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GOTTFRIED ADAM

Religious Education teacher: profession -person -competence

When studying Protestant Religious Education students are exposed to the full breadth and scope of Protestant theology and religious education. This encounter allows them to integrate their own religiosity and spirituality, their theological views and experiences with Religious Education.¹

The goal of their studies is to acquire the theological and educational competence required to teach Religious Education. This necessarily includes developing an individual theological position, finding a conceptual clarity in terms of religious didactics, and establishing a professional self-concept. Developing such a self-concept as a teacher of Religious Education is the key to the success of their studies. It is created in

¹ To the article overall see R. Lachmann, Einführung in den Beruf einer Religionslehrkraft, in: id. / R. Mokrosch / E. Sturm (eds.), Religionsunterricht. Orientierung für das Lehramt, Göttingen 2006, 13-49 and 353-357 (graph); B. Dressler, Religionslehrerinnen und Religionslehrer, in: M. Wermke / G. Adam / M. Rothgangel (eds.), Religion in der Sekundarstufe II. Ein Kompendium, Göttingen 2006, 97-118. On the discussion of pedagogy: J. Baumert / M. Kunter, Stichwort: Professionelle Kompetenz von Lehrkräften, in: ZfE 9 (2006), 469-520; E. Terhart, Didaktik, Stuttgart 2009, 71-88; A. Feindt et al. (eds.) Lehrerarbeit - Lehrer sein. (Friedrich Jahresheft 28), Seelze 2010.

engaging with theological and academic questions, considering the profile of their future profession, and reflecting their own life story and religiosity.

Religious Education as it is taught today belongs to the rich Christian educational tradition. A high esteem for learning has characterised Christianity from its beginnings. This fact is exemplified by both the early Church and the Reformation.²

1. Looking at history: Christian appreciation of education

That Jesus himself acted as a teacher “is among the central aspects of his activities as described in the Gospels. There can be no doubt that this unanimous testimony preserves memories of his actual deeds.”³ He travelled and taught mainly in Galilee, assembling a circle of disciples and interpreting the Torah. In his lifetime, he was addressed as ‘teacher’ (cf. Matthew 8:19 et al. and John 1:38: διδάσκαλε). Clearly, listeners were impressed by his teaching (cf. Mark 6:2 f. and Luke 2:51

² B. Schröder, Vom Ursprung und Wandel des Religionslehrer-(leit)bildes im Christentum, in: id. / H.H. Behr / D. Krochmalnik (eds.), Was ist ein guter Religionslehrer? (Religionspädagogische Gespräche zwischen Juden, Christen und Muslimen 1), Berlin 2009, introduces exemplary teachers as role models in the history of Christianity.

³ J. Schröter, Jesus als Lehrer nach dem Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments, in: ZPZ 53 (2001), 107-115, here 107.

f.) Omerzu specifically speaks of Jesus' 'didactics' characterised by specific rhetorical devices, brevity and liveliness.⁴

Further developments show that the close association of faith and learning continued to be characteristic of Christianity. During the Reformation, the question gained a new urgency in view of the interest in a universal provision for education in general as well as for Religious Education in particular. The era's radical departure from past structures allowed education to flourish, evidenced by the foundation of many new universities and schools. The church reformers also assumed that every Christian had the right, and by extension, should have the ability to read the Bible and possess the necessary fundamental knowledge to arrive at an independent judgement in matters of faith. This is the idea behind Luther's catechism. It makes religious education a foundational dimension and key element of Protestant identity.

It is in this context that we must also consider the role of modern-day Religious Education teachers. Both general and religious education require people to impart them. Without a teacher, no truly significant learning can take place. That raises the question: What makes a good teacher? Traditionally, the answer to that question⁵ was sought through assembling ideal personality traits and enumerating the virtues expect-

⁴ H. Omerzu, Art. Jesus als Lehrer, in: LexRP 1, 2001, 909 - 911.

⁵ Examples in G. Adam, Art. Religionslehrer: Beruf and Person, in: id.

ted of religion teachers. But the empirical turn of religious education has resulted in more evidence-based research into the role of teachers.⁶ Since the mid-1980s a theory of professionalisation has been developed. The current debate on the professionalism of teachers of Religious Education is based on a mixture of empirical data and normative demands. Empirical research here mainly serves to ‘ground’ normative considerations by testing their effectiveness.⁷

2. Theological-educational competence

The current state of the debate regarding expectations of teachers of Religious Education is condensed in the ‘Recommendations of the joint Commission to Reform Theological Studies’.

2.1 Definition – Structure – Requirements

In the Recommendations the following general key competence of teachers of Religious Education is defined:

/ R. Lachmann (eds.), *Religionspädagogisches Kompendium*, sixth edition Gottingen 2003, 163 f. A clear example is H. Kittel, *Der Erzieher als Christ*, third edition Göttingen 1961.

⁶ See the presentation in R. Hofmann, *Religionspädagogische Kompetenz*, Hamburg 2008, 153 - 159 and 162 - 170.

⁷ Cf. A. Scheunpflug, *Qualitätsstandards für Religionslehrkräfte - Anfragen an die Traditionen?*, in: B. Schröder / H. H. Behr / D. Krochmalnik (eds.), *Was ist ein guter Religionslehrer?*, 221 - 244.

“Theological-Educational competence means the totality of the professional abilities and skills necessary, the willingness and ethical attitudes that are required of a religion teacher and that allow him or her to deal constructively with the complexity of their professional work situations, i.e. to be capable of independent didactic action. This capability necessarily includes the development of a reflexive ability to distance oneself, as well as a rich repertoire of action options that allows teaching and learning processes to succeed in practice.”⁸

This definition is more specifically defined by a division into five fields comprising twelve separate subordinate competences. Account is also taken of the fact that Protestant Religious Education takes place in the context of a public educational system and is integrated into the school environment.⁹ The Recommendations therefore not only address competences that are required for classroom work, but also the entire spectrum of professional tasks a teacher of Religious Education will encounter in the school environment. This illustrates

⁸ Kirchenamt der EKD (ed.), *Theologisch-Religionspädagogische Kompetenz. Professionelle Kompetenzen und Standards für die Religionslehrerbildung* (EKD-Texte 96), Hannover 2008, 16. - The structural model on p. 22.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 28 - 38. The text also contains associated standards in theology and religious education for the course of studies as well as practical vocational standards for traineeship (Referendariat) and the introductory phase on the job. The areas of competence and partial competence are reprinted above in the article by Hartmut Lenhard, *Stages of training for teachers of Religious Education*.

the importance of understanding the profession of a teacher of Religious Education not solely in terms of a ‘specialist in religious instruction’, but through a continuing focus on the act of teaching, educating and aiding the development of the whole person.

In the profile that the German Permanent Conference of Ministers of Education (KMK) published for teaching Religious Education,¹⁰ the same competences are emphasised, only divided into the following seven categories:

- 1) Knowledge of the subject
- 2) Ability to reflect on one’s person and role
- 3) Perception and diagnostic skills
- 4) Theological-didactic competence development
- 5) Ability to design teaching and learning processes
- 6) Dialogue and discourse competence
- 7) School development expertise.

These recommendations demonstrate awareness of current changes in school and society and draw the appropriate

¹⁰ Sekretariat der KMK, Landergemeinsame inhaltliche Anforderungen für die Fachwissenschaften und Fachdidaktiken in der Lehrerbildung, Beschluss i. d. F. vom 16. 10.2008. In opposition to the five areas of competence in the Joint Commission here as No. 1 the Knowledge of the subject is added and the ability to design teaching and learning processes is split into two areas (Theological-didactic competence development and the ability to design teaching and learning processes).

consequences for the professional requirements and the training of teachers of Religious Education.

2.2 Specific competences

- 1) Knowledge of the subject refers to the theological knowledge needed for teaching the required curricular content of Religious Education. It is important in preparing teachers of Religious Education to take into account the differences in curricular and professional requirements which are necessary for the various school forms in the German education system. A diversification of academic training is the only way to ensure an optimal preparation for their future professional lives (→ see below section 5.1).
- 2) The ability to reflect on one's person and role addresses the teacher's personality.¹¹ The key issue here is the development of a professional self-concept. The psychological term self-competence is often used to describe this. Individual religiosity and the personal relationship to the Protestant Confession and Church play an important role in the process of acquiring this self-concept. Indeed, the importance of the teacher's individual values and worldview is arguably greater in Religious Education than in any other

¹¹ Kirchenamt der EKD (ed.), *Theologisch-Religionspädagogische Kompetenz*, 28 f.

school subject. Further aspects also need to be addressed in the context of self-reflective competence.¹² These include formative experiences, motivations, psychological and educational beliefs, and basic pedagogical attitudes and values (e. g. on human nature, respect, openness and emotional engagement).

- 3) The perception and diagnostic skills¹³ refer to the ability to access and relate to the religious background and life, as well as the experiences and attitudes of pupils on the basis of both empirical data and individual observation. Further, it means being able to diagnose individual scholastic progress and integrating these diagnoses into the planning of learning processes that both support and challenge the pupils. Religious education to date has mainly looked at religion in biographical contexts. With regard to pedagogical diagnostics and evaluation, as well as the evaluation of skill levels, however, much work remains to be done.
- 4/5) Theological-didactic competence development and the ability to design teaching and learning processes cover three main aspects: the acquisition of theological and

¹² J. Baumert / M. Kunter, Stichwort, 469-520, list besides (1) professional knowledge (comprises of pedagogic knowledge, subject knowledge, pedagogic knowledge, organisational knowledge, consulting knowledge) additionally (2) knowledge on conviction and values, (3) motivational orientations and (4) self-regulative skills as parts of the professional competence of teachers.

¹³ Kirchenamt der EKD (ed.), Theologisch-Religionspädagogische Kompetenz, 19 and 34 f.

didactic knowledge appropriate to the school type and age-group addressed, rendering the curricular themes of Religious Education accessible to the pupils, and designing, implementing, and evaluating learning processes.¹⁴ Classroom teaching is the core of the religion teacher's professional life. In their academic studies, students of religious education must address these competences by developing - at least to a degree - their own theological position and didactic stance.

- 6) Dialogical and discourse competence embraces both the ability to enter into interdenominational and interreligious dialogue and cooperation, and the ability to participate in discourse on religious issues.¹⁵ The religious demographic situation has changed in Germany through reunification, immigration and shrinking birth rates. Therefore, Religious Education in school must deal with the question of how *people* who belong to different religions and have different worldviews interact with each other (see article Christian Grethlein, Interreligious topics).
- 7) School development competence refers to the ability to contribute to change and improvement within the school system. As individual schools are increasingly allowed greater liberty to develop their own profiles, it is important to uphold the place of Religious Education as part of a well-

¹⁴ Ibid., 18, 30 ff.

¹⁵ Ibid., 20, 37.

rounded general education and the relevance of the Christian concept of humankind for the education of young people today.¹⁶

An important part of the future school development is the formation of a specific ‘group of subjects’ which will include Protestant and Catholic Religious Education, together with the subjects of Ethics / Philosophy / Norms and Values, and Jewish and Islamic Religious Education.¹⁷ This, too, requires the active involvement of teachers of Religious Education. Finally, there is the matter of contributing to school culture and extracurricular activities and enhancing the religious dimension of the school (e. g. through rituals, school atmosphere, holidays, celebrations, and worship). This extends even to school chaplaincy, which is increasingly in demand (see above article by Michael Wermke, Religion in school outside Religious Education).

2.3 Interim reflection

This overview of the competences required of Protestant religion teachers demonstrates the requirement profile in its

¹⁶ Ibid., 19 f., 36.

¹⁷ This was already suggested by EKD in 1994, cf. EKD-Kirchenamt (ed.), *Identität und Verständigung. Eine Denkschrift*, Gütersloh 1994, 79.

entire width. In this context, it must be remembered that the acquisition of these competences can and must be divided between the first, academic stage of teacher training and the second, practical stage (which, in Germany, has an institutionalized form for the first two years after the completion of the academic training, with practical and theoretical parts, the so-called *Referendariat*) (see article Hartmut Lenhard, *Stages of training for teachers of Religious education*). In the following, I will address a few selected issues in more detail.

Recent empirical research has shown the surprisingly great importance of subject-specific didactics for successful teaching. These didactical competences are addressed in several chapters of the present volume (see below Martin Rothgangel, *Religious competencies and educational standards for religion*).

The fact that Religious Education is confronted with opposing expectations and demands is addressed briefly below at the beginning of the article by Gottfried Adam and Martin Rothgangel, *What is 'good' Religious Education?*¹⁸ Rainer Lachmann also deals with the question of what motivates students to choose teaching Religious Education as their vocation.¹⁹

¹⁸ Those interested in studying this in more detail are referred to the instructive article by R. Lachmann, *Einführung*, esp. 20-23 and, regarding specifically the East German situation, esp. 24-30 (in cooperation with R. Hoenen).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 14-17 and 353 (graph).

Here, we will look at three questions that are of particular interest regarding the understanding of the religion teacher's professional role and his or her self-concept. These are:

- First, the legal framework within which Religious Education is taught and its institutional relationship to the church;
- second the issue of theological clarification and conceptual clarity in the theory of religious education; and
- third the dimension of personal relationships in its significance for the teaching profession.

3. The legal framework for Religious Education

To arrive at a professional self-concept as a religion teacher in Germany, it is central to understand the constitutional context and educational justification of Religious Education as part of general education, and to be able to stand up for that position in the school and in public discourse.

Religious Education takes place in schools that perform public functions, as state schools and as schools sponsored by churches or other sponsors. This binds them to a specific, legally codified framework that extends to the tasks of teachers of Religious Education. It determines the conditions of their employment and limits them in some regards, but also opens possibilities that form the foundation of successful religious learning. Compared to other school subjects, the status of

Religious Education is determined by a number of specific legal requirements which are discussed below.

3.1 The constitutional context

Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the German Basic Law guarantees the provision of Religious Education as a regular school subject:

“Religious instruction shall form part of the regular curriculum in state schools, with the exception of non-denominational schools. Without prejudice to the state's right of supervision, religious instruction shall be given in accordance with the tenets of the religious community concerned. Teachers may not be obliged against their will to give religious instruction.”²⁰

These provisions must be interpreted with reference to the 'freedom of faith' and the promise of 'undisturbed practice of religion' guaranteed in Article 4 of the German Basic Law. In the sense of a 'positive freedom of religion', Religious Education enables pupils to make active use of these rights (for more details, see above Gottfried Adam / Rainer Lachmann, *Reasons for Religious Education in Public Schools*, section 5,1).

²⁰ www.btg-bestellservice.de/pdf/80201000.pdf.

3.2 The institutional context

As a regular school subject, Religious Education has a firm place in the school curriculum. It is taught in the context of regular school lessons, during school hours, and not as an extracurricular activity. It further partakes in the educational mission of the school beyond the narrow scope of individual subjects, addressing the pupil as a whole person and providing a unique contribution through the contents it addresses (communicating the Gospel, the religious dimension of human existence). It is this institutional context of the school that gives Religious Education in school its specific profile.

The status as a regular school subject also necessitates grading the pupils' academic work in Religious Education, with the grades potentially affecting their promotion and scholastic careers. Thus, the assessment must be conducted in accordance with the usual school grade canon. Therefore, grades in Religious Education must not be understood as a judgement of a pupil's 'state of faith', but solely as an evaluation of their academic performance.

In keeping with Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the German Basic Law, Religious Education is taught 'in accordance with the tenets of the religious community concerned' (for more detail, see G. Adam / R. Lachmann, Reasons. Section 5.2). This means that Religious Education is provided by the state in cooperation with the religious communities. The state school system is responsible for the external organisation, the

provision of teaching staff, for curricula and authorised teaching materials. The cooperation and involvement of the churches is necessary because defining religious content is beyond the remit of government agencies.

This arrangement ensures that Religious Education cannot be understood as privileged catechetical instruction in the classroom for the benefit of the Churches. Rather, its task is to support the development of the pupil's personality by introducing religion and faith as an essential dimension of human life. Religious Education has a share in the general task of the school and its educational mission (see above Friedrich Schweitzer, Religious education as a task of the school). In this sense, the Protestant Church in Germany considers itself to be “sharing the responsibility to ensure that the question of humans and their responsibility for the world is heard in the school.”²¹

3.3 Freedom of instruction

The qualification held by the majority of teachers of Religious Education is a government-administered exam for the subject of ‘Protestant Religious Education’. Like their colleagues holding analogous qualifications for other subjects, they are

²¹ Decision of the 4. EKD-Synod on religious education as a regular subject at public schools, in: EKD-Kirchenkanzlei (ed.), *Die evangelische Kirche und die Bildungsplanung*, Gütersloh / Heidelberg 1972, 104.

usually civil servants or salaried employees of the federal state, municipality, or another educational provider.

While it is legally required that Religious Education is offered, no individual may be forced to teach it. Just as pupils (or their legal guardians) are free to choose whether or not to attend Religious Education in accordance with Article 4 of the Basic Law, no teacher may be forced to teach the subject against his or her will. This is to safeguard freedom of religion for the teaching staff. Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the Basic Law specifically states that “teachers may not be obliged against their will to give religious instruction.” This has been adopted verbatim or analogously in all constitutions of federal states of Germany that were enacted before the unification in 1991.

4. Religion teachers, the church, and lived religion

The double reference of Religious Education to both state and church means that, besides the role of the state as the educational authority and employer of the majority of teachers, the Church continues to play an important role.

4.1 Certification as an expression of co-responsibility

The most striking expression of this co-responsibility is the necessity for teachers of Religious Education to hold both a

state certification and a Church permit to teach (the *vocatio* for Protestant teachers of Religious Education, the *missio canonica* for Catholic teachers).

Permission is generally granted by the Church organisations responsible for the respective federal state. The Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) has stated that “the importance of issuing a specific permit to teach Religious Education by the religious communities (*vocatio*)” in their view lies in “establishing a bond of trust between the teacher and the religious community to ensure that Religious Education is taught in accordance with its tenets”²².

The Churches support religion teachers in their professional lives by offering counselling, networking opportunities, training courses, conferences and publications, and a broad range of activities through their respective institutions dedicated to Religious Education (i.e., *Religionspädagogische Institute* and *Pädagogisch-Theologische Zentren*).

4.2 Teachers of Religious Education and lived religion

In the past, Church certification was viewed very critically in part. Recent empirical studies from Lower Saxony and Baden-

²² Position on questions of constitutional law regarding religious education of July 7, 1971. Reprinted in: EKD-Kirchenkanzlei (ed.), *Die evangelische Kirche und die Bildungsplanung*, Gütersloh / Heidelberg 1972, 126.

Wuerttemberg suggest that this is changing.

“Especially the *vocatio* is increasingly understood as an aid (an expression of encouragement and promise of support) and foundation of a relationship of mutual trust [...] In any case, it must be remembered that Protestant religion teachers are not subject to any Church authority concerning their teachings, but - through their particularly well-qualified theological training - participate in the general priesthood of the believers. The majority of teachers of Religious Education, aware of this fact, are happy to request and receive the *vocation*.”²³

Thus, the image of role conflict and a tense relationship with the Church, which had been created by studies in the 1970s and 1980s has been corrected on the basis of sound data. The current situation between teachers of Religious Education and the Church can be described as a symbiotic-constructive relationship. This does not imply, that “the religion of Religious Education is changing into a pattern of ‘church inside the school’,” while on the other hand, the religion of Religious Education is not a “religion without church”²⁴. The

²³ B. Dressler, *Religionslehrerinnen*, 113.

²⁴ A. Feige et al., “Religion” bei Religionslehrerinnen, Münster 2001, 460 f. - The relation church - school has in another study been overall understood as symbiotic-constructive, practiced in a state of friendly openness (A. Feige / W. Tzscheetzsch, *Christlicher Religionsunterricht im religionsneutralen Staat? Unterrichtliche Zielvorstellungen und religiöses Selbstverständnis von evan-*

teacher's relationship with the Christian faith and the Protestant Church does influence the professional concept of self, the professional ethic, values, the perception of the role as teacher of Religious Education and the way of teaching. Lived religion as it is embodied in their life, shines through the didactic presentation of religion in the classroom.

“Lived religion – the individual practice of religion, the understanding of one's own life and purpose, the personal religious knowledge - is a helpful resource for teaching Religious Education.”²⁵

However, this cannot be reduced to a mere formula of a good example and its imitation, but takes place in the context of mature didactic reflection. Religious Education teachers are not 'heroes of the faith', but as much believing, searching, and often doubting Christians as anyone else.

5. The uses of theology and religious didactics

Both theology and religious didactics are relevant in that they make appropriate teaching of Religious Education possible.

gelischen und katholischen Religionslehrerinnen und -lehrern in Baden-Württemberg, Ostfildern / Stuttgart 2005, 15).

²⁵ B. Dressler, Religionslehrerinnen, 108.

This requires the teacher to develop an individual theological position and a corresponding didactic concept.

5.1 Theological expertise

Sound theological knowledge is a basic professional requirement for future teachers of Religious Education. They need to have acquired a sufficient base of knowledge to be able to reflect upon theological issues and arrive at independent, reasoned judgement. Nonetheless, the training of teachers of Religious Education cannot simply mirror that of future pastors or academic theologians. Depending on the requirements of the university curriculum between 14 and 40 course hours are allotted for didactics and theology. Therefore, time and opportunity for theological studies is very limited. In order to enable students to arrive at an individual position, theology and related contents must concentrate on the basics and be presented in a ‘simplified’ manner.²⁶

²⁶ See the series “Theologie für Lehrerinnen und Lehrer”, vol. 1-5, Göttingen 1999-2012; especially R. Lachmann, / G. Adam / C. Reents (eds.), *Elementare Bibeltexte. Exegetisch-systematisch-didaktisch* (TLL 2), fifth edition Göttingen 2012; R. Lachmann, / G. Adam / W. Ritter (eds.), *Theologische Schlüsselbegriffe. Biblisch-systematisch-didaktisch* (TLL 1), fourth edition Göttingen 2012. Further: P. Biehl / F. Johannsen, *Einführung in die Glaubenslehre*, Neukirchen-Vluyn 2002. For a more thorough look at questions of systematic

The study of theology also serves the purpose of self-clarification. The religious life history and the religious experiences of students are relevant for the academic education because they partly determine which questions they especially engage and where they seek personal reassurance. Each student brings religious views and insights from home, that is, a theology of their own. Their course of study makes it possible to learn about other perspectives and viewpoints, to reflect on their own insights critically, complement them and, where it seems necessary, modify them. The clarification of their own faith and life issues is also a contribution for the development of a theological self-concept as a teacher of Religious Education.

5.2 Conceptual clarity in didactics

Considering the different approaches and underlying didactic concepts of Religious Education creates and deepens awareness of the contexts and structures relevant to didactic action (see articles Rainer Lachmann, History of religious education and Martin Rothgangel, Conceptions of religious education and didactical structures). This allows the students to answer the question: How can Religious Education in school be

theology, see: W. Härle, Dogmatik, third edition Berlin / New York 2007.

designed responsibly, in both its theological and didactic dimension, so that the concerns of pupils, teacher, and issues are adequately addressed in their societal and religious context?

The point here is not to subscribe to one or the other concept of teaching Religious Education to the exclusion of all others, but to identify the respective strengths of different approaches, analyse them in regards of their didactical structures and make use of these in a complementary way. Of course, this process includes the personal preferences and emphases which form the individual theological-educational profile.

6. The dimension of personal relationships: Basic pedagogical attitude – Emotions / Enthusiasm – Being a role model

Professionalism, for a teacher of Religious Education, is expressed not only in the cognitive realm, but also in its communicative and social dimension. The pupil-centred pedagogical attitude and the resulting relationship between teacher and pupil have been at the heart of the teaching profession's self-concept since the Enlightenment. Whatever aims and methods of teaching and educating are formulated, they are transported through the nexus of this personal relationship. Teachers cannot be reduced to a source of information. To the children and young people in their care, the

underlying attitude matters far more. Is their teacher merely marking time, caught in an unwanted job, or is there a genuine dedication to teaching as a cognitive and emotional challenge?

6.1 Basic pedagogical attitude

The pedagogical stance describes a basic attitude in which all efforts to educate are undertaken in the spirit of an unconditional interest in the pupils as persons. It means accepting individual young persons as they are.

The German tradition of hermeneutical pedagogics (*Geisteswissenschaftliche Pädagogik*) developed the idea of 'pedagogical relation' in its theory.²⁷ According to this, all educational activities are guided by their purpose for the sake of the young person' in a mutual and voluntary relationship that is not based on coercion. This relationship between adults (teachers) and young people (pupils) must be designed from the start in a way that allows the young persons to gradually dissolve the relationship in the course of emerging into adulthood.

²⁷ Cf. W. Klafki, Das pädagogische Verhältnis und die Gruppenbeziehungen im Erziehungsprozess, in: id. et al. (eds.), Funkkolleg Erziehungswissenschaft, vol. 1, Frankfurt a. M. 1970, 53 – 91. – Further: H. Giesecke, Die pädagogische Beziehung. Pädagogische Professionalität und die Emanzipation des Kindes, second edition Weinheim / München 1998.

Teachers must thus take into account both the present situation and future potential of their pupils.

This professional attitude can be described as an educational partnership, combining proximity with a measure of conscious distance on the part of the teacher. It categorically excludes an attempt by the adult party to abuse their advantage in experience and knowledge to agitate or indoctrinate. The pedagogical relationship places the young person at the centre. It is based on mutual trust and respect. Janusz Korczak described an attitude of this type as one of respect and recognition of the dignity of children and adolescents.²⁸ These are challenging ethical demands made of all educators. To teachers of Religious Education, they are theologically both rooted in and deepened by the Christian conviction that, as God came to mankind in Jesus Christ, every human is valued before God regardless of abilities or achievements. The pedagogical stance functions as the foundation of an education that accompanies young people on their way to independence. It takes pupils seriously as subjects in their own right.

6.2 Emotions – Capacity of enthusiasm

The educator Giesecke clearly showed that previous theories of education have most often neglected an important aspect

²⁸ J. Korczak, *Das Recht des Kindes auf Achtung*, in: id., *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4, Gütersloh 1999, 383 ff.

of learning and education: the emotional dimension.²⁹ Simultaneously, the modern discipline of neuroscience has demonstrated the central role emotions play in learning processes. Gerhard Roth programmatically states that “without emotions and motivations, there is no learning”³⁰. This refers to individual attitudes towards learning, the status of school in family and society, and the learning environment and atmosphere at the school. Further aspects are the socio-emotional attitude of the pupils towards their teacher and vice versa. That makes it important for teachers to devote time and effort to ensuring that “every pupil has his or her ‘emotional place’ in the classroom as well as in the network of relations in the class.”³¹

The neurobiologist Gerald Hüther points to another issue. He found that successful knowledge transfers depend to a high degree on emotionally engaging young people. “The best way of producing emotional involvement in pupils is by developing a relationship of respect, recognition, and encouragement.” His goal is a “relationship culture of respect, encouragement and support, in which trust can grow and young

²⁹ W. Giesecke, *Lebenslanges Lernen und Emotionen. Wirkung von Emotionen als Bildungsprozesse aus beziehungstheoretischer Perspektive*, second edition Bielefeld 2009.

³⁰ G. Roth, *Bildung braucht Persönlichkeit. Wie Lernen gelingt*, Stuttgart 2011, 21. - See esp. 73 ff. (Emotion und Motivation) and 178 ff. (Lernen, Emotionen und Vertrauensbildung).

³¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

people are enabled to develop highly complex patterns in their brains”³².

As early as 1903, Berthold Otto, the advocate of Progressive Education, wrote in a similar vein: “The teacher, as he should be, must enthuse pupils by being enthusiastic.”³³ His position is that a good teacher is not only emotionally engaged with the subject, but can kindle this love in pupils as well. That neuroscientists now remind us of such traditional insights and validate them through their findings is telling.

“The person and behaviour of the teacher must not be neglected. Emotional engagement with the subject matter, displayed both consciously and unconsciously, can positively affect the motivation of pupils.”³⁴

Positive emotions (1) facilitate the integration of new information. (2) Emotional aspects of the learning context can

³² G. Hüther, Für eine neue Kultur der Anerkennung, in: U. Herrmann (ed.), Neurodidaktik. Grundlagen und Vorschläge für gehirngerechtes Lehren und Lernen, second edition Weinheim /Basel 2009, 199-206, here 205. In his publication: Was wir sind und was wir rein könnten. Ein neurobiologischer Mutmacher, second edition Frankfurt a.M. 2011, on pages 89 -110 he comprehensively deals with the question of enthusiasm.

³³ B. Otto, Wochenschrift „Hauslehrer“, Berlin 1903, 98.

³⁴ M. Brand / H. J. Markowitsch, Lernen and Gedächtnis aus neurowissenschaftlicher Perspektive Konsequenzen für die Gestaltung des Schulunterrichts, in: U. Herrmann (ed.), Neurodidaktik, Weinheim / Basel 2009, 69 -85, here 85.

further serve as ‘recall signals’. (3) Finally, positive emotions activate the brain’s reward system, reinforcing the behaviour pattern.

In the light of these insights, it seems strongly recommended to continue involving neuroscientists in the debate on the professional qualification of teachers.

6.3 The teacher as curriculum? - or: Being a role model

Finally, I will turn to a question that has always attracted considerable attention: the role of the teacher as an example for pupils. In this context, it has been stated that ‘the person of the teacher is the most important curriculum.’ This saying reflects the following perception: the quality of ‘good’ teaching - of effective, convincing, and authentic teaching - ultimately does not depend on teachers' methodological competence and motivational skills, but on the way that they can represent the importance of a question, a problem or subject to a young person through their own person.

In learning processes which aim to have pupils arrive at individual positions and convictions, the person of the teacher is of the greatest importance. That is why especially teachers of Religious Education must be aware of their role as representatives of certain beliefs and convictions with regard to religion and faith and continuously reflect on it. This function burdens them with the dual demand of, on the one hand, being

asked to support the pupils' quest for orientation by taking clear positions, while, on the other hand, having to avoid fostering excessive dependence. In this dilemma, it is important to recall that individual faith, religiosity and spirituality, and the decisions and actions they inform must always be measured against the cause of Jesus Christ and, where necessary, they have to be revised. Yes, teachers of Religious Education can serve as role models³⁵, but in a specific manner that I believe Wolfgang Bartholomäus describes aptly as follows:

“The lived Christian faith of the religion teacher's influences Religious Education as the faith which he tries to live in reality, burdened with all doubts and uncertainties. Thus, the teacher of Religious Education is rather, as Irene and Dietmar Mieth envisioned her / him ‘*a problematic role model providing an opportunity for reflection*’ [...] Those who want to learn to be Christians will only be able to do so through the interface with the incomplete realisations of being a Christian that they encounter in their fellow humans. ... If we have learned it at all, this is how we did.”³⁶.

³⁵ To the intriguing question about the role model see G. Adam, “Daß uns ihres Glaubens Exempel nutzlich sind”. Lernen an Biografien großer Vorbilder - aufgezeigt am Beispiel von Martin Luther King, in: M. Rothgangel / H. Schwarz (eds.), Götter, Heroen, Heilige, Frankfurt a.M. / Bern et al., 2011, 143 -166 - as well as further contributions therein.

³⁶ W. Bartholomäus, Der Religionslehrer zwischen Theorie und Praxis, in: KatBl 103 (19787), 168.

Teachers of Religious Education provide their lessons in the context of public schools in awareness of both their pedagogical and theological responsibility. In doing so, they are providing a constitutionally mandated offer for the pupils that, from the perspective of the Protestant Church, can only be provided in all freedom. The core of this offer is the possibility of a communication between today's young people and the Gospel.

For further reading

- G. Adam, Beruf: ReligionslehrerIn, in: *Ibid.*, Glaube und Bildung. Beiträge zur Religionspädagogik I (StTh 6), second edition Würzburg 1994, 242-262.
- B. Dressler, Religionslehrerinnen und Religionslehrer, in: M. Wermke / G. Adam / M. Rothgangel (eds.), *Religion in der Sekundarstufe II. Ein Kompendium*, Göttingen 2006, 97 - 118.
- M. Hahn, Religionslehrerinnen und Religionslehrer (Da-)sein - Person und Beruf, in: H. Noormann / U. Becker / B. Trocholepzyk (eds.), *Ökumenisches Arbeitsbuch Religionspädagogik*, third edition Stuttgart 2007, 75 -112.
- B. Schröder / H. H. Behr / D. Krochmalnik (eds.), *Was ist ein guter Religionslehrer? (Religionspädagogische Gespräche zwischen Juden, Christen und Muslimen 1)*, Berlin 2009.