

Dear members and friends of the EARLI SIG 19,

We are happy to send you all the latest issue of our Newsletter! This coming September we hope to meet many of you in beautiful Siegen, Germany, where we host the biennial SIG19 conference on 21-23.9.2016. The theme of this years' conference is "Experiencing Religion and Religious Experience in Religious Education". This issue includes the preliminary program of the conference and information about the conference venue. Furthermore, we are proud to present interviews of our keynote speakers: Vasiliki Mitropoulou, Manfred Pirner, Ann Taves, and Carles Salazar.

Our new "Spotlight on Research"-section introduces research by Clark University, US. We are informed about this multinational study on how college learning experiences influence students' life goals. The spotlight here is on the Finnish perspective.

At the end of the Newsletter you'll find information about the EARLI SIG19 membership and list of recent publications by the SIG19 members.

We wish you all a very happy and inspiring spring time, and welcome you to Siegen in September!

Katharina Kindermann & Marjaana Kavonius (co-editors)

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Ulrich Riegel

SIG 19 – Coordinator

Dr. Ulrich Riegel is Professor of Religious Education in the Department of Catholic Theology at the University of Siegen. His recent research is on formal and informal processes of learning in church buildings, competencies of RE teachers, and the spiritual quality of Sunday activities. All these projects are empirically, using both, quantitative and qualitative methods.

Elina Kuusisto

SIG 19 – Coordinator

Dr. Elina Kuusisto works as a Postdoctoral Research at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, Finland.

She is also a visiting Professor at the University of Vienna, Austria. Her purpose as a researcher is to explore how one's life purpose can be supported and implemented in schools and universities. Currently she is studying moral education, moral sensitivities (ethical sensitivity, intercultural sensitivity, interreligious sensitivity), and deepening her learning about purpose in contexts of professional and academic education. Kuusisto's doctoral dissertation examined religious education in the context of volunteer work. Her study showed that volunteer work can be an important avenue for young people to express and realize their purpose in life.



Dan Fleming

JURE – Coordinator

Dr. Dan Fleming is Dean of Studies and Senior Lecturer in Theology and Ethics at The Broken Bay Institute in Sydney, Australia. His research interests include moral philosophy, theology, religious education, and moral education. Most recently Dan has been focusing on the origins of moral responsibility in dialogue with philosophy and theology, as well as how it is that religious experience and worldview contribute to the formation of moral understanding and commitment. His work at The Broken Bay Institute draws him into dialogue with teachers of religious education from all around Australia.

Wednesday, 21th September 2016

- 10.30 Registration desk open
- 12.00 – 13.00 Lunch
- 13.00 – 13.30 Opening the Conference
- 13.30 – 15.00 Keynote Ann Taves (University of California, USA)
Finding and Articulating Meaning in Secular Experience
- 15.00 – 15.30 Coffee
- 15.30 – 16.30 Collegial Sessions I & II
- 16.45 – 17.30 Plenum Siebren Miedema (Universiteit Amsterdam, NL)
The Quest and Relevance of Religious Experience in Education
- 17.30 – 22.00 Dinner “Discover Germany”

Thursday, 22th September 2016

- 08.30 – 10.00 Keynote Carles Salazar (Universitat Lleida, ESP)
Believing Minds: Steps to an Ecology of Religious Ideas
- 10.00 – 10.30 Coffee
- 10.30 – 12.00 Collegial Sessions III & IV
- 12.00 – 13.00 Lunch
- 14.00 – 14.30 Coffee
- 14.30 – 15.30 Collegial Sessions V & VI
- 15.30 – 16.00 Coffee
- 16.00 – 17.30 Keynote Vasiliki Mitropoulou (Aristoteles Universitat, GRE)
Digital Reality and Religious Experience. How Do They Relate?
- 17.45 – 18.45 Collegial Sessions VII & VIII
- 19.00 Conference Dinner

Friday, 23th September 2016

- 08.30 – 10.00 Keynote Manfred Pirner (Universität Erlangen, GER)
Media Experience and Religious Experience. Explorations of an Intricate Relationship in the Context of RE
- 10.00 – 10.30 Coffee
- 10.30 – 12.00 Collegial Sessions IX & X
- 12.15 – 12.45 Business Meeting SIG 19
- 12.45 Closing the Conference
- 13.00 Snack

***Experiencing Religion and Religious Experience
in Religious Education***

21. – 23. 9. 2016



We are delighted to welcome you to the 5th biennial SIG19 conference
at University of Siegen, Germany.



Haus Patmos in Siegen

Surrounded by nature, lush forest and its own beautiful grounds, Haus Patmos is located in the suburbs of Siegen. The house has been in existence for over a hundred years and is renowned for its professional, hearty hospitality. After a comprehensive renovation and extension project Haus Patmos today stands as a splendid hotel and guest house complete with a conference centre, a coliseum and extensive grounds.

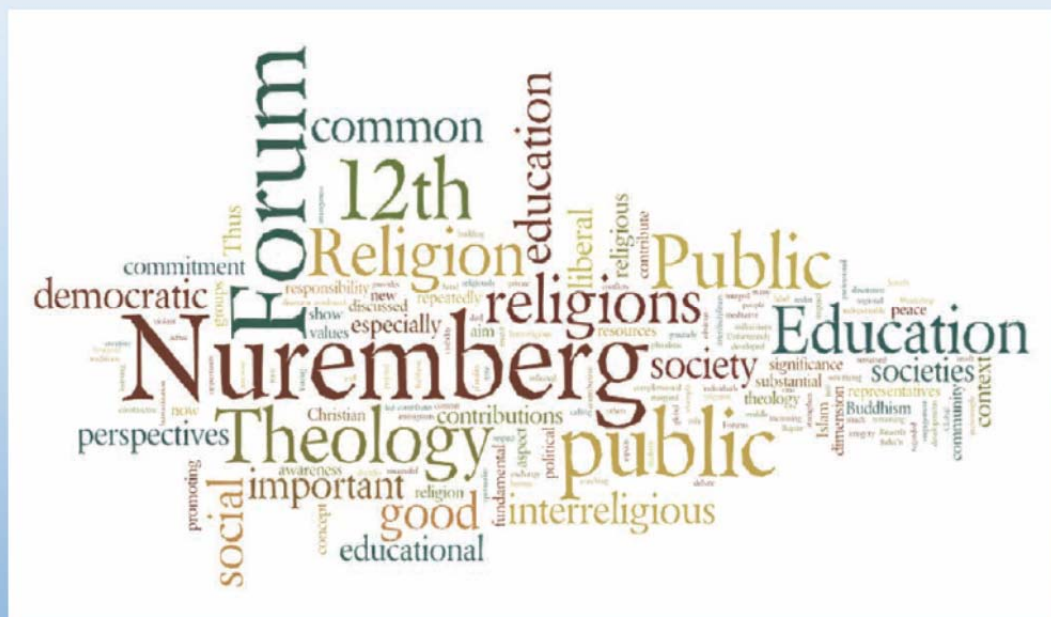


More Information

<http://www.hauspatmos.de/>



4th – 6th October 2016



<http://www.nuernberger-forum.uni-erlangen.org>



This is the second contribution to our new section: Spotlight on Research. We have an interesting group of members doing research in various fields of religious and spiritual education. Via this new section we want to give an overview of that. In each newsletter we present research findings of one of our members. So feel free to join in!

Multinational Study of How College Learning Experiences Influence Students' Life Goals – A Finnish perspective

Elina Kuusisto (University of Helsinki)

About the Study

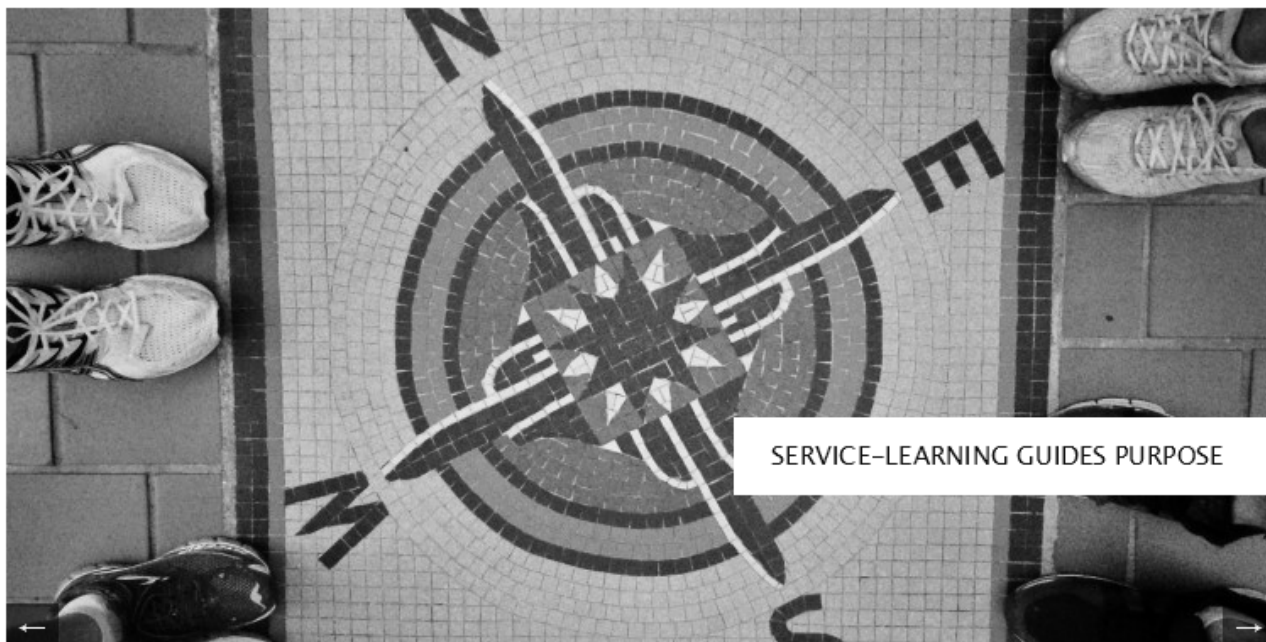
A three-year (2014-2016), multinational research study examines how educational experiences can help students find a strong sense of purpose for their lives. The work builds an international conversation on optimizing higher education's contribution to purpose development by engaging distinguished scholars worldwide. This collaboration will jointly collect data for the first-of-its-kind multinational dataset linking experiential education to the development of life purpose. In addition, researchers will jointly produce a Special Issue, an edited book and two webinars to develop a wider international community of scholars addressing this important educational issue.

The lead principal investigator Seana Moran, research assistant professor of psychology at Clark University, USA, co-principal investigator Jenni Menon Mariano, associate professor in the College of Education at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee, USA, are joined by five researchers from countries in Asia (China, South Korea), Europe (Finland, Spain), and South America (Brazil). Professor Kirsi Tirri (co-founder of EARLI SIG19) at the Department of Teacher Education, University of Helsinki, is the principal investigator of the Finnish team.

The John Templeton Foundation

The study is funded by The John Templeton Foundation, USA, which supports independent research and public engagement, pursuing breakthrough discoveries to expand our current knowledge about the universe, the full potentials of humanity, and life's ultimate purpose. The Foundation's motto, "How little we know, how eager to learn," exemplifies its support for open-minded inquiry, commitment to rigorous scientific research and related scholarship, and encouraging civil, informed dialogue among scientists, scholars, theologians, and the public at large. www.templeton.org

Before and after the sequence, all participating students filled in a questionnaire. Besides certain background variables (e.g. gender, centrality of religiosity, religious education in the family), we assessed the students' knowledge about the church building. In the pre- and post-test we also asked the students about their attitude towards the church building. After each of the seven units the students evaluated how interested they were during the lesson. Furthermore, the students that went on a field trip reported about their feelings inside the church building and the teachers gave us a written feedback how they experienced the church visits.



Expectations

"Given that the world is becoming more interconnected, a study of international scope is both timely and important," Moran said. "We are fortunate that we have the opportunity to work with a growing cadre of scholars around the world who are also examining youth purpose."

"We are pleased to be collaborating with the University of Helsinki on this research," said Mariano. "The University of Helsinki communicates a distinct mission to promote the well-being of humanity, and this focus, along with its strength in research, makes it an excellent site for studying how collegiate learning can promote young people's purposes to contribute to the common good. Our partnership will help build cross-cultural understandings of how to promote positive life purpose development among youth."

"I expect excellent cooperation with the partners whom I already know and I have already worked together with them. I believe that the results of the project will benefit both the international and national research community as well as the professional development of young teachers. The training period, at its best, can reinforce the professional identity of young teachers and give them a certainty of that their profession basically is a service trade in which teachers can give their own contribution to society and to the care and education of future citizens" Kirsi Tirri says.

Finnish Data

Finnish data ($N=395$) were gathered from student teachers and theologian students in 2014-2015. Students answered an online questionnaire before, during and after their service-learning period. Student teachers included future kindergarten teachers ($n=89$), class teachers ($n=56$) and subject teachers ($n=175$) and their service-learning was conducted in kindergartens, elementary schools, and lower and upper secondary schools, respectively. Theologians ($n=75$) worked as student pastors at the parishes of Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland.

First Results

The first results of the study will be published in a Special Issue “*Education for Purposeful Teaching around the World*” in the *Journal of Education for Teaching* (JET). The Special Issue is edited by Professor Kirsi Tirri, as the lead editor, together with Dr. Jenni Menon Mariano and Dr. Seana Moran. Articles consist of conceptual analyses, both statistical and qualitative empirical analyses, cross-cultural comparative analyses, and syntheses of relevant extant findings. Authors of the articles are collaborators in this multinational project. Also additional countries such as Iran are represented. The Special Issue is due to be published in fall 2016.

More Information

learning4purpose.org



From left

Professor Dr. Kirsi Tirri

<http://blogs.helsinki.fi/ktirri/>

Associate professor Dr. Seana Moran

<https://www.clarku.edu/departments/psychology/facultybio.cfm?id=905&progid=26>

Associate Professor Dr. Jenni Menon Mariano

<http://usfsm.edu/faculty-members/dr-jenni-menon-mariano/>



Name: Vasiliki Mitropoulou
Position: Assistant Professor of Pedagogy and Teaching
Institution: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Theology
Country: Greece
Web link:
<http://www.theo.auth.gr/en/node/71>
Research key words: didactics, teaching innovations, digital media and material in RE, teacher training

1. What started your career as a researcher in the area of religious and spiritual education?

During my school years I thought of RE as not an interesting course due to the way it was taught. At University I studied Italian Literature at the Faculty of Philosophy. During my studies I got an interest for Religion and afterwards I followed studies at the School of Theology. While I was studying the courses I realized that my favorite course was RE and felt that this was the field I really wanted to follow in my life. So I continued with master studies in Practical Theology and then a PhD where I suggested new with innovative ideas on the challenge Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) pose to render more interesting the way RE is taught with their integration in the teaching procedure, and, additionally, how they affect the way teachers teach. I believe that ICT in RE can provide new ways how to teach pupils about religion so as to think of it as course that connects with their daily lives.

2. What, in your opinion, is the most important area for religious and spiritual education research today?

I think that the way RE is taught is still not very innovative. Most pupils in Greece do not understand neither the religious church language (texts) nor religious art. In my opinion an important research area would investigate how can RE content be closely connected with the pupils' world? How can the pupils helped How RE can be best organized with the implementation of ICT?

I believe that ICT can hold a very important place in RE as they would help to the teaching of religious topics in ways that are both accessible and attractive to students and create a pleasant atmosphere.

My research interests focus: (a) on the results of the use of ICT on the teachers who nowadays have to use computers in class and integrate digital material into their teaching. What training competences/skills development (with lifelong learning) should they receive so that they can deal with this challenge? (b) how the use and integration of digital media and material in the teaching of RE can develop in the pupils skills such as, digital literacy (along with religious literacy), use of digital media and material in their works, create an interest and motivation in the innovative teaching approaches with ICT and promote collaboration with group work, creativity and understanding of the religious content.

I was coordinator for RE in Digital School project (of the Ministry of Education) which involved construction of digital instruction materials for ebooks and Learning Object Repository. I think it is an important topic for all areas of education but especially for RE because topics related to religions and ICT touch more the pupils who since their birth live with technology and understand much of the world through them.



Name: Ann Taves

Position: Professor of Religious Studies

Institution: University of California at Santa Barbara, Department of Religious Studies

Country: USA

Web link:

<http://www.religion.ucsb.edu/people/faculty/ann-taves/>

Research key words: experience, meaning, pluralism, formation, qualitative methods

1. What started your career as a researcher in the area of religious and spiritual education?

Actually, I think of myself as a scholar of religion, not as a religious or spiritual educator. Here in the U.S. that title is usually reserved for faculty who teach in theological schools. We would not have such a position in a public (state-funded) university. In the states, we have a fairly clear boundary between teaching about religion, which is OK in public schools, and religious formation, which is left to religious institutions. Most religious institutions in the US serve a fairly homogenous population that seeks to form people in the particular tradition represented by the institution. I realize that the situation in Europe is quite different.

2. What, in your opinion, is the most important area for religious and spiritual education research today?

Religious and spiritual educators teaching in pluralistic contexts, such as you have in Europe, face challenges that we have do not have in the US. This is one of the reasons I found your conference theme so interesting. As someone who was raised in a secular family and, thus, with no religious or spiritual education, I am intrigued by the question of what a secular version of religious or spiritual education might look like. For me, this translates into the question of how we can help non-religious students to find and articulate meaning within a secular or naturalistic worldview, i.e., without trying to "convert" them.

For some time now, the focus of my research has been on experiences, both unusual and ordinary, and how people decide what meaning they hold, whether religious, spiritual, secular, or pathological. I am particularly interested in practices that make some experiences stand out (become more salient) and the significance that traditions then ascribe to them, as well as the way that unusual experiences, in some cases, give rise to new spiritual paths and religious movements.

I think that experience is a particularly good way to approach the question of what a secular version of religious or spiritual education might look like, since most people have had some experiences that seem pregnant with meaning and others that seemed quite senseless. Given that common experiential base, we can explore different ways of helping people to wrestle more deeply with questions of meaning, purpose, and – in old fashioned religious terms – their sense of vocation in life.



Name: Manfred Pirner

Position: Professor

Institution: University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Chair of Religious Education

Country: Germany

Web link: <http://www.evrel.ewf.uni-erlangen.de/mitarbeiter-innen/pirner/>

Research key words: professionalism of RE teachers, religious and educational rationality, teaching and learning in religious education, human rights education and religion, theology of education

1. What started your career as a researcher in the area of religious and spiritual education?

My motivation has always been to improve the quality of religious education but also the quality of public education in general by bringing in perspectives from Christian theology. To both ends, empirical research is indispensable and can be quite illuminating. For instance, an empirical study among the educational staff of a big Christian youth work organization (Christliches Jugenddorfwerk Deutschland e.V., CJD) showed that many of them did not believe in God, but still indicated that they experience some aspects of Christian faith as being helpful and supportive for their educational task.

2. What, in your opinion, is the most important area for religious and spiritual education research today?

It is the question of how children and young people can best cope with and benefit from the plurality of religions and worldviews in modern societies. This question concerns almost all areas of public education, from kindergarten to adult education, but also education in families and religious communities. At present, it becomes especially urgent with regard to the children of refugees families. It seems to me that in research on refugees religion as a resource for coping as well as a cause for conflict is widely neglected or deliberately avoided. But I am convinced it has to be part of the educational challenge that lies ahead of us.



Name: Carles Salazar

Position: Professor of Social and Cultural Anthropology

Institution: University of Lleida, Departament d'Història de l'Art i Història Social

Country: Spain

Web link:

<http://www.hahs.udl.cat/hs/csalazar.htm>

Research key words: anthropology, cognition, evolution, religion, kinship, cooperation

1. What started your career as a researcher in the area of religious and spiritual education?

I am an anthropologist, my main area of research as far as religion is concerned, is the origins of religion and the comparative study of forms of religiosity rather than religious and spiritual education per se. My interest in the study of religion probably arose as a result of my own condition as a religious believer. I suppose I simply wanted to find out the origins of my own religious belief, taking into account that I do not come from a religious family and I did not receive any religious education in my childhood (quite the contrary, in fact). Anthropology helped me to understand human beings, in a broad comparative perspective that includes the whole mankind, for what they are rather than for what they should be. I take religiosity as a condition of human beings, as a fact of what is to be human, pretty much the same as our sexual, personal or collective identities. And as an anthropologist, I think my job is to try to understand human beings for what they are, in all their complexity. Furthermore, I think this understanding has to be done within the framework provided by scientific research. Anthropology teaches us to relativize all forms of knowledge, and certainly science is not the only form of knowledge available to us, but it is definitely a very important one. Consequently, I see my research in the area of religion as a limited one. I try to explain why humans have the religious beliefs they have with the resources provided by scientific research, both in the natural and the social sciences. But as a scientist I cannot go beyond that, and I am perfectly aware that that is only a partial truth about what is to be a human being and what is to be a religious human being.

2. What, in your opinion, is the most important area for religious and spiritual education research today?

I see religious and spiritual education as an integral part of the education that all humans should receive. But religious education is and has been different in different societies and historical periods according to prevailing moral values and ideological commitments. I believe that in contemporary democratic societies religious education has to face two important challenges. First, it has to make religion compatible with science, or religious education compatible with scientific education. This might not be a problem in most European societies but it is in other parts of the world. To this effect, I think that Stephen Jay Gould's principle of NOMA (Non Overlapping Magisteria) continues to be perfectly valid. But we need to develop this idea, not only in exploring what exactly should be included in religion's and science's magisteria but also in the way the two of them can be made compatible and complementary. Secondly, religious education has to address the issue of religious diversity. Religion and spirituality are universal human values, but the way we approach them are always historically and culturally specific. In the same way as we all have a native language but we are all aware that there are other languages and that it is good to know about those other languages, at least to be able to understand some of them. The same thing should apply to religious education, we cannot have more than one religion but we can know about other religions and we can try to understand them.

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SIG 19 NEWSLETTER: NOTES AND GUIDELINES

We want to encourage a wide participation in SIG 19 and in the Newsletter. If you intend to contribute to the newsletter, please take into account the following issues. You can make suggestions concerning to content of the SIG 19 and the newsletter. However, the editors retain the rights to alter and modify the contributions.

Interviews:

In each newsletter we will focus on one or two researchers connected to the SIG 19. One of the covered researchers is preferably a junior researcher. Please do not hesitate to make suggestions concerning the interviewees.

Reviews:

In this section the SIG members can review different things, such as, books, articles and conferences, etc. Please do not hesitate to contribute and to present also your own works. A review should not exceed 250 words.

Special feature:

This section we feature some interesting and inspirational aspect concerning the SIG 19 areas of interest. The author is invited by the editors with regards to the suggestions by the members. The contributions should not exceed 500 words.

Announcements:

If you feel that there is something relevant happening in the interest areas of SIG 19, please use this section. Such things are up-coming conferences and projects. This section can also include propositions for shared projects. The announcements should be 100 words at maximum.

New members:

We wish new members warmly welcome to our SIG 19! We will list the new members in this section after we have been informed by them.

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EARLI SIG 19 MEMBERSHIP – HOW TO JOIN US?

To become a member, you must first become a member of EARLI. For more information, please visit the EARLI website:

<http://www.earli.org/>

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