

STEFAN HEIL · MANFRED RIEGGER

The Professional Habitus in Religious Education

**Theory and Practice
of Competence-Based Teacher Training –
including Professional Simulation**

echter

if you need to train the following aspects: context (German *Kontext*), skills (German *Fertigkeiten*), cognitive abilities (German *Fähigkeiten*), competences as a cognitive system of rules (German *Kompetenzen*) and habitus. In the next part I give a case study.

5.2 Classroom interruptions and Professional Simulation (Manfred Riegger)

In this chapter I'll give an example of the above-mentioned phases in the context of teacher education.

In Germany we have 16 federal states and each state has different political guidelines for teacher education. In general, students have to study four or five years at a university and after graduation there is a one- or two-year-long internship in schools. After this preparation the person can teach as a teacher on their own. In studies at university there are at least two phases of practice in schools (German *Schulpraktika*). Typically phases of practice are prepared with a preparatory or accompanied class. Sometimes the practice at school is followed up by a review class.

According to the teacher training curriculum in Germany, the primary goal of the whole process is the realization of a quasi-scientific study, an inquiry, which has been prepared during the preparatory or accompanied class. Therefore the whole process is called teaching practice in schools (German *Schulpraktische Studien*). There are findings on longitudinal studies that the students do not conceive the teaching practice phase according to the concept behind the teacher training curriculum. For them, the practice period means first and foremost the chance to get in contact with the field of their future job, to learn about the duties and responsibilities of teachers, and experience everyday life at school. In particular, the students had the feeling that they could test their qualifications as a teacher. However, the positive experiences during the practice period did not change the negative general assessment of pre-service teacher training.

The integration of practical phases into a general concept which links practical and theoretical elements too is left to the universities. For inter-

relation we have to avoid disconnectedness. Therefore we have to create “third spaces”. Third spaces in teacher education are spaces where academic knowledge, practitioner knowledge and the knowledge that exists in communities come together in new, less hierarchical ways, in the service of teacher learning. In this case study I will create such a third space by means of Professional Simulation.

0. Planning the simulation process: “I don’t want to go to heaven.”

This case study is part of the teacher preparation programme in the subject Religious Education at the University of Augsburg in Bavaria, Germany, Catholic-Theological Faculty, in Summer 2018, from 12 April to 12 July.

1. The learning setting

1.1 Scheduling etc.

The case took place in the class “Planning and Analysing Religious Education” at the University of Augsburg, 3.45–5.15 p. m. under the leadership of Manfred Riegger. The 12 students (11 female, 1 male) wanted to become teachers in secondary schools (German *Mittelschule*). On Thursday morning they are in different schools to observe lessons in Religious Education and give lessons in Religious Education. In the afternoon they learn scientifically how to teach. In the 9th session the described example took place.

1.2 Content-related preparation

In the case of disruptive classroom behaviour (cf. Riegger 2019b) in a lesson with the topic heaven, looking at empiric research on the causes, alternative actions and evaluation would be a part of the preparation.

For the habitus formation through simulation, the topic of heaven was chosen. If no previous knowledge in systematic theology exists, students may self-educate themselves with a reading list. This is the basis for fundamental considerations (German *Elementarisierung*) (cf. Schweitzer et al. 2019; Riegger 2019a, 88-96), in the “basic structures” of the content and in the “basic approach” of students in their ways of thinking (cf. Büttner/Dieterich 2016) about heaven: archaic, physical, physiological and psychological, post-mortal conceptions of heaven (religious and theologic-

al) and hybrid conceptions of heaven (cf. Riegger 2019a, 93) are discussed. In addition “basic experiences” and “basic truths” are shaping the content-related work process which has to proceed the planning of the “basic learning process” incorporated in the simulation.

2. Cooperation contract between the professor and students

2.1 Relationship of the students

Most students think: there is way too much theory at university. Therefore all students of the class were happy to participate in simulated practice. Nobody was forced to simulate something or someone.

2.2 Willingness to acquire competences

The students want to grow in competences, because they want to become professional teachers.

2.3 Clarify the aim

The students want to observe and react professionally in the conflicting situation in which a pupil says: “I don’t want to go to heaven.”

3. Simulation

3.1 Design of the scene

Participants are sitting in a semicircle. At the front, a desk and two chairs for a sketched outline of the scene; Religious Education lesson in year 9 (secondary school, German *Mittelschule*); the lesson has already started; the spelled-out role of a pupil is played by a student (if possible by an expert teacher); other roles may be outlined in a given case. The role of the teacher is going to be played by one student at a time.

3.2 Attunement

Except for the teacher, every role has been cast. At this point the leader is introducing the scene, e.g. “This is the part of the classroom that’s important to us. We are currently in the middle of a Religious Education lesson in year 9. The topic is heaven. Peter is listening but seems to be bored.”

3.3 Leader releases an impulse

Explanation by the leader: "The different meaning of sky and heaven is being explained to the students by Mr. Maier. Whoever wants to take over the role of the teacher (Mr. Maier) can come forward and do so. Two of the students are sitting over here." At this point the leader is stepping down from the simulated scene. "You can take over the role of Mr. Maier one at a time. Step in his scene and simulate what you would do in his case. Once you are done, please return to your seat."



Photo 1: Classroom simulation at university

3.4 Carrying out the action in five steps

A participant takes on the role of the teacher and steps in front of the students explaining: "In German there is only one word for heaven and sky, but the English language has two words. Can someone offer an explanation of the different meanings?" As a pupil wants to answer the question, another pupil shouts out: "I don't want to go to heaven! It is way too boring there! I would rather go to hell!" The interaction between "pupil" and "teacher" continues until someone else takes on the role of the teacher.

Multiple alternative actions are being simulated one after another, but the interruption by the pupil remains the same. The leader of the class decides on the optimal time to continue with the next point on the agenda.

3.5 Sharing of personal experiences

The simulated teacher said: "I was shocked. I couldn't say anything." The simulated pupil said: "I felt good, because I won the battle."

3.6 Change of perspective: Sharing the experiences of others using one's own experiences, taking into account the perception of the experience of others

"It was easy for me to empathize with the teacher in scene 1. If I had been Mr. Maier, I couldn't have said anything at first either. I think: every Christian wants to go to heaven. I would have had to think about the pupil's answer."

3.7 Finishing off the simulation

The table and chairs used in the simulation are carried away. Nobody sits on those chairs or uses that table. The leader of the simulation could say: "We are back to our classroom at the university. If you are still in the role of simulation, please let it go."

4. Reflection on habitus formation

There are three forms of reflections.

4.1 Pragmatic-reflective reflection

After the simulation a student says: "I never thought that I wouldn't have a response to a pupil's interjection. Now I have few responses."

While this step focuses on increasing the competency of actions in a school setting, the purely pragmatic reasoning is supported by scientific theories.

4.2 Reflective-scientific reflection

"Though I did know that the biblical heaven could be understood as 'seeing God' (1 Cor 13,12), I was unaware of the possibility of experiencing this abstract as boring and therefore undesirable."

4.3 Biographical-reflective knowledge if necessary for professionalization
A reflection with explicit biographical references could show that some participants have never thought about 'heaven' up to this point. Is this not necessary to inspire action in the processes of education?

5. Evaluation

It wasn't possible to do assessments (5.1) and empirical measurement of the effects (5.2) in this class, but at the end of the session all students were happy (5.3). Two weeks later, a student said: "In class a similar interjection came up – with a smile – and I was prepared."

Conclusion

This case study of Professional Simulation is well done. But we need much more empirical evidence.

5.3 Teacher training – Professional Simulation of communication strategies in classroom interaction as a contribution to professional habitus formation (Stefan Heil)

To gain a deeper insight into the process of habitus formation, two case studies situated in different contexts are presented. Both case studies take a closer look at how the theory of professional habitus formation in Religious Education can be used in professional and scientific practice.

The first case gives an example of how the professional habitus can be formed intentionally by means of teacher training at university. The application of the new method Professional Simulation (ProfiS) delivers a vivid example of students' habitus formation.

Context

An example of the implementation of Professional Simulation in teacher training emerges from a seminar at the University of Würzburg, Chair of Religious Education. The seminar is entitled "Successful Communication in Religious Education". It is placed in the modules "Concepts and Topics