Religious Education Teacher between Biography, Habitus and Power: Professional Ethical Perspectives

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Abstract

This study marks a high complexity of the field, which is further enhanced by the fact that these discussions are transposed into religious education and professionalism research relating to religious education teachers. It seriously considers very unique semantics and practice of leadership emerging then, crosswise and as a background to the educational hermeneutics. Obviously, besides didactic implications, professional ethical implications in an elementary sense are also at play here. The researcher will proceed in four steps: Firstly, I examine aspects of professionalism theory, into which, secondly, professional ethical considerations are entered in their significance for the topic of leadership, then deepen this through discourse-theoretical considerations before finally, fourthly, perspectives are opened up.

Keywords

Complexity, Religious education, Professionalism research, Educational hermeneutics, Discourse-theoretical considerations

I. Introduction
“Ladies and gentlemen, I know you are religious education teachers and as such new to my school. I also know that in religious education one goes in search of truth together, that means religious education teachers and pupils. Teachers often shy away from making a clear announcement, especially in religious education. But here at my school, it shouldn’t be like that. As from all other teachers in the other school subjects, I also expect a clear teaching guidance and a clear class leadership from you.”

With these words we young professionals were welcomed as new teachers at our school. Certainly, the principal was notorious. As a historian with a doctorate and head of department, he knew exactly what he was saying. At some parent-teacher conferences he sometimes broke off discussions with a reference to Louis XIV, which was pointed to the situation: the school, that’s me.

Certainly, that was a long time ago. But has the vote for strong leadership presented with verve and the power of his agency really lost its plausibility completely? Nowadays, subject didactics within the categorical framework of a strong constructivism favors learning arrangements and learning counters; instead of class leadership, one speaks of classroom management. The teacher is merely a learning facilitator and learning companion. In some visions, one has the impression to read the model of a trainer at Club Mediteranee rather than that of a teacher. This may be exaggerated, but in the meantime also in religious didactics sensitive minds like Rudolf Englert view it very critically and have been held jointly responsible for partly highly problematic manifestations of religious education(Englert, Hennecke,
& Kämmerling, 2014). In addition, there are observations of the educational sociology, which sees a weak leadership by the teacher, which is replaced by the learners own leadership, as an internal educational factor for educational injustice. After all, the strong learners profit from self-responsible learning, while the weaker learners need a narrow, yet subject-related pedagogical modeling (Rabenstein & Wischer, 2016).

These short lines already mark a high complexity of the field, which is further enhanced by the fact, that these discussions are transposed into religious education and professionalism research relating to religious education teachers. Doesn’t a very unique semantics and practice of leadership emerge then, crosswise and as a background to the educational hermeneutics? Obviously, besides didactic implications, professional ethical implications in an elementary sense are also at play here. I will proceed in four steps: Firstly, I examine aspects of professionalism theory, into which, secondly, professional ethical considerations are entered in their significance for the topic of leadership, then deepen this through discourse-theoretical considerations before finally, fourthly, perspectives are opened up.

II. Professionalization of the Religious Education Profession

Within the framework of the teacher-related processes of professionalization, the good religious education teacher, who intuitively masters the art of teaching and who in-
dividually orientates himself on the Socratic oath of the ideal teacher, shouldn’t give up the normative horizon of religious education teacher training and education to the religious education teacher. Rather, within the wide framework of the school pedagogical professionalization of the teaching profession, religious education teacher research also undertakes professional theoretical shifts of emphasis. A further aspect is the complementary determination of the relationship between three approaches based on the subject profile of religious education: firstly, a personality approach, that sees in relatively stable dispositions of personality the essential factor of good religious education. Nevertheless, due to the changeability of personality-determining characteristics, teacher training always includes personality development; secondly, a structural-theoretical approach, whose main focus are the antinomies of the teacher’s teaching, which are laid down in the action itself and which are to be dealt with mainly communicatively and systemically in the interaction of teachers, parents and pupils. These expressly include the inner interweaving of content-related, didactic, affective and valuable moments; and finally thirdly, the competence-oriented approach of the expert paradigm, which focuses on the development of professional field-related competences (Pirner, 2012, 15-21). Such professionalization aims at a wide field of professionally-specific competences. Competences in the field of theological and subject-didactic professional knowledge are interdependent with those in the field of convictions, goals and values as well as with those of motivational orientations and personal professional self-regulation.
Meanwhile there are several catalogues of competences that are understood as the basis of the professionalism of religious education teachers. Even across confessional boundaries, they show considerable similarities in all shifts of emphasis. The habitus model, currently represented with great persuasiveness in teacher research aims at a religious-educational-theological competence within the framework of a self-reflexive professional habitus. This model, influenced by the habitus theory of Bourdieu, shows, that the individual competences are interrelated and that this model is part of professional teacher action to reweigh these competences in critical reflectivity depending on the situation. In order to be able to act professionally, teachers must have the competence to build up routines, to change these routines by dealing with new things and to integrate personal just as institutional conditions into their actions (Heil & Ziebertz, 2005, 41-64; Heil, 2006).

On the one hand, this habitus is constituted by action structures. These are professional field-specific rules, which determine action and thus form the basis of a professional practice. This includes routines and dealing with new things. Routines are recallable patterns of a repertoire of action in relation to teacher tasks such as counselling, teaching, education. Of course, it is important, that these routines keep themselves open to new things such as dealing with religious plurality. On the other hand, besides the structures of action, the conditions of action determine the habitus. These conditions make it possible, but they also influence the professional actions of teachers. Among the conditions are the institution school with the elements such as grading,
time management, role-specific pattern of a teacher-student relationship, curricula or civil service. In particular, the definition of the relationship between school and church, which is shaped by Article 7.3 of the Basic Law, has an effect on church school supervision, in missio and vocatio. Regarding to the person, the close connection between biography of life and biography of faith is evident in professional theory. Religious education teachers have to express their personal faith in their professional habitus and - as required, for example, by Catholic canon law - distinguish themselves through orthodoxy, pedagogical skill and the testimony of Christian life (Heil & Ziebertz, 2005, 47-61; Heil, 2006, 82ff.).

The religious-educational habitus is thus to be understood as a professionally-specific competence building process in which, in the interrelation of subject and external influences, the structures and conditions with regard to “coping with the different demands in the professional field” are to be brought into a coherent whole (Heil & Ziebertz, 2005, 47). It thus offers criteria for contents and target horizons of a professional, reflected religious education teacher’s action.

III. Professional Ethical Desideratum

Certainly, a desideratum catches the eye. In the various competence catalogues and also in the habitus model “the ethos of religious education teachers is very brief” (Schröder, 2012, 193). Professional ethics is taken for granted in other professions such as the medical profession, the profession of
journalist or the profession of lawyer. With Birgit Ofenbach, professional ethics can be understood as a conglomerate of different moments. According to this, the profile of its content includes the self-conception of serving the general public and the greater public good, but not egoistic particular interests, the inextricable combination of professional competence, morality and a sense of responsibility, the pursuit of professional activity only on the basis of professional qualification processes and certificates, a high degree of collegiality, moral integrity, which is essentially tied into the leap of faith of others in relation to members of the profession (Ofenbach, 2006, 42f.). In relation to the teaching profession, this professional ethos takes on specific contours. It is important to combine a basic moral attitude with professional, didactic and personal skills (Ofenbach, 2006, 348; Schröder, 2012, 193f.). Nevertheless, a pedagogical professional ethics stands in a dilemma of principle: the demanding challenge consists in making didactic decisions appropriate to the situation in the light of a moral attitude and at the same time allowing this moral attitude to be affected by these specific contextual conditions. The pedagogical professional ethics “thus unites professionalism and morality at a medium level of abstraction between situational action and decontextualizing attitude” (Fritz, 1991, 13).

This topic is certainly present among religious education teachers, even if it is embedded in the wider horizon of personal and religious attitudes. With growing emphasis, contemporary religious education is turning towards the teacher beliefs, those often pre-conscious, profession-related
attitudes, positions, presuppositions and basic assumptions, 
that help to structure, justify and align one's own teaching 
activity in the diversity of its dimensions and competences 
to be aimed at (Lehner-Hartmann, 2014; Reusser & Pauli, 
2014, 642-661). Within the framework of this research on 
such subjective theories of teachers, inner correlations be-
tween religiousness and professional ethics attitudes have 
emerged. Teachers are particularly keen to bring profession 
and person together, whereat therefor the basic religious at-
ttitude playing a fundamental role. In qualitative procedures 
it became clear, that these teachers orientate themselves in 
their thinking and acting strongly at their conscience, but 
also at the Bible and at their own visions and ide-
als (Rothgangel, 2017, 144f.). In addition, American teacher 
belief research in particular has been able to demonstrate a 
connection between religious conviction and very specific 
pedagogical and didactic practices, which leads above all to 
an appreciative, encouraging and appreciative attitude to-
wards learners (Sikkink, 2010, 160-179). Religiousness can in-
fluence the professional ethics and thus the teaching activity 
in such a way, that it becomes orientationally effective, as 
the church requirements for the training of religious educa-
tion teachers also make clear. Religious education teachers 
“can further develop their personal faith and their faith prac-
tice in the confrontation with their theological insights and 
interpret their own way of life in the light of the Gospel. 
They can recognize the importance of their own faith for 
their professional activity and understand their profession as 
the execution of their faith.” (Sekretariat der Deutschen 
Bischofskonferenz, 2011, 16f.). This ambitious theological
profile of the religious education profession is integrated into the basic martyrrological function of the church via the concept of witness, insofar as religious education teachers have “to be witnesses of the faith in schools” (Sekretariat der Deutschen Bischofskonferenz, 2011, 34.). Thus the profile of a professional ethics is implicitly drawn, which is to be marked by values of justice, attention and recognition, care and truthfulness (Pirner, 2012, 21-28; Lindner, 2015). With the superogatory of a Christian ethics as opposed to a secular ethics emphasized in the theological ethics it can be assumed (Benner, 2004, 36), that by faith this religious-educational professional ethics receives a special radicalism in the attention to the learners. Some speak here of the kenotic dimension of this profession, which is connected with an option for the weak within the framework of the systemic conditions of the religious education teacher activity (Schmälzle, 2001, 1701). Bert Roebben goes even further, developing a spirituality for religious education teachers in the decline to Meister Eckhardt’s de-education theory, which becomes effective in professional ethical relevant self-reflections: “Have I ‘cured’ people today as a teacher? Have my students become more human and have they discovered themselves, their own possibilities and their limits? Have they become more of a big whole?” (Roebben, 2016, 161)

IV. Education as a Leadership

Now one might ask, whether such an empathetic attitude towards learners doesn’t have a problematic back side.
Certainly, it is precisely in the light of the idea of God that religious education is distinguished by its desire to appreciate each and every one of them. Also from this perspective of recognition, the focus is increasingly on education. For some, understood as "secularised religion" (Liessmann, 2017, 36), others point out, that educational processes as a whole represent “anything but a power-free space” (Bröckling, 2017, 241). In general pedagogy, Norbert Ricken drew attention to the ambivalence of the concept of education, because in the light of Foucault’s discourse theory, it implements rather undefined leadership practices than enables autonomy. It is known from teacher research, that religious education teachers want the best for their students. And yet through certain methods, certain structures of teacher action, they contribute to the disadvantage of learners contrary to their own intentions. Because the topic of leadership now comes directly into focus here, it will be investigated in more detail. For Michel Foucault, the question arises as to why, despite the emphatic promises of autonomy, subjectivation and maturity through education, it is precisely, that these are not fulfilled. In terms of discourse theory, he makes a revealing look on the educational systems: “Education may de jure be an instrument, that in a society like ours allows every individual access to any kind of discourse - but we know, that in its distribution, in what it allows and in what it prevents, it follows the lines drawn by social differences, contrasts and struggles. Every educational system is a political method to maintain or change the appropriation of discourses with their knowledge and power” (Foucault, 2003, 29f.). In discourse theory, therefore, there is an intrinsic
connection between power and education of the subjects, since these are “the great procedures of the subjugation of discourse”. What applies to the court system, the judicial system, psychiatry, and even to the literary act of writing, which is generally considered free and creative, applies not least to schools and universities: “What is actually a teaching system - if not a ritualization of the word, a qualification and fixation of the roles for the speaking subjects, the formation of an at least diffuse doctrinal group, a distribution and appropriation of the discourse with its power and its knowledge?”(Foucault, 2003, 30; Bröckling, 2017, 15-73). Two examples from school lessons can illustrate this:

1. inclusive class, distribution of tasks. In order to be pupil-oriented, the teachers distribute tasks and materials, that are targeted, but strongly different in method and level. As a prerequisite, however, the children must first be identified in their cognitive level and their motivation to learn and then explicitly named, at least performatively named, in the distribution of the differentiated materials.

2. in many textbooks, including religious books, there are gender-related tasks. Sensitive to the mechanisms of gender-related constructions of doing gender, they want to do justice to the individual children in their gender. Learning aids are differentiated according to gender when, for example, text assignments on pink paper are offered for girls and dictation exercises on blue paper with a pirate logo are offered for boys. And the former NRW school minister Löhrmann, aligned to the goal of “Learning together in diversity”, was heard in an interview: “Girls rather need an application reference, while many boys are fascinated by tech-
nology itself. In chemistry, for example, girls especially wanted to know: What do I need that for? When they know, for example, that this is interesting for cosmetics, they have their own approach (Rendtorff, 2014, 116; Grümme, 2017, 53-60). These different examples mark with varying intensity the attempt to appreciate the heterogeneity of teaching in terms of cognitive performance and gender and to do justice to the individual pupils. Nevertheless, they don’t remain unproblematic. Isn’t this working with hidden addresses, identifications and thus also distinctions, which are only constructed during achievement? The intention to appreciate the pupils in their diversity, emphasizes them first of all. Heterogeneity is thus only constructed through this appreciation.

The second example makes this even more acute: we are working here with the assumption, that there are natural distinctions between the sexes, which are then symbolically reinforced and normatively charged by the different assignment of colors. A real girl plays with pink dolls, a real boy is interested in technology. In the background, mechanisms of the typological stereotype become blatantly visible, which would certainly become even clearer if we said: “the children with a migration background get the green worksheet, the bio-Germans the yellow one.” Here, the discourse would indeed be immediately proven to be “untenable” (Rendtorff, 2014, 126). With reference to the language-analytical reflections of confessional conversations, Foucault wants to expose such mechanisms in educational processes as subtle exercises of power. They consist in the fact, that power-shaped structures of society assert themselves in such a way, that the subjects believe to be free. Such leadership is
based “not on coercion, but on the willingness to be led.” It is based on practice in what must seem paradoxical from the point of view of liberal self-determination: “voluntary servitude as the highest form of individual freedom” (Bröckling, 2017, 22). In the subjects’ search for autonomy, an asymmetry reproduces itself, that Foucault calls “pastoral power” (Foucault, 1987, 243-261; Steinkamp, 2015). As the confessor together with the penitent, as the ‘shepherd’ together with the ‘sheep’ affirms the order of confession and spiritual guidance, so the power of discourse prevails in it. Accordingly, “education itself can be read as a social transformation through individual formation and thus as a specific form of ‘leadership of the leaders’ (Foucault)” (Ricken, 2006, 25).

The inner connection between power and education thus consists in the fact, that education ultimately cultivates self-control and thus introduces into power contexts, that reproduce themselves behind the backs of the subjects through this self-control (Ricken, 2006, 25-30). Education and power must therefore be thought critically together in order to be able to deconstruct this power of discourse. “Thus, not only modern pedagogy in general, but especially the figure of ‘education’ can be understood as the central moment of a secularized pastoral power, whose fertility and effectiveness lies precisely in the rejection of heteronomy and repression, in making one’s own forming access to people’s way of life irrecongnizable and in presenting it as a ‘vicarious concern’ (Ricken, 2006, 212; Ricken & Balzer, 2012).

In the background stands a discourse-theoretical concept of power. In Michel Foucault’s poststructuralism, theories
and concepts are placed in the context of practice and social distinctions. Fixed meanings, ontological attributions, unhistorical essentializations, quasi fixed as nature, descriptions of beings are dissolved and attributed to the power of discourses to determine meaning (Emmerich & Hormel, 2013, 107; Budde, 2012). Every speaking, every acting, every thinking gains its meaning in concrete constellations, which are shaped by the dynamic and highly complex structure of knowledge and interest in the sign of social and cultural hegemony and political power. The “microphysical type” of power at Foucault presupposes (Konersmann, 2015, 236), that in “every society the production of discourse is simultaneously controlled, selected, organized and channeled – through certain procedures, whose task it is, to tame the forces and dangers of discourse, to banish its unpredictable event, to circumvent its heavy and threatening materiality” (Foucault, 2003, 10f.). In this respect speaking “is to be understood as calling, power-productive speaking” (Rose, 2014, 142). The aim of what Foucault calls ‘discourse analysis’ is to uncover, expose and counteract these mechanisms in an ideology-critical way. It thus also becomes the task of a leadership- and power-sensitive religious education.

V. Conclusionary Perspectives

What does this imply for the leadership issue under this discussion? I concentrate on three perspectives. 1. The Moralization Trap: Especially the last quotation by Bert Roebben reveals a problem: isn’t this a moralization and an
overstraining of religious education teachers, that undermines the relative logic of pedagogical processes by breaking down the boundaries of professional ethics? A professionality-oriented professional ethics is, after all, “not a de-differentiated world, social and life responsibility” (Baumert & Kunter, 2006, 474). The required option for the weak to suddenly become practical as an integral part of professional ethics in the field of teaching leadership and class leadership overlooks the pedagogical processes themselves (grading). To burden professional practice with overburdening professional ethical demands by oneself or by the institutions, moreover, hits back negatively on the religious education teachers themselves. “According to the results of burnout research”, the religion education teacher “is demotivated and internally quits, when he or she is overwhelmed by unfulfillable expectations and family educational deficits and the consequences of structural irresponsibility in state and church are carried out on his or her back.” (Schmälzle, 2001, 1699).

2. Complexity of the Field: Recent school research marks the pedagogical relevance of leadership for successful teaching. Andreas Helmke has presented clear research results, that are supported by John Hattie’s meta-study. It is then important to clearly structure and guide the learning processes, and precisely in this way to encourage the pupils to learn on their own. Leadership and autonomy are thus in an interdependence, that Helmut Peukert once qualified as a pedagogical paradox. However, as indicated, the operationalization and realization of such a professional ethics is already extremely difficult. These professional ethical perspectives can only be brought to bear in the reality of
teaching in a highly fragmented way. This has to do with the already outlined tension between the concrete situation and general professional ethical maxims. It is based above all on the complexity of the structures and conditions specific to the professional field, as critically reflected by the habitus concept (Blömeke, 2010, 210-220; Ofenbach, 2006, 350f; Pirner, 2012, 26; Lenhard 2008). Professional ethics can’t be implemented abruptly.

3. Critical Self-reflexivity: But it isn’t only the complexity of the field, that brings an almost paradoxical structure into a leading concept of religious education. Guided by post-structuralist considerations, the sensitivity for the aporetic implications of the religious education teacher’s actions can grow. In view of the clandestine power structures in religious education, a leadership practice, that focuses on participation, autonomy and justice, can have negative consequences. One could show this in different fields of leadership in a religious educational praxeology. A critical self-reflection of one’s own practice and didactics is therefore required. This doesn’t resolve the paradox of religious education, in which every theory of religious education is written—even the one presupposed here. But this enlightened self-reflexiveness helps her, to work situational on this paradox (Grümme, 2019).
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종교교육 교사의 삶, 성품, 그리고 역량에 대한 연구: 전문적 윤리 관점에 중심으로

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이 연구는 교육의 실천에서 발견되는 고도의 복합성에 주목한다. 이것은 종교교육과 전문연구의 분야에서 집중적으로 논의되는 영역이다. 특히 종교교육 교사들에게 중요한 부분이 된다. 특히, 교육적 해석학의 배경으로 지도력의 해석학적 실천의 의미를 이 연구는 신중하게 고려한다. 변증법적 함의와 함께 전문적 윤리의 적용은 기본적인 의미에서 중요한 논증의 축을 형성한다. 연구자는 네 가지 단계로 연구의 주제에 접근한다. 첫째, 전문적 의문의 다층을 조명하는 것이다. 둘째, 전문적인 논리의 고증이 지도력 주제에서 중요한 부분을 차지하게 되는 것이다. 셋째, 논론-이론의 검증 과정을 통해 이 주제에 집중하는 것이다. 넷째, 이러한 해석학적 관점을 일반 대중에게 개방하는 것이다.

주제어
복합성, 종교교육, 전문연구, 교육적 해석학, 논론-이론 검증과정

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