

## PDF hosted at the Radboud Repository of the Radboud University Nijmegen

The following full text is a publisher's version.

For additional information about this publication click this link.

<http://hdl.handle.net/2066/82277>

Please be advised that this information was generated on 2019-04-22 and may be subject to change.

## Book Reviews

Englert, R., Porzelt, B., Reese, A. & Stams, E. (2006). *Innenansichten des Referendariats. Wie erleben angehende Religionslehrer/innen an Grundschulen ihren Vorbereitungsdienst? Eine empirische Untersuchung zur Entwicklung (religions)pädagogischer Handlungskompetenz.* [Forum Theologie und Pädagogik, bd 14]. Berlin: LIT Verlag. ISBN 978-3-8258-9189-5.

Empirical studies of primary school religious education are fairly rare compared with those of the practice in secondary schools. The same applies to the teacher's role in it, while very little is known about how to train teachers of religious education at primary school level. The exploratory study by Englert, Porzelt, Reese, Stams and their co-workers fulfils this need. They seek to determine how future teachers themselves envisage developing their religio-pedagogic competence to shape religious education in Catholic primary schools. The study is interesting, thorough, comprehensive, ambitious and stimulates further research.

The content is structured around concepts like training, competence, professionalism, professional biography, religious socialisation, self-perception and job satisfaction. The concepts are explained in the introductory chapter. The participants are students ("Referendar/innen"), who, after completing their academic training, did a two-year course to equip them for their task as primary school teachers. In the period 2001 to 2003 they were investigated by means of interviews (N=36) and questionnaires (N=473). Transcripts of interviews were analysed in various ways, which are reported in different places. This gives the reader a chance to encounter the students involved in flesh and blood, which is commendable. The entire study gives an impression of searching thoroughness, suggesting many hours' hard work. Apart from one table of results of quantitative analyses (that of a factor analysis on p. 130), the methodology is sound.

The development of religio-pedagogic competence in future teachers is explored with reference to five themes. The first is religious socialisation. A remarkable finding is that many participants in the study are or were active in church youth work. As Porzelt points out in the concluding chapter, this probably provided a good basis for their eventual religio-pedagogic activities. Those who engaged in church youth work display a marked advantage in the development of religio-pedagogic competence, reminiscent of the biblical passage: "To him who has will more be given" (Mk 4:25). But participation in youth work does not mean that these students identify strongly with the church — on the contrary. The second theme is self-perception regarding their religio-pedagogic activities. The authors use professional motivation, orientation to contents, professional ethos, goals of religious education and teaching style as indicators of self-perception. As in other fields, students in religious education appear to orient themselves pedagogically rather than in terms of subject matter: their focus is (the development of) the child. This trend raises all sorts of question regarding recent theorising in religious pedagogy and didactics, such as the continuing relevance of the

correlation model. The third theme is the development of religio-pedagogic competence. The authors describe it in terms of the paired concepts of autonomy and guidance (*Anleitung*). It appears that in practice many students have difficulty maintaining a balance between the two. Often they seem to be at the mercy of mentors at the school where they do their practical work, and this is a matter of luck. That complicates that development of religio-pedagogic competence. The latter probably also depends on the goal orientations and objectives of religious education that students, often implicitly, set themselves. Whereas they usually opt for an experientially oriented approach, they seem to measure children's progress by way of purely cognitive tests. These produce few results, which is frustrating. What students (and teachers) then use as a measure of success in religious education lessons is the creation of a good atmosphere. As Porzelt points out (p. 461), more reflection is needed on what constitutes a good atmosphere. The fourth theme is sources. In their teaching and in finding their feet in the school and in their training students seem to rely mainly on their mentors at primary schools (and this person might be a rather scanty source when it comes to religious education), their own coping strategies (such as the belief that they are able to influence their environment — *Selbstwirksamkeitsüberzeugung*), and lesson plans. Seminars in their own training appear to be considered a very limited source. According to the students sources help them mainly if they relate closely to teaching practice, are individually tailored and consistently available. The fifth theme is students' satisfaction with their training. By and large they appear to be fairly satisfied, apart from seminars. But the results of the quantitative and qualitative analyses reveal different pictures, namely a decline and an increase in satisfaction respectively. The authors try to find a good explanation for these contrasting results.

The study may be considered ambitious in that it tries to examine different aspects of future teachers' way of developing their religio-pedagogic competence. Since theorising in this field is still in its infancy, that is not easy. This study helps to clarify the different aspects, but not their interrelationship. Clearly defined concepts could enable future studies to identify the relations between relevant aspects of the development of religio-pedagogic competence. This study by Englert, Porzelt, Reese, Stams and their co-workers may be seen as a sound, healthy stride in that direction. — Theo van der Zee, Nijmegen (NL).