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The Professional Habitus in Religious Education

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

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5. Case studies

(Manfred Riegger & Stefan Heil)

In this chapter we explain the phases of "Professional Simulation (ProfiS)" (5.1) and apply it to several cases derived from teacher education (5.2), teacher training (5.3) and empirical research on Catholic schools (5.4).

5.1 Phases of Professional Simulation ***(Manfred Riegger)***

Introduction

In teacher education most real-world classroom systems are too complex to allow realistic simulations by computers. But at some point, there is a need to study a classroom system to try to gain some insight into the relationship among various components or to predict performance under some new conditions being considered. In such a case we could do an experiment with the current classroom system. For example, a pupil may be placed out of the classroom to reduce interruptions. Testing something like this could lead to long delays and alienation, not to mention the ethical problems. For such reasons, it is usually necessary to create a model as a representation of the system and study it as a surrogate for the current classroom system. For this purpose we create a specific simulation, a simulation to increase professionalization. When using a model in Professional Simulation, there is always the question of whether it accurately reflects the part of the classroom system for the purpose of the decisions to be made. To improve the model validity, ex-

pert teachers can be very helpful. This section of the chapter explains the sequence of actions of Professional Simulation (ProfiS) by means of teacher education.

Sequence of actions: phases and sections of Professional Simulation (ProfiS)

A look at the sequence of actions of Professional Simulation implies two steps: firstly the one hand there is a structure, a form. After planning there are five phases and several sections (see Figure 16). Secondly the structure has to be filled with content.

| Phases | Sections |
|------------------------------------|---|
| 0. Planning | Planning the process of teaching and learning |
| 1. Preparation | 1.1 Scheduling etc. 1.2 Content-related preparation |
| 2. Working alliance | 2.1 Relationship of the participants 2.2 Willingness to acquire competences 2.3 Clarify the aim |
| 3. Simulation | 3.1 Design of the scene 3.2 Attunement 3.3 Impulse 3.4 Carrying out the action 3.5 Sharing of personal experiences 3.6 Change of perspective: Sharing the experiences of others 3.7 Finishing off the simulation |
| 4. Reflection on habitus formation | 4.1 Pragmatic-reflective reflection 4.2 Reflective-scientific reflection 4.3 Biographical-reflective knowledge if necessary for professionalization |
| 5. Evaluation | 5.1 Assessments (e. g. review at the next meeting supported by questions; written self-assessment of the impacts after a defined time) 5.2 Empirical measurement of the effect (e. g. questionnaire) 5.3 Emotional closure (e. g. acknowledging positive feelings, handing over of afflicting emotions) |

Fig. 16: Phases and sections of Professional Simulation

Description of actions: phases and sections of Professional Simulation (ProfiS)

Here I will describe in detail the phases outlined above.

0. Planning the simulation process

Like every learning process, you have to plan Professional Simulation

1. Preparation of the learning setting

Characteristic: During preparation the following aspects are important: scheduling, provided room etc. (1.1), content-related preparation (1.2).

1.1 The decisions might be based on the following questions:

How much time is given (more than 45 minutes)?

- Can the seating arrangement be changed?
- Are technical tools needed (simulator, software, hardware etc.)?

1.2 Content-related preparation

This part of preparation can include a theoretical analysis of the topic. It might be necessary to discuss specific information concerning the simulation, like preconditions of a specific learning situation or school type.

2. Working alliance between leadership and participants

Characteristic: The working alliance is important because Professional Simulation is a specific way to learn. Three aspects are specific: the relationship of the participants (2.1), the willingness to acquire competences (2.2) and clarifying the aim (2.3).

This phase is about the clarification of the foundations of the "working alliance" between leadership and participants. The phrase "working alliance" originates from the theory of professionalism (Oevermann 1996) and specifies the relationship between professional and client. The phrase was chosen due to the professional nature of the course, but could (on a meta-reflection level) also become the object of the simulation itself. On a foundational level, the "working alliance" defines the communicative relationship of all participants as well as discussing the participants' openness. This can happen in a number of different ways, e.g. in a conversation, through a questionnaire or in a stimulus. It is essential to clarify the preconditions and the participants' willingness to grow in their expertise. An emphasis on competence is also part of this phase. After clarifying the openness and relationships of the participants, the objectification follows. This is achieved by focusing in on the aim. In this way, the objectively verifiable criteria of the simulation are made visible.

It is essential to clarify the nature of the seminar. Simulation is not simply an abstract, cognitive way of learning, but based on and leading towards experiences. Thus, getting personally involved in the learning processes is a key precondition. Nobody can be forced to be an active part of a simulation! But compared to a mainly cognitive way of learning, knowledge acquisition through specific actions in a simulation can make a difference. The simulation of actions makes it possible to test these on probation without the fear of making non-reversible mistakes. More precisely: trying out without the fear of making non-reversible mistakes and even experiencing less successful actions offers opportunities for growth and the development of competences.

3. Simulation

3.1 Design of the scene

Characteristic: Search for a distinguishing situation or scene and a reduction on a few simulation parameters (if applicable: common) (=model). The scene is built up with real-life props and the help of imagination.

The scene, which ought to be as close to reality (real life) as possible, forms the initial point of the simulation. The set-up of that scene is fundamental, as the informative value depends significantly on the considered conditions. The gathered information is summed up fundamentally focusing on the issue. A reduction of reality on the essential factors is necessary: unchangeable or at least only minimally changeable preconditional and contextual variables, as well as process and product variables (cf. Dunkin et al. 1974).

Requirement variables are:

- Previous experiences of the teacher (milieu of origin, age, gender etc.)
- Experiences gained during teacher training (university, subjects studied, practical experiences)
- Characteristics of the teacher (skills, abilities, competences, attitude, motivation, expected self-efficiency etc.)

Context variables could be:

- Previous experiences of the learner (milieu of origin, age, gender etc.)

- Experiences of previous lessons (bored in Religious Education lessons etc.)
- Characteristics of the learners (skills, abilities, competences, attitude, motivation, expected self-efficiency etc.)
- Context (ethnic formation of the learning group, working climate etc.)

Both kinds of variables have an impact on the way teachers and students act in a lesson. The outcome of the lesson is made visible in “product variables” (skills, abilities, competences, attitude etc.). The scene comprises a specific situation, for example a female student, a male student and the role of a teacher in a specific situation, which can be casted variably during the simulation.

The set-up of the “simulation scene” is crucial. The context of the simulated scenario has to be constructed in a way that the participants can easily put themselves in the position of their appointed persons. During the scenario, one has to empathize with the role played. The way of their thinking and acting ought to be experienced. If someone distances himself from the reality of the scene, corrections to the simulation should be made.

3.2 Attunement

Characteristic: Information concerning the context of the simulation is given in order to point out the similarities between the model and the reality outside.

In this stage, the task is to activate the attention of all participants and their willingness to engage, and to awaken their interest in the simulation. The necessity of subjects to engage with the content requires an individual form of “setting the scene”. Information concerning the context of the simulation is needed in order to point out the similarities between the model and the reality outside in a comprehensive way. The language should neither be too elaborate nor too brief. Terminology is to be translated into everyday language.

3.3 Leader releases an impulse

Characteristic: The leader sets the simulation in motion.

When everything has been prepared for the simulation, the leader has to release an impulse, an incentive (Latin *pellere*, English *push*) in order to set the simulation in motion and to activate the thinking and acting of the participants. This could generally be any action by the leader in charge of the simulation: differentiated body language, the use of objects and media etc. Verbal actions are of particular importance, especially when looking at the instructions of participants. The call to action has to be clear and distinct.

3.4 Carrying out the action in five steps

Characteristic: Actions and alternatives are simulated.

Now the actual simulation takes place in the five steps: perception – categorization – empirical assessment – decision – intervention (see 4.5.1). This constitutes the actual core of the simulation. Alongside the specified roles rooted in real-life behaviour patterns, the role of the teacher is roughly outlined but individually cast and therefore also individually acted out. At least two, preferably more, different sets of actions should be simulated. This enables new and different approaches to the scene. Based on the information given (sticking to unchangeable variables) concerning their role, participants are free to act out their roles independently. It can be helpful to act in the opposite way to your natural inclination instead of following ideal behaviour.

When *acting* in the simulation, consequences of particular actions can be experienced, repeated, corrected and modified due to close to reality circumstances but without fearing the risk of serious consequences. In all of this, there can never be only one correct or optimal solution. Some actions may however be more successful than others. Modifying your own actions is possible at nearly every stage. The intensity of the action with which problems are solved impacts the formation of a habitus.

Various actions are simulated. Multiple scenarios with different participants taking over the teacher's role are simulated one after another.

3.5 Sharing of personal experiences

Characteristic: The participants share their experiences.

"Sharing of personal experiences" can be interpreted in a number of ways: it can be about one's own perception of how one performed, the dis-

closure of one's own intention in the simulation, or the achieved intention, the impact of the performance.

- What did I achieve?
- What was communicated to the other participants?

This perspective on the simulation allows the person being simulated to express his or her perceptions on the simulation and to bring the experienced situation to the mind of everyone present including oneself. An important medium in this case is the simple narrative. When storytelling, the experience is put into context and freely interpreted without referencing theoretical knowledge. The subjective experience, which is not available to the external observer, is thereby made visible and, to some extent, even comprehensible to others.

The leader of the class might say the following: "Let us sit in a circle and talk about the simulated alternative actions starting with alternative 1 and the following scenes. There are questions to structure the conversation. Each time we will start with the simulated teacher, followed by the simulated student."

- Finding the role: "How did you approach your role?"
- Expectations of the role of the teacher: "What did you intend with your actions?" (e.g. "I wanted ..."). "Could you achieve what you intended?"
- Experience of the role of the pupils: "What was your perception?", "Could you achieve what you intended?"

The leader of the simulation is responsible for ensuring that the experiences are shared one after another and that no evaluation happens in between.

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

Characteristic: Observers tell of their own experiences which they were reminded of by the experiences of others.

The communication about the experience of the other participants is in the centre of attention. It can be useful to put rules into place for

giving feedback in order to prevent inappropriate comments. The observers contribute by sharing their perspective from the context of their role.

It is not about assessment, but about the contribution of one's own perspective based on one's own experience in light of the simulation. The starting point is "alternative 1", followed by the later scenes. A possible question could be introduced by the leader, including the beginnings of possible answers.

- "With which roles and behaviours can you empathize? Please start your description with 'As a ...', e.g. 'As pupil X, as teacher Y, I felt ... when I did ...'."
- "With whom did you interact in your role?" "How did you, in your role, experience the other person in his or her role?"
- "When hearing the report of the other person, which experiences did you remember?" "Caused by participant 1's report, I remembered a similar experience I had ..."

3.7 Finishing off the simulation

Characteristic: individual letting go of roles, de-setting of the scene

Nobody takes on pupil or teacher roles any more. The scene is to be de-set and all props are put away. The circle of chairs is restored. Now, a conversation about the whole simulation takes place.

4. Reflection on habitus formation

According to the famous French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, "habitus" is "a system of internalized patterns" (Bourdieu 1974, 143) which enable people to act almost automatically. To professionalize the action in teacher education, we have to reflect these patterns. There are three forms of reflection.

4.1 Pragmatic-reflective reflection

Characteristic: discovery of new action based insights

In light of the simulation thematic correlations, special contributions or strongly differentiating experiences are discussed, bearing in mind the possible practical application. Often the present "expert teacher" plays an

important role as he or she is able to connect the experiences of the simulation with his or her real-life experiences with reality by introducing similar situations.

Of further use can be questions which allow another reflective and pragmatic understanding of the simulation. Possible questions for the whole group are:

- “Which alternative actions could be applied to your reality?”
- “What did you learn for yourself in this simulation?”

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

Characteristic: discovery of new scientific insights

The experiences made within the simulation which so far have been reviewed by the above steps – as a result of which at least some of which have been added to new insights – are now used for scientific theories. This enables a thought through personal opinion including theories based on scientific criteria.

In light of pedagogical, content, pedagogical content, technological pedagogical content theory (cf. 2.2) – in comparison to the preparation – deeper reasons and sources are discovered.

4.3 Biographical-reflective knowledge if necessary for professionalization

Characteristic: discovery of new professional and biographical insights

Last but not least, a reflection of the biographical elements, depending on the profession, can follow, although in theatre formation at the university probably individually.

5. Evaluation

Characteristic: verifiable gathering of information and review at the next meeting (5.1); empirical measurement of the effect (e.g. questionnaire from Riegger, M./Negele, M./Lehmann-Grube, S. 2019) (5.2), emotional closure (5.3).

- 5.1 Assessments (e.g. review at the next meeting supported by questions; written self-assessment of the impacts after a defined time)

At the very end, the impact of the simulation is to be looked at. This step can only be standardized to some extent, although it should be as standardized as possible in the way information about planning, process and results of the whole simulation are gathered. The gathering of information should be as verifiable as possible.

- 5.2 Empirical measurement of the effects (e.g. questionnaire, interviews)
Important too is the testing of acquired competencies. By means of a standardized test the longevity of the competencies is eroded. This test can serve the purpose of discovering the actually acquired competencies. After the effect of the addressed topics has been defined, the "felt" effect can be looked at.

- 5.3 Emotional closure (e.g. acknowledging positive feelings, handing over of afflicting emotions)

Because of the experience-orientated learning done in the simulation, a conclusion including the emotional side is required. Nobody should leave the classroom with unresolved emotional baggage. *For the "emotional conclusion"* the following questions could be helpful:

- "Which responses did the simulation trigger in you?"
- "The simulation went really deep (was really intense?). What are you going to take with you? What are you leaving here?"
- "Which responses were triggered by the context?"
- "How do you feel now? Everyone should answer this question."
- "What did the simulation trigger in me?"
- "What baggage are you still carrying with you?"
- "Which emotions did you feel throughout the simulation?"

Content can be talked about before addressing emotional aspects connected to the experience or in reverse order.

Conclusion

This sequence of actions of Professional Simulation is well proven. Professional Simulation may also work in other types of training. You can use it

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-