bringing objectivity and impartiality in. As it was not known what existential questions students posed, from the 1970s and into the early 2000s a series of investigations into children's pondering about life were undertaken. The studies were both quantitative in terms of numbers of students participating but also qualitative through the open questioning method used. In the research project *The Child and Curriculum. Existential Questions and Educational Responses* we have repeated parts of these earlier studies, re-analyzed archival data, and can compare students' existential questions over time. We have also inquired into the historic backgrounds of these earlier studies, interviewed Swedish teachers of today, and compared older and present-day Swedish RE-syllabi to syllabi of neighboring countries regarding the role of students' existential questions. Given a present-day 'otherification' of religion, religious beliefs and believers, the aim of this presentation is to raise a discussion of whether a reformulated focus on existential dimensions in RE education in line with the transformation of the 1960s could serve a didactical purpose in dialogue with contemporary discussions of RE-approaches and 'subjectification'.

Presentationer i vårt symposium:

Katarina Kärnebro: UMRe, Balil and Värdeprojektet – backgrounds and ideas.

Annika Lilja & Christina Osbeck: Swedish students' 'livsfrågor' over time. Teachers' responses and RE-responses. Are students' questions othered?

Karin Sporre: Swedish RE-syllabi on 'livsfrågor' from 1969 to 2021 in international comparison. 'Subjectification' today in a German and a new British RE-approach.