



SIG 19 Religions and Worldviews in Education Newsletter

Issue 2/2019

Dear SIG 19 Members and Friends,

In this autumn issue, you'll find information about our SIG's proceedings during the latest EARLI conference in Aachen, Germany on 12th-16th of August and information about the next SIG19 conference at Stockholm University, Sweden on 8th-11th of June, 2020. You will also find information about the decisions that were made in our business meeting and introductions of our coordinators and newsletter editors. After these introductions there are some photos from the past EARLI –conference. In this newsletter you can also find interviews in which Christina Osbeck and Cristian Simoni will provide insights to their career and current research.

More information about the Next SIG 19 Conference “*Values, Worldviews, and Religions in Education: Changing Realities in the City*” and its keynote speakers are provided in the end of this Newsletter. Please, mark the conference dates in your calendar! And please see the separate Call for Papers!

At the end of the Newsletter there are announcements and an appendix which is a collection of recent publications by our members and friends. The announcements are about an interesting European Academy of Religion conference and Invitation to an Open Seminar: Identities and Resilience in Times of Enhanced Nationalisms: Perspectives from Finland and the UK!

Have a Beautiful and Inspiring Autumn!

On behalf of SIG19 coordinators

Laura Hirsto

COORDINATORS

Laura Hirsto

University of Helsinki,
University of Eastern Finland

Martin Ubani

University of Eastern Finland

Alexander Unser

TU Dortmund
(JURE)

NUMBER OF SIG19

MEMBERS 33

RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP!

**YOUR CONTRIBUTION IS
IMPORTANT!**

EARLI CONFERENCE 2019 in AACHEN: SYMPOSIUMS ORGANISED BY SIG19

This year the 18th Biennial EARLI conference was organised in the beautiful city of Aachen in Germany next to the borders of Belgium and the Netherlands. During the conference our SIG organised three Symposiums and our members and friends presented their research findings in several other sessions as paper presentations, round table discussion and poster presentations. Our invited symposium: *Worldviews and religions in Education – perspective to functions and experiences* brought together viewpoints of the meaning of worldviews and religions in teaching and learning contexts.

The individual presentations within this symposium were held by Laura Hirsto (*University students' personal worldviews – Contextual experiences*), Arniika Kuusisto (*Positions of worldviews in education: Experiences from teachers and learners*), Terence Lovat (*The largely absent worldview needed for understanding global jihadism*) and Manfred Pirner and Nastja Häusler (*Religious and professional beliefs of schoolteachers – a literature review of empirical research*). Elina Kuusisto was chairing the symposium and Alexander Under was the discussant.

The second symposium was *Religious and Secular Plurality and RE Classroom interaction in Finland, Germany and Sweden*. The individual presentations within this symposium were held by Martin Ubani (*Is it a question of religion at all? Finnish students experiences of integrated RE classrooms*) Ulrich Riegel and Sarah Delling (*Addressing Religion and Secularity in German Catholic Education. An Analysis on Videotaped Lessons*), Christina Osbeck (*RE classroom research and hidden curricula in Sweden*) Karin K Flensner (*Divergent opinions and controversial issues in the Religious Education classroom practice*). Martin Ubani was chairing the symposium and Konstantin Lindner was the discussant.

The third symposium: *Finding purpose in education – A perspective of professionals* was organised by Elina Kuusisto and chaired by Alexander Unser. The discussant of the symposium was Doret De Ruyter. The individual presentation in the symposium were given by Elina Kuusisto (*How do Finnish teachers' life goals actualize in their profession?*), Sebastian Röhl (*Critical or positive effects of a religious calling to teach? A study among evangelical teachers*), Niina Manninen (*Finnish social services students' perceptions of purpose and helping*) and Jorien Copier (*Purposeful visions for the future – School leaders formulating aims for education*).

SIG19 BUSINESS MEETING AT EARLI CONFERENCE 2019, AACHEN, GERMANY

Our business meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 13th August, 2019 from 17:15-18:15

1. Opening and welcome

Coordinator Laura Hirsto opened the meeting. Kaisa Viinikka was chosen a secretary of this meeting and there were introductions of all attendees. Attendees in the meeting were: Elina Kuusisto, Alexander Unser, Martin Ubani, Arniika Kuusisto, Terry Lovat, Ulrich Riegel, Johannes Hammer, Manfred Pirner, Cristian Simoni, Carina Caruso, Jan Woppoma, Konstantin Lindner, Kaisa Viinikka, Christina Osbeck, Sarah Delling, Sarah Schlicht, Paulina Szymankiewicz, Karin K. Flensner, Jorien Copier, Sebastian Röhl, Niina Manninen and Nastja Häusler.

2. Elected new coordinators:

We warmly thanked Elina Kuusisto for her work as a SIG19 coordinator now that she is stepping aside. We welcomed Martin Ubani as a new coordinator for SIG19 along with Laura Hirsto and Alexander Unser (JURE coordinator) who continue in their positions.

3. Newsletter

The position of the Newsletter editor was opened for a period of two years 2019-2021. Early Stage Researcher Kaisa Viinikka was chosen as a Newsletter editor. There was a discussion during the meeting that it would be good to have two Newsletter editors and Niina Manninen agreed to be an editor together with Kaisa.

4. Edited Journal Special Issues

Coordinator Laura Hirsto told about edited Journal Special Issues after the SIG 19 Conference in Joensuu (2018):

Hirsto, L., Kuusisto, E., & Ubani, M. (Eds.) (2019). Special issue "International perspectives on worldviews in education." *International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research*, 18(5). <https://www.ijlter.org/index.php/ijlter/issue/view/68>

Kuusisto, E., Hirsto, L., & Ubani, M. (Eds.) (2019). Special issue "Religions and worldviews creating purpose and meaning for learning." *Journal of Values & Beliefs* <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13617672.2019.1616400>

5. Seventh SIG 19 Conference in 2020

Theme: Values, Worldviews and Religions in Education: Changing Realities in the City

One of the organizers professor Arniika Kuusisto presented details on the Stockholm conference June 8-11, 2020.

6. Recruitment of new members

Coordinator Laura Hirsto told about the current situation of SIG 19. Now we have 33 members and there have to be approximately 30 members for each SIG to exist as a separate group. It is crucial that our members will renew their membership and new members join this SIG. She told that it is important to be as visible as possible and suggestions for new ways of visibility are welcome. Next there was the



discussion about how we could get more members from different parts of Europe for instance from South-Europe and United Kingdom. There were also ideas that our SIG could do more collaboration and interaction with other conferences (e.g. ISREV and AULRE) and SIGS.

7. Other matters to be discussed

Peer reviewers will be needed for EARLI related journals and those who are volunteers for that position can sign up for the coordinators and they will choose the peer reviewers. Ulrich Riegel told about series of Waxmann: *Research on Religious and Spiritual Education* which is a great avenue for members to publish their research in. The other matter that was discussed was that members wanted, for example own symposium and an award for the best presentation at the next SIG 19 conference in Stockholm. There could also be like "Tournée of SIG19" in the conference that for instance PhD students from the University of Helsinki and University of Eastern Finland could attend.

8. Closing

Coordinator Laura Hirsto closed the meeting.

After the business meeting, the coordinators invited all to join for a dinner at a local restaurant in Aachen.



Dr. Laura Hirsto works as a Senior Lecturer in University Pedagogy at the Center for University Teaching and Learning at the University of Helsinki and as a research director at the Department of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education at the University of Eastern Finland. She also holds the Title of Docent in educational psychology (Associate professor) at the University of Helsinki. Dr. Hirsto has worked at the University of Helsinki for over fifteen years at the Department of Teacher Education and at the Faculty of Theology. She also worked at the Aalto University as an educational/academic developer, and for the last four years at the University of Eastern Finland. Her research has focused on worldview issues in the learning processes of children as well as contextualized motivational and learning processes of university students. She has also studied (university) teacher learning. Currently, she is involved with investigating university students' and teachers' learning and motivational processes and educational development in a flipped learning environment, as well as elementary and secondary school students' experiences and perspectives to learning in a tablet based learning environment. Dr. Hirsto has been participating at EARLI –conferences since 1999, and she has been a member of the SIG 19 for almost a decade.



Martin Ubani has worked since 2013 as the Professor of Religious Education at the School of Theology and School of Applied Sciences in Education and Teacher Education, University of Eastern Finland. He is a research fellow at the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem, Israel since 2016. Encouraged by his PhD supervisors Professors Kirsi Tirri and Arto Kallioniemi, Martin's first EARLI was in 2005. There he became the co-newsletter editor for newly established sig19 newsletter for 2 years. In 2007 he was the chair of JURE conference in Budapest, and a member of the EARLI IPC for the 2009 EARLI conference. His research interests are around different aspects of religion and education. Lately he has entertained his studies on religion in public schools, classroom research, and religious literacy in the 21st century skills framework.



I am Alexander – the former and the new JURE coordinator of SIG 19. I work as Assistant Professor for Catholic Theology and Religious Education at TU Dortmund University since this year after finishing my PhD on social inequality and interreligious learning at the University of Würzburg in 2018. During the last years, I had the opportunity to work in an interdisciplinary project on religion and human rights. My current quantitative-empirical research focuses on social inequality in religious education, on interreligious learning, and the political dimension of religiosity.

INTRODUCTIONS: SIG 19 NEWSLETTER EDITORS

I am Kaisa Viinikka (ThM and MSS), PhD student and Early Stage Researcher at the University of Eastern Finland. I am RE, history, psychology and civics teacher. I am doing research in “21st century skills, multiple literacies and development of RE teacher education” –project. The topic of my thesis is RE student teachers and their professional development in the light of 21st century skills. My research interests are focusing on RE, teacher education, professional development, competence and teaching.



I am Niina Manninen (PhD in Education, BSS). I defended my thesis on Social services students’ education and purposes in life at the University of Helsinki in May 2019. I have been a senior lecturer at Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Social Wellbeing unit for the past nine years. I have been teaching, for example, social exclusion related processes and phenomena and how to promote inclusive practices in the field of social education. My research interests include purpose in life, morality in social work practice and resilience, spirituality and hope in social educational work.



Beautiful Aachen Dom

SIG 19 Business meeting: Arniika Kuusisto introducing the next SIG19 conference in Stockholm





Attendees at our business meeting

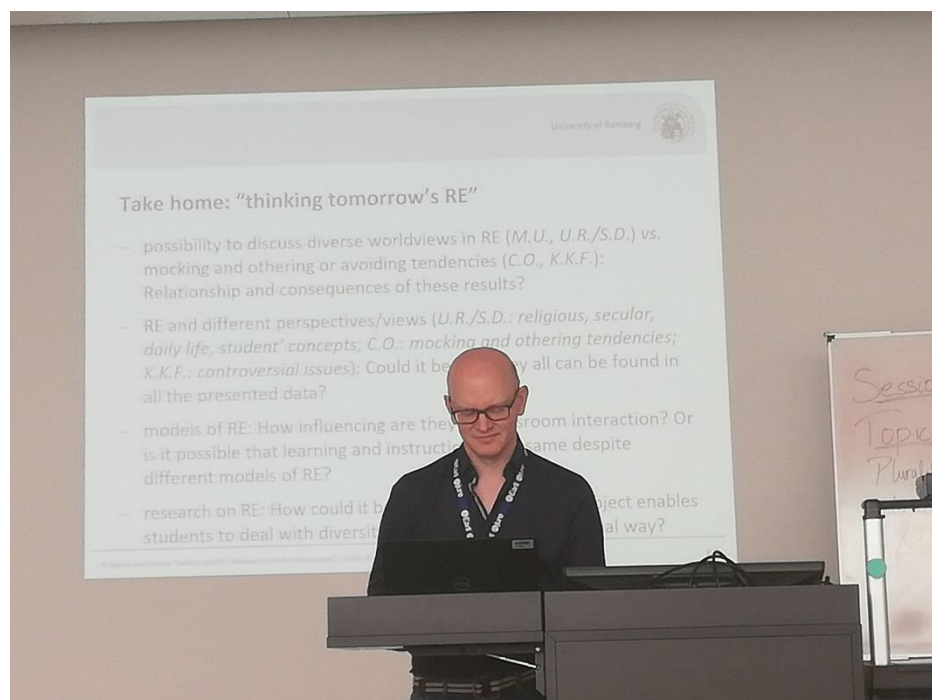


Elina Kuusisto presents the concept of Purpose in Life



Niina Manninen presents a study that was done in collaboration with her PhD supervisors Elina Kuusisto and Kirsi Tirri

Konstantin Lindner was the discussant at Religious and Secular Plurality and RE Classroom interaction in Finland, Germany and Sweden -symposium





Both pictures are from SIG19 dinner after the business meeting.
The place was a lovely Italian restaurant thanks to Alexander Unser who had arranged the place.





Position: Associate Professor in Social Studies Education, Head of Department

Institution: Department of Pedagogical, Curricular and Professional Studies, University of Gothenburg

Research keywords: Religious education, values education, moral education, ethics, world views [livsförståelse], didactic [didaktik], discursive practices, classroom studies

What started your career as a researcher in the area of religions and worldviews in education?

My work in the field of RE research started when I was a student and my supervisor asked me to assist her on a project about children's reception of differently told religious narratives. Later on, in 2006, I finished my dissertation on pupils' life interpretations and how bullying in school works as a shaping and homogenizing tool of life interpretations.

What, in your opinion, is the most important area religions and worldviews in education research today?

Since my dissertation, I have been interested in developing RE research in a direction towards ongoing learning processes, such as processes in RE classrooms, and I still find that this is an important area to develop more knowledge about, due to the lack of studies here. I think it is important to pay attention to hidden curricula and I have had a special focus on knowledge of RE as language, and how potential learning is related to hegemonic speech genres of classrooms, understood as discursive practices.

In Sweden, RE as a school subject includes worldviews and ethics, but less research has been paid towards these as content areas, why I think these are important to research further, which I also have tried to contribute to myself. One research project I would like to mention in this regard is EthiCo "What may be learnt in ethics? Varieties of conceptions of ethical competence to be taught in compulsory school", and couple of others in progress are "Refining the ethical eye and ethical voice – The possibilities and challenges of a fiction-based approach to ethics education" as well as "The Child and Curriculum. Existential Questions and Educational Responses".

What was your personal highlight at EARLI conference 2019 in Aachen?

Even though I have been active in the RE field for several years now, I had not yet been to an EARLI conference, so this was as such a very interesting experience. I enjoyed the possibility to meet new colleagues and discuss informally, which I find to be of special value. I appreciated several presentations during the conference, some of which I have had reason to come back to, such as the keynote by Eckhard Klieme "Research on Teaching: Content matter, practices, quality and effectiveness" and the invited symposium of SIG 19 "Worldviews and religions in education – perspectives to functions and experiences".



Position and Institutions:

Assistant at the Chair of Philosophy of Education at the University of Padua. Teaching positions in “Religion Didactics” and “Laboratory of religious education” at the ISSR of Rimini and Forlì (Institutes of Religion Sciences connected with the Faculty of Theology of Bologna). I’m also a high school religion teacher.

Research keywords: Adolescent religious education, practical knowledge, values-oriented educational action

What started your career as a researcher in the area of religions and worldviews in education?

My research on religious education started with my thesis of my Master Degree in Philosophy. I did an empirical research about values and religious conceptions of the adolescents of the Northern-Italy province where I’m still living. The final work was also published (in Italian) with the contribution of other two colleagues that took part at the research group. At that time, I had already completed a previous academic Degree in Religion Sciences and I was working as religion teacher. Before the academic one, I received an informal education in order to act as religious volunteer educator in extra-school contexts. Religious education has been, then, an important part of my life; it has involved both my practical and theoretical activities. After my first research, I’d like to precise, I did my Ph.D. in philosophy of education and since then I’m maintaining in parallel these two research itineraries. The one in philosophy of education has permitted me to study some prerequisites of the religious and value-oriented educational action, too.

What, in your opinion, is the most important area religions and worldviews in education research today?

I think, without rhetoric, that every branch of religious and spiritual education research could reveal precious for different reasons; I sincerely believe in this. The importance of a multifaceted and disseminated research on religious and spiritual education is connected, I think, with the goal to strengthen the claim of scientific foundation of these disciplines. Obviously, in order to enhance a research-field, not only a quantitative and a qualitative growth is needed. In fact, the advancement of our domain has to be accompanied and fostered especially by the epistemological studies. Personally, I feel myself strongly involved in adolescent religious education because I agree with the idea of the existence of new important challenges regarding this topic. Someone has spoken about a real educational emergency, but, even if I’m not keen in approaching educational themes starting from a negative framework, I recognize we need something new to say to adolescents in our times. Summing up: I would recommend both the advancement of the epistemological research and the one regarding particular current questions that could help educators’ practice.

What was your personal highlight at EARLI conference 2019 in Aachen?

It has been my first plenary EARLI biennial conference. I found convincing the formula of the symposia proposed by the SIGs and the other sections based on putting together papers with similar topic. About our SIG 19 I can really say that I had absolutely a positive impression, I perceived the passion for researching and researching together. Hence, the desire to comprehend and to respond to the nowadays religious educational problematic from one hand and, on the other hand, the will to create a real community of researchers. I’d like to thank all colleagues I met for the warm welcomed received.



Organizers:

Professor Arniika Kuusisto, Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden (Left)

Professor Jenny Berglund, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Education, Stockholm University, Sweden (Right)

Keynote speakers:



Dr Tünde Puskás

University Lecturer, Docent at Linköping University, Sweden. Research on ethnicity, language, culture and religion and the construction of national and ethnic identities. Background in ethnic and migration studies; how difference based on ethnic categories is negotiated, articulated and re/constructed in everyday practice and in narratives. Current research project on cultural heritage tradition and religion in Swedish preschool practices; How are religion, traditions and cultural heritage handled in the world of preschool? How does this influence children's daily lives?

Dr Anna Strahn

Lecturer in Sociology at University of York, with two PhDs: First a philosophical PhD on the implications of the work of Emmanuel Levinas for how we think about the relations between subjectivity, ethics and education → “Levinas, Subjectivity, Education: Towards an Ethics of Radical Responsibility” The Second PhD in sociology of religion; theoretical interests in morality, meaning-making and modernity; negotiating faith – including countercultural teachings on gender, sexuality, and other religions – across different urban spaces → “Aliens and Strangers? The Struggle for Coherence in the Everyday Lives of Evangelicals”, also shortlisted for the *BSA/BBC Thinking Allowed Ethnography Award*. Research and teaching in the sociology of religion, “in conversation with the sociology of the family, childhood studies, urban sociology, the sociology of the body, and the anthropology of religion and ethics” Leading an ethnographic project on nonreligious children in the UK; on reconstructing the forms of nonreligion and secularity through everyday practices.



Professor David Thurfjell

Professor in the study of Religions at Södertörn University in Stockholm, Sweden. PhD in History of Religions from Uppsala University (2003) and has since published widely within the field. Research includes secularization and religious change, religion among Romani people, Iranian and Shi'ite studies, Pentecostal studies, ritual and postcolonial theory. Perhaps most popular of his books is “Det gudlösa folket: de postkristna svenskarna och religionen” (The godless people: the post-Christian swedes and religion) (Molin & Sorgenfrei 2015). President of the Swedish association for the history of religions.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

This conference will be held in Bologna (Italy):

<https://www.europeanacademyofreligion.org/euare2020>

(a panel of the conference will be dedicated to religious education)

Invitation to an Open Seminar

Please see the invitation to an Open Seminar: *Identities and Resilience in Times of Enhanced Nationalisms: Perspectives from Finland and the UK!*

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.

Publication & contact:

Kaisa Viinikka, University of Eastern Finland, Finland

kaisa.viinikka@uef.fi

Niina Manninen, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences, Finland

niina.manninen@metropolia.fi

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