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Performative and Experiential Approaches to Art in Religious Education

An Empirical Project Based on Educational Design Research

In religious education (RE), learning by using art is highly important, especially because art promises experiential and performative learning processes. Astonishingly, the didactic approach in the teaching of religion is nevertheless often cognitive, verbal and discussion-oriented, as can be seen in the few empirical studies that have been done on art in religious learning processes (Brenne & Gärtner 2015). So far, there are no studies which systematically compare the different approaches to and teaching-learning settings of art in RE. The research project presented here aims to make a first contribution in this regard. To do this, different teaching-learning arrangements were designed, using the same Anastasis icon in each instance (cf. Fig. 2) and collecting and evaluating data on the respective learning processes and learning results in different age groups. The aim of the study is to develop local theories on the possibilities and opportunities for and obstacles to religious learning through the use of art, and to design concrete teaching-learning arrangements for working with art in religious education. In the process, performative and experience-oriented as well as subject-oriented ways of learning receive special attention. In RE in German-speaking countries, one often links these “ways of learning” to the hope that one can initiate experiences which learners can connect to religion or interpret in a religious way, in order to create a didactic reaction to the progressive loss of religious experience in young people. The rest of this article reflects critically on the extent to which performative and experience-oriented approaches to art can generate (religious) experiences in teaching-learning arrangements.

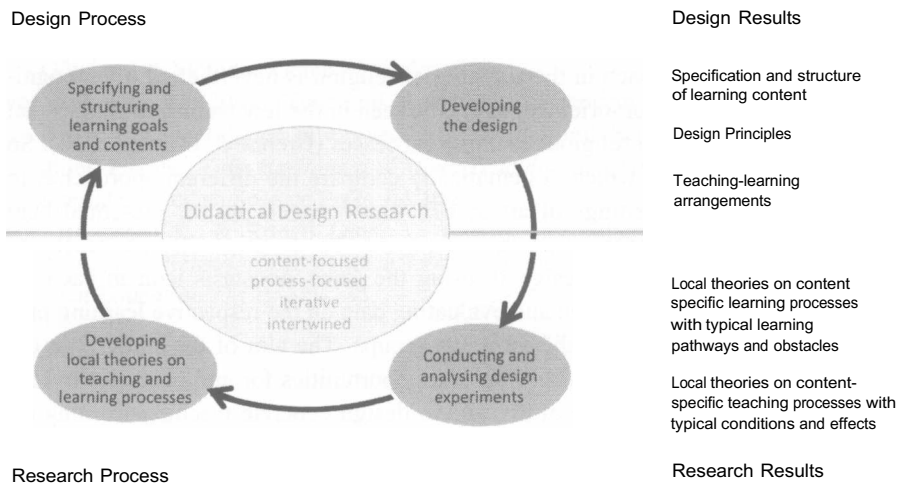
1 Methodological Approach: Didactical Design Research

The project is based on the fundamental principles of Didactical Design Research (DR) (cf. Fig. 1) as it has been developed in the German-speaking environment using the concept “Fachdidaktische Entwicklungsforschung” (Prediger & Link

2012; Einsiedler 2011) and in English-speaking countries with concepts such as “Educational Design Research”, “Design-based Research” or “Development Research” (Van den Akker et al. 2006, 4f.; McKenney & Reeves 2012, 17f.).

One can understand DR as decidedly theory-related and practice-oriented at the same time. “The ultimate aim is not to test whether theory, when applied to practice, is a good predictor of events. [...] Direct application of theory is not sufficient to solve those complicated problems” (Van den Akker 1999, 8f). Thereby, the challenging goal is two-fold: To promote didactical theory-building (cf. Fig. 1 bottom part) and at the same time develop concrete proposals for teaching-learning arrangements (cf. Fig. 1 upper part); therefore, conducting research and developing practice at the same time.

Fig. 1: Working Areas in Content-Focused Didactical Design Research



Legend: HuBmann & Prediger 2016, 35.

Despite the relatively diverse approaches in DR, one can detect certain common features (Van den Akker 2006, 5; Prediger et al. 2012, 453), which are briefly explained in the next section.

Responsively Grounded, Learning Ecology

The focus on the natural learning environment with its numerous variables, contexts and actors makes it possible to test and discuss interventions in a responsively grounded way as close to practice as possible. While design experiments are embedded in such a “learning ecology” (Cobb 2006), they are, however, not reproducible in a strict empirical sense. DR, however, claims to have “ecological validity” (Gravemeijer & Cobb 2006, 44), i.e., results have to be transparent and accountable

to the particular learning environment and offer consistent descriptions and local theories that can be adapted to other learning environments.

Interventionist

DR identifies problems that exist in practice, reflects on them theoretically, designs possible approaches to practice and puts them to the test. “Intervention” is “used broadly to encompass the different kinds of solutions that are designed [to] make a real change on the ground” (McKenney & Reeves 2012, 14). DR therefore comprises of an intervention in practice with a two-fold aim: on the one hand, to find solutions to problems (“utility-oriented”; Fig. 1 upper part) and, on the other hand, to assess the experiences made in the interventions and reflect on them on the level of theory-building (“theory-oriented”; Fig. 1 bottom part). In this sense, theory and practice are inseparably intertwined (Fig. 1 centre).

Iterative

The theoretical-practical research takes place in iterative cycles (cf. Fig. 1 centre). This implies, in the first place, several empirical tests, further development of research design and practical solutions, which are tested and assessed in different practical situations. The results of the particular cycles lead to the modification of teaching-learning arrangements and the research on these settings. In the second place, this also means continuous reflection on the theoretical basis and on the leading (local) theories, which are also modified during the iterative process of the research.

Process-Focussed

In the course of this research, the epistemological interest is not exclusively focused on improved learning results. This is because the sole observation of “improved” learning results still does not reveal much about how these results have come about and how learning processes should be structured to make this learning result more likely. DR therefore focuses equally on ways of learning and learning processes as on typically discernible processes, learning obstacles and learning opportunities. Therefore, the design principles have to be focused on the process as well (cf. Fig. 1 centre).

Content-Focussed

The current understanding of DR draws on the learning content (cf. Fig 1 centre), which is specified and structured from a didactic point of view. This didactic reconstruction is a multidimensional process which is oriented towards general and content-specific educational aims, teaching and learning theories and the perspectives of learners, as well as taking into account the subject field’s structure and logic. It also inquires after an appropriate sequencing in the acquisition of the learning

content. Usually, the design cycle starts with the specifying and structuring the learning goals and content (cf. Fig. 1 upper part).

Local Theory

If teaching and learning processes are oriented towards a specific learning content and towards a concrete context, “general” theories of teaching and learning are usually too unspecific in this regard. DR therefore formulates “local theories” (cf. Fig. 1 bottom part) which can be placed between “general” theories of teaching and learning and individual observations. DR develops local theories by comparing cases and discernible patterns within these, which can also be made plausible independently from the concrete context. In this sense, the results can then be regarded as valid (have “ecological validity”). Such local theories are developed in the current study by using an Anastasis icon with a view to the didactics of images, notions of the Resurrection and theologising with children and adolescents.

2 Cycle of Research: “Developing Own Notions of the Resurrection by Using an Anastasis Icon”

Essential for the current study is a form of DR as it was developed in the “Forschungs- und Nachwuchskolleg. Fachdidaktische Entwicklungsforschung zu diagnosegeleiteten Lehr-Lernprozessen” (FUNKEN) (=Research and Junior School. Didactical Design Research for diagnosis-driven teaching-learning processes) at the Technical University of Dortmund. This model is very explicitly content-focused (cf. Fig. 1 centre). In this model, the research process starts with the specification and structuring of learning content (cf. Fig 1 upper part).

Specifying the Learning Content and Learning Goals

The learning content in the present study is specified by “developing an own notion of Resurrection” and is regarded as a combination of a subject to be learned (“Resurrection”) and active working on the subject (“developing an own notion”) (Reis & Schwarzkopf 2015, 65-76). One can see from existing studies in religious education that children in primary school already have Christological conceptions as well as notions of the Resurrection (Butt 2009; Benz 2015; Link-Wieczorek & Weiland 2008; Gärtner & Pisarski 2013), but even when they are much more advanced, they cannot manage to conceptualise, from a theological perspective, the necessary interconnection between Christology, Soteriology and Eschatology in relation to the Resurrection (Butt 2009, 65; Büttner 2006 43f.; Ziegler 2006, 163; 495). The teaching-learning arrangement consequently has to offer the possibility, from a theological perspective, to link these dimensions in the learning process. In the process, such teaching-learning arrangements should in the first place be mindful of the systematic-theological plurality of notions regarding the Resurrection (Reis

2009). Secondly, the learning process does not aim at adopting (pluralistic) theological models, but it aims at designing learners' own notions of the Resurrection. It therefore concerns itself with the development of a design in which the prior knowledge in the form of individual notions of the Resurrection can be brought into contact with one another and with the Christian tradition, with the purpose of developing one's own, thought-through and sustainable constructions.

The selected icon of the Resurrection (cf. Fig. 2) illustrates Christ's descent into hell. On the left side he rescues Adam from death. Eva awaits him on the right side. Behind Adam, we can see King David, Solomon and Moses; behind Eva there are apostles. Jesus is standing on a sort of white cross that is built of the broken gates of hell. A broken lock and keys can be found on the ground as well. Thus, in the icon Jesus is presented as resurrected and victor of death.

Fig. 2: Icon of Resurrection by Anastasis



Legend: Russian icon, 16. Century, 131 x 104 cm, Ikonenmuseum Recklinghausen,

The icon is regarded as suitable from a theological point of view, because the soteriological and eschatological dimensions of the Resurrection are expressed in a complex way. Using an art work is regarded as suitable from a didactical point of view, because the ambiguity of images encourages the development of own interpretations, and their perceptibility enables sensual-aesthetical ways of access. The selected icon especially contributes to the creation of (new) interpretations of the Resurrection, because the motive of Christ's descent into hell represents an outer-biblical, largely unknown and not uncontroversial motive which could lead learners towards "sehendes Sehen"¹ (= 'seeing seeing') and accompanying reflections.

¹ Cf. for the distinction between "sehendes Sehen" (= "seeing seeing") and "wiedererkennendes Sehen" (= "recognising seeing") Imdahl 1996.

Developing and Conducting the Design

The design was developed in various cycles in accordance with the DR. In a first cycle, the learners were requested in small groups (3 groups of 3-4 children each, 3rd to 4th school year; 2 groups of 2 learners each, 9th school year) to express their notion of “Resurrection” by means of drawings and explanations (t1). Subsequently, they were faced with the icon of the Resurrection. The teacher was asked to focus on the three aspects of description, analysis and interpretation in a discussion-oriented access to the image. There was no further methodological input. As a result, the cycle followed the widespread didactic practice of interpreting images in religious teaching (Gärtner 2015b, 269f). The teacher saw herself mainly as a facilitator who had to guide the learners in a group discussion about the image. In this process, this learning phase links to theologising with children with the goal of obtaining their own co-constructions through investigation of the Christian tradition. Accordingly, the learners had to compare their own notions of the Resurrection with those of the icon and finally, where required, had to make a modified drawing of their own notion of the Resurrection (t2). The two images t1 and t2 served to collect data on the level of learning and possible progression in learning. The videotaped discussion during the lesson captured the discernible learning process.

In the second cycle in the primary school, a template guided the observation of the image in the first phase and focused on individual excerpts of the image before the learners were confronted with the entire image. In addition, stimulating questions were formulated for central points in order to encourage the learners to engage more intensively in a (theological) discussion about their individual notions of Resurrection amongst themselves and to restrain dominating learners. The teacher obtained concrete assistance when confronted with incorrect interpretations of the image as well as with bringing in the necessary background knowledge. All in all, however, this phase in the second cycle was also mainly open and followed the principles of children’s and youth theology. For the secondary school, the design of the first cycle was mainly maintained because of its positive results, and it was expanded to a joint class (9th school year; 15 learners). The modifications that took place here were mainly of a research-methodological nature. Because of the size of the group, not all the learners presented their notions of the Resurrection by means of t1 and t2, but only some of the written-down conceptions were presented as examples in front of the entire group. Written data for t1 and t2 by all the learners is available, and the entire lesson was captured on video.

In the third cycle, the method in the primary school was to replace the image on the template with a frozen image, a re-enactment of the scene (2 groups with 5 learners; 4th school year), which means that a non-verbal, more performative confrontation with the image was initiated. The further steps in the development and investigation mainly stayed the same structurally.

A fourth cycle is planned for learners with special needs.

Assessing the Design

The data was processed by means of transcriptions. The images that the learners created for t1 and t2 were put into writing by analysing the motives, compositions and colours and amending these with specific explanations of the images. The transcribed verbal data could be categorised with maxqda and enhanced with the data of the images. The assessment then resulted via a multi-step procedure of categorisation and codification (Schmidt 2005) with the aim to capture and systematise as many sets of texts as possible without losing sight of the concrete data material in the process. As a result, the selected approach resorts under the tradition of Grounded Theory (Kruse 2015, 391), but was modified, because the codification is more theory-driven. In the current study, the codification was generally understood as “the complex allocation of key concepts to text excerpts by means of which the interpretation of the text is made explicit – which the researcher thus opens up in the meaning of the text” (Kruse 2015, 379). In a first step, key aspects and dimensions from text passages were encapsulated in an open process of codification, and in a second step finer distinctive categories were created through systematic comparison. Through maxqda, one can always retrieve the original data. The open process of codification is at the same time informed by theoretical presuppositions (e.g., theologising, roles and functions of the teachers) which were complemented, modified and differentiated by the open codification. Therefore, it entails a deductive-inductive procedure (Kelle & Kluge 2010, 67). By synoptic comparison of these categories, they could be analysed further with the aim of identifying structures and patterns in the data material, which could possibly lead to new categories (Kelle & Kluge 2010, 59). Through a process of theoretical integration, the structures and patterns which were worked out in this way were then linked with educational theoretical discourses and converted into the construction of local theories. At the same time, evaluated educational design products relating to images could also be extrapolated from the results.

3 Key Results

Because the fourth cycle has not been finalised yet and because of the brevity of the current report, the next section focuses on initial results from the primary school, which I compare in certain instances with the results from the secondary school.

Learning Process

In the primary school, the learners tend to identify and interpret individual motives in the icon. The composition and interpretation of the image as a whole take a back seat against this. Especially learners with elementary biblical knowledge tend to do

“recognising seeing”², because they want to decode individual elements of the image (in isolation). In this way, a girl from the fourth grade who illustrated her own notions of the Resurrection by means of detailed sketches of biblical accounts of the Resurrection tried to decode the persons in the following way:

S: I once saw a film, and there was a Herod and a Pilate, and I believe, that's both of them. [...] And Jesus stands on a cross and that is Mary Magdalene or Mary [...]. But what I find very funny now is, who is holding Jesus' hand?

Often, children would also incorrectly discover the three wise men in the image. In its interpretation as a whole, however, the Anastasis icon largely does not lend itself to “recognising seeing”, because it neither deals with a known motive, nor does it deal with a biblical one. Therefore, this approach does not offer the learners easy access to the image. In the 9th grade, where “recognising seeing” is also predominant, the learners are, on the other hand, largely in a position to integrate the decoded individual elements into an overall interpretation of the image and in the process, as the case may be, transform their individual interpretations and interpret them anew within the context of the image as a whole. It is, however, the task of the teacher to guide the learners towards a consistent comprehensive interpretation and discourage (hasty) interpretations of the image.

In the primary school, on the other hand, Jesus' gestures prove to be the hermeneutic key to the interpretation of the image. This offers the learners options of anthropological interpretation (gestures of helping, saving), which can also be interpreted in a Christological way (salvation from death) and thus offer a key to the comprehensive interpretation of the image. In the case of an unguided introduction to the image, however, the possibility exists that the gestures may get lost in the wealth of details in the same way as when the focused method was used with the template. When the learners, however, have a performative experience of the frozen image, it opens up a comprehensive and impressionable access to the image.

S1: (Actress Angel): It looked like H. [girl that re-enacts Jesus] was not so absolutely more powerful, but a bit more of a friendly person to people [...].

S2: (Actress Jesus): For me, it felt like I would somehow be his salvation, to take him along with me, where he would feel well [...].

T: to S3 (Actor Adam): Do you feel saved, taken along?

S3: Ye ... no! Somehow it felt strange to kneel down, but somehow also like: Come along!

2 For the distinction between “seeing seeing” and “recognising seeing”, see note 1.

The spontaneous re-enactment of the gestures initiated by a school girl herself in an unguided introduction to the image had a similar interpretation. This also resulted in a conversation about the saving action of Jesus.

S1: When one is here above, then one treats someone in such a way, to come down to him. [Pause] And the other people are actually also here below and he [Jesus] has always actually tried to help other people and perhaps he actually tries here to bring up another person and to say to him, you are also important, also when you do not have a halo or have done nothing special on our life, because God loves all of you.

Access via the gestures and the constellation of the figures had an influence on the further interpretation of the image. After having performed the frozen image, the group of learners kept the constellation of the figures in mind amongst themselves – thus the children described the Jesus character as the “leader” of the scene as a whole, whereas the other persons were receiving or waiting. After some individual observations were analysed, the learners devoted themselves to the comprehensive interpretation on the teacher’s incentive.

T: What is happening in the picture now? [...]

S2: Yes, that Jesus is saying there: Come along, you are redeemed.

T: Redeemed of what?

S2: Adam after all also died once. That he is then simply saved from death and comes along with Jesus. [...]

S1: I think that it looks like that Jesus sort of saves those from death, because there are actually also the coffins, and I think, that those people are actually resurrecting, I say, and that Jesus sort of helps them to do that. [...] And I think, when that should be a stone here which reminds us of Jesus’ tomb, then it could also be that Jesus is also resurrecting here, because it actually says in the Bible that he, after his resurrection, met his disciples again. [...] That he is perhaps also already in heaven and then meet with all these people whom he – for example Adam and Eve.

S2: One could also think that this is a gate [points to a large stone] and when they enter through it, then they are in heaven.

Performative and experiential methods in this context therefore prove to be helpful for an anthropologically grounded and Christologically sensitive access to the image. The relevance of this for individual notions of the Resurrection for t2 will be discussed further below.

In contradistinction to this, attempts to explain and interpret the images brought in by the teacher during the lesson were almost without any discernible effect in the learning process and learning result. Largely unguided conversations in the teach-

ing situation in which the teacher mainly saw herself as a facilitator and relied on the interaction of the learners amongst themselves and with the image also proved to be not very productive for the learning process and learning result. Admittedly, interesting observations emerged through the entire process, as well as shorter children's theological conversations which, however, proved to be rather random, fluid and inconsistent. Thus, for example, within a short timespan a learner held three very different interpretations of the Resurrection, decidedly propounded in each instance. For t1, he drew two tombs, from one of which led a road to a heavenly city sketched with two houses in which Jesus, God and the other dead live on and can go for walks. For t2, he explained his sketch as follows:

S: Well, I imagine that the corpses arise, dig themselves out, and walk up the stairs. But it could also be that the corpses are sucked up through a tunnel. I have again drawn Jesus' cross here. And then he is put into the tomb here. He is actually put into a tomb that is closed with a huge stone. The Jesus flies as a Spirit from Golgotha to heaven. And then he is with God.

In the conversation during the lesson, on the other hand, he was skeptical about the interpretation that the dead go up into heaven:

S: I don't picture it in that way, because heaven ... It could be, but it is not likely, it is more likely that there are only meteorites in heaven and planets such as Saturn.

In addition, verbally gifted learners usually tend to formulate their individual observations and interpretations selectively and by leaps and bounds, and partly dominate the conversation by monologues. This could possibly be based on the fact that particular children's notions of the Resurrection exclusively emerge in particular groups of children, but then cumulatively, for example, the notion that the moon is the active power in the resurrection of the dead.

These first results explain the key role of the teacher, who cannot simply remain in a facilitating role. This becomes clear in the interaction between the teacher and the learners. Confirmation by means of praise for further observations made of the image frequently proved to be crucial. If one decidedly positive acknowledgement by the teacher fails to materialise, because she rather collects contributions and facilitates the conversation process, the observations of the learners are often not pursued further, but new interpretations come into play. In this way, the learners repeatedly replace the relevant observation that Jesus is on a cross and Adam is kneeling on a coffin by new and partly very associative interpretation attempts, without these attempts making any further contribution to the process of awareness.

This is also revealing with regard to the way in which the teacher deals with incorrect interpretations. As such, they are afraid to definitely describe learners'

statements as “incorrect”. In other studies, there is also a highly documented opinion that in the case of images, there are no incorrect interpretations (Gärtner 2015a, 105). Nevertheless, numerous incorrect interpretations emerged in the observed lessons, especially regarding the identification of the people (apostles as the three wise men, Jesus as an angel, Eve as Mary with child or as a boxer with red gloves, et cetera). Apart from that, three types of reactions in the teachers could be observed: ignoring or accepting; offering other suggestions for the interpretation; and correcting. The first reaction often led to dead-end interpretations which did not go any further, or to wild guesses. The alternative suggestions for interpretation offered by the teachers were mostly ignored or rejected by the learners, as underscored by the following dialogue.

T: Can you also imagine that the picture shows that Jesus is already dead, that Jesus has already died?

S: (all): No! [...]

T: So, for you it is not at all possible that Jesus is already dead and that he arose again?

S: (all): No!

On the other hand, they willingly accepted the appreciatively formulated corrections and could mostly incorporate these productively in the further process of interpretation. A teacher corrected incorrect identification of the persons as follows:

T: I now give you additional information. Both these persons who are kneeling are Adam and Eve.

S1: (enthusiastically): So, that is Eve and that is Adam. Then that could be God.

S2: But God does not like Adam and Eve anymore, because they have eaten this, this apple.

T: What could this mean?

S2: That he has forgiven them again?

T: (softly) Ah. If you apply this to the Resurrection?

S1: That he has given them life again.

If one therefore methodically compares the differently structured learning arrangements with one another, the setting oriented towards a mainly verbal, dialogically open interpretation of the image according to the three-step method of description, analysis and interpretation in the primary school makes the learning process less productive, especially in the cycles which are not guided by the teacher. Children’s theological conversations quite rarely come about through this type of openness; they fizzle out without the support of the teacher, or are dominated by the verbally stronger learners, during which the other learners partially tune out.

The introduction to the image by means of the template makes it possible to focus on individual excerpts from the image and describe them in more detail. The motivation, especially by moving and gradually discovering the image is high, but subsequently the problem to transfer individual interpretations of motives to the interpretation of the image as a whole remained. The learners in the primary school were often not able to do this.

On the other hand, the performative re-enacting of Jesus' saving gesture offers a hermeneutical key to the learners with which they can obtain anthropological and partially Christologically informed access to the image and the topic respectively. Because of this, at least the top-performing learners were in a position to expand their own notions of the Resurrection and to ground them in a Christological way, as can be seen when looking at the learning results in the next section.

Learning Gains

For methodological reasons, one can only partially ascertain the concrete learning gains from the available results, especially because the data collection in the first cycle for t2 was not yet structured enough and had to be partly curtailed for lack of time. The following four types of learning gains, however, can be seen in the primary school. A few learners acquired expansion and differentiation in their notions of the Resurrection, whereby the icon proved to be extremely positive. Thus the above-mentioned learner who saw Jesus in the frozen image gave her notions of the Resurrection for t1 as follows (cf. Fig. 3: t1): From the graves, a light takes the souls into heaven. These people are happy there (heart), because they are saved in heaven and for example do not have any pain anymore. The bodies by implication stay in the graves. The caption of the image is "God also watches over the people from heaven". For t2, she expanded this notion in a Christological way and in the process also drew on the icon with regard to its composition (cf. Fig. 3: t2).

Fig. 3: Student's (female, 9 years) drawings of Resurrection

Drawing at t1

Drawing at t2

Jesus comes to the cemetery on a cloud, takes along the dead who are floating on the clouds and, according to the girl, subsequently enters with them through the gate of heaven. The heaven, filled with yellow light, has the circular inscription “Gate of Heaven as Salvation to the Light”. A second group of learners rather expanded their own notion by additions and not by closer substantiation through individual motives of the icon; especially angels or crosses were integrated. A third group obtained detailed knowledge of the Christian notion of the Resurrection without, however, integrating this into their own notions. A fourth group carried out a change in conception for t2 without it being fundamentally linked to the learning process. Thus a learner drew for t1 how a dead person is taken from hell into heaven by a glistening light (cf. Fig 4: t1). For t2, he depicted Jesus on the cross and who is taken down by an angel and – according to his explanation – resuscitated. Subsequently the angel bums down the cross (cf. Fig. 4: t2), in order to erase bad memories.

Fig. 4: Student's (male, 9years) drawings of Resurrection

Drawing at t1

Drawing at t2

One can only assume that the Christological centre of the icon has led the boy from the resurrection of the dead to the notion of the Resurrection of Jesus. The individual motives in the image, however, remain unexplained.

In this regard, it is interesting to compare the learning gains in the 9th grade. Here, only a few learners expanded or modified their previous notions; especially the fundamental notions (resurrection of the soul, rebirth, no resurrection) remained consistent – one learner, however, changed from “I cannot imagine that dead people rise again, when they were really dead” to “I can still not imagine it completely, but I believe that there is a division between soul and body. That the soul lives on is to me much more realistic than the fact that the body ‘lives on’.” Certainly the confrontation with the icon led many learners to a multi-perspectival consideration of the Resurrection and in this context also to a thought-through consideration of their own position – which the learners pointed out as decidedly positive. “By

means of different viewpoints, however, new viewpoints can also come about, that means, this work inspired me to reflect but also inspired doubt and new trains of thought.” “The image helped me, because in this way one has to observe and interpret each aspect of the image carefully. Therefore I engaged more closely with deliberation of the Resurrection.”

4 Local Theory-Building

Transforming the results into theory-building takes place within the context of DR, as local theories with limited scope and oriented towards the specific learning content and the concrete context of the tested teaching-learning arrangement. Within the context of the current contribution, one can only give a forecast here as to which local theories could be developed from the available results.

1. The work with the frozen image and the gestures in the image can reveal the relevance of performative experiential-oriented access to images, delimited locally. Especially, however, because performative learning has such an effect on the further interpretation of the image, it is meaningful that the experience initiated by bodywork also aims at key dimensions of the learning content. With this, the current study in this regard emphasises the “general” teaching and learning theories according to which aesthetic and performative learning by means of images initiates holistically oriented religious learning processes and contributes to initial empirical reflection on a performative didactics of religion (Dressler et al. 2012; Riegel & Fricke 2011).

2. On the other hand, one can more clearly differentiate the widespread assumption in the didactics of religion that aesthetic learning by means of images opens up mild participation in the discussion during lessons, because all learners could contribute with their individual observations. In child and youth theology, working with art is therefore afforded greater importance (Kalloch 2014, 2015; Buntfuß & Feind 2008) in order to offer alternatives to the approach in the didactics of religion which is criticised as usually being too verbal and cognitive (Grümme 2014, 2013; Kammeyer 2012, 208). In phases of open discussion about the image, however, learners with strong verbal skills prove to be dominating; their observations and interpretations are often defining for the learning process of the entire group and eclipse other subjective interpretations. Also, there were definitely learners who could or would not express themselves about the image and in one case even cried because of this. The study could show how difficult working with images can escape the verbally and cognitively dominating structures of religious education, precisely because subject-oriented and performatively oriented approaches in religious education should at all times be done reflectively. Images thus always offer child and youth theology links to subject-oriented and non-verbal settings and interventions; but these are to be balanced out more precisely in their relation to processes using verbal methods.

3. Images are often used in the didactics of religion as (silent) initial stimuli or – increasingly – also as main medium with the aim to initiate subject-oriented learning processes. Especially the analyses of the discussions in the lessons emphasise the important role of the teachers who did not limit themselves to a facilitating function, but particularly extended their contribution in order to stimulate the process. Input which corrects and informs, and also challenging stimuli by the teacher actually do not prohibit subject-oriented learning processes, but frequently open up initial and new options for interpretation to the learners. A further analysis of the available data aims to characterise the supporting and helpful teacher interventions and reformulate them in connection with the use of images in religious education. Because the role of the teacher in the didactics of images has up to now not been properly taken into consideration (Burrichter 2015; Leonhard 2015) one can derive productive research gains for teacher education from the available results.

4. The study could undertake an initial typecast of the possible learning gains through the use of icons and therefore contribute to the capturing of data about learning gains through the use of images, which has hardly been researched up to now. As a result of this, one can determine the function and effect of images in religious education more specifically. Icons thus mainly contribute to the amendment and development of an own notion of the Resurrection in the context of primary schools. The learners get to know aspects of the Christian notion of the Resurrection by means of the image. Some learners adopt or integrate this into their previously rather rudimentary or fragile notions of the Resurrection, and because of this some undergo a total change of conception.

On the other hand, in the 9th grade, the introduction of the images generally did not lead to (selective) expansion or transformation of learners' own notions of the Resurrection. The icon rather led them to differentiated acquaintance with the Christian tradition and thought-through examination of their own position. Schwarzkopf has established on an empirical basis that such a multi-faceted structured observation of notions of the Resurrection is indispensable for a thought-through and appropriate understanding of the Resurrection (Schwarzkopf 2016). Using the icon has therefore contributed to the acquisition of essential receptive and hermeneutic premises in this regard.

Further studies will have to investigate the extent to which these results can also be transferred to other motives in images and thus also the extent to which age-specific statements about the function and effect of images can be made.

5 Religious Experience through Art?

The frozen image, the re-enactment of Jesus' gesture, seems to be a promising approach with theological potential. Especially in comparison to the other teaching-learning arrangements the performative and experience-oriented approach proves to be helpful. The body-related experiences brought about by the frozen image fo-

cussed the learners' attention on the anthropological and soteriological centre of the icons. The learners repeatedly reverted to these experiences in the further course of instruction. Subsequently, the learners were in the position – to various degrees – to interpret these experiences in an anthropological or soteriological way. A few learners subsequently converted this interpretation of the experiences into their own post-mortem conceptions. From this, one can – in view of the small sample – cautiously infer that performative methods for opening up art can, in comparison to cognitive approaches, initiate experiences which could be converted more intensely into theological interpretations. One cannot infer from the results the extent to which the learners themselves interpret these as religious experiences. The question also remains whether this should be the goal of RE, or whether the focus should not rather be much more – as aimed at in the current teaching-learning arrangements – primarily on the (multi-perspective) interpretation of experiences. These, however, are further theoretical questions addressed to the concept of initiating religious experiences in teaching, which, in conclusion, one can only mention here.

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