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# **The Professional Habitus in Religious Education**

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

**echter**

regarded as professional in a narrower sense (cf. 2.1). The following considerations are indispensable to broaden the horizon of practitioners in order to prevent such one-sided assessments.

## **2.3 Professionalized habitus and case relation, and expert repertoire**

### *Discipline and/or profession*

The following differentiations tend towards the functional distinction of discipline and profession (cf. Stichweh 2013). Discipline refers to the entire field of science in which research processes and theory construction take place. On the one hand, the term “discipline” indicates teachable, systematically structured bodies of knowledge, thus scientific theories. On the other hand the communicative community of scientists and academics scrutinize and investigate certain scientific research objects. Basing points are the criteria “truth” and “veracity”. The profession in the context of scientific education refers to the interaction between professionals and recipients in the professional work-practice and within institutional structures. Crucial factors here are the criteria “efficiency” and “communication” between professionals and scientists.

### *Expert repertoire*

The reference point of the expert repertoire and the theory types, as well as the forms of knowledge, is the educational practice in schools. This covers anything in relation to religious-educational reality: staff, buildings and spaces, laws, guidelines and rules, curricula (cf. Meyer 1997, 2018) and the social, political, religious and ecclesiastical environment there.

As a research object of scientifically constructed theory, four theory types can be distinguished and from the perspective of action, four forms of knowledge.

Four theory types in the scientific expert repertoire

It is indisputable that different areas of theories and knowledge exist (cf. e.g. Mendl 2015, 2). But can we reasonably structure these domains, which are so crucial for teacher education? Since Erich Weniger (1990, esp. 38ff.;

see also Oelkers 1984; Badry/Knapp 1999; Meyer 1997, 215ff.; Wiater 2012, 12) it has been established within social and human science to differentiate three theoretical degrees. The benchmark here is the closeness, or distance, to the educational practice in schools and therefore an increasing degree of abstraction. By further differentiating the third theoretical degree in two ways, there are four theory types. The reference point of theory development in universities is the educational practice in schools in general and the practice of Religious Education in particular. To go into detail:

*Theory type 1: To raise and understand subjective theories* – or theories based on everyday experiences by practical agents (cf. Groeben/Scheele 1988; Groeben/Wahl/Schlee/Scheele 1988; Wahl 1991; Schoenfeld 2000; Kindermann/Riegel 2016). Implicated, subjective theories or assumption theories help in coping with everyday school life and permanently accompany our thoughts, feelings and actions. One can surely speak of theories here, as people develop self- and world views, find explanations and make prognoses (cf. Meyer 1997, 221), which can be constituted alongside scientific theories, evaluated through the same standards and examined methodically (cf. *ibid.*). Profound subjective theories can be conceptualized if data is systematically collected and methodologically comprehensible.

*Theory type 2: Developing and contrasting professional theories.* It is open to debate to what extent teachers who studied at university are to be distinguished from so-called “classic” professionals such as physicians or lawyers. Whilst the latter professions demand a professional application of systematic and rule-governed knowledge, it is almost impossible to linearly derive clear scientific standards of action for the complex and inconsistent everyday tasks in schools and lessons. Therefore reflective and explicit personal theories, role models or guiding advice (cf. Wiater 2012, 12) gain importance here, which are collected in respective advice literature (e.g. Reuber 2004). Within a so-called practical Religious Education, an action science, these theories are developed and contrasted systematically and thus become professional theories. Professional theories do not only intend to explain interpretations, but also want to stir the imagination and emotions of practitioners and prompt concrete action. However, these forms of advice have to be reflected and scrutinized on a scientific and political level

in order to be realized responsibly. Hence, one has to consider the following theory types in this process of professionalization.

*Theory type 3: Conceptualizing and conveying pedagogical theories, content theories, pedagogical content theories, technological pedagogical content theories.* This theory type contains scientifically sound, systematic and generalizable assertions about specific realities (cf. Wiater 2012, 12). Their intention is to provide exact knowledge and principles which legitimate practical action through rudimentary regulative ideas (cf. *ibid.*). Interdisciplinary theories come into play which have a direct relevance for Religious Education. As respective examples Kalloch's conceptions of teaching religion education (cf. Kalloch et al. 2010, 29-203) as well as the models of (subject-specific) lesson preparation (cf. Riegger 2005, Heil 2013) can be listed here. As it is done in almost all survey articles (cf. Blömeke 2005; Helmke 2003; Lipowsky 2006) and in the model for professional competence in the CO-ACTIVE Project by Jürgen Baumert and Mareike Kunter (cf. 2006, 2011 and 2013), Lee Shulman's approach (1986) for professional and professionalized action can be taken into account if we substitute knowledge for theories: pedagogical theories, content theories, pedagogical content theories.

Due to the increasing relevance of digitalization in educational processes, technological pedagogical content theories shall be explicitly taken into account (cf. Koehler et al. 2014). Content theories are particularly relevant for Religious Education teachers, especially theological theories like biblical exegesis, dogmatic and fundamental theology, liturgics etc. as well as pedagogical content theories of Religious Education (cf. Simojoki 2016, 145).

As systematic and regulated the construction of these respective theories and bodies of knowledge might be, one has to start from the premise that scientists hold certain inherent attitudes which determine their scientific production. This involves the necessity of examination, which is enabled through the following theory type.

*Theory type 4: Theory of science analyses and captures the production of knowledge.* Theory of science is a branch of philosophy (cf. Schurz 2006; Seiffert 2001; Tschamler 1996) in which the approach of knowledge production is analysed, reflected and, as the circumstances require, criticized (cf. Beck/Krapp 2006, 36; see also Heger 2017; Brieden/Heger 2018). In accordance with the basic law of the theory of science (cf. Rombach 1979,

9), the fundamental ambiguity of knowledge production is scrutinized, namely the object of cognition itself (object) and the way that leads to this object (method).

Theories can be considered scientific if they are for example substantiated, intersubjectively verified, self-consistent and nomothetic (cf. Bucher 2003, 28) or if they boast the status of promulgations, which – in social studies – are usually probabilistic, i. e. they are based on likelihoods whose significance level is smaller than one per cent (cf. *ibid.*). Besides the three familiar basic theoretical positions in science – empirical-analytical, hermeneutical and critical approaches (cf. Lämmermann 1991, 66; Bucher 2003, 25ff.) – several others might come into consideration (cf. Tschamler 1996, esp. 120ff.). In debates in Religious Education, there are always recurring battle lines, widely regarded as obsolete, which can be ascribed to these basic positions (cf. Schweitzer 2002, 47; Englert 1995, esp. 160-167). We allocate our approach to the symbolic-critical approach (cf. Fürst 1986; Peukert 2004; Riegger 2008), which is based on Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (2003). On this fourth theoretical level, fundamental disambiguation can be conducted (cf. figure 7).

	Theory type	Examples of Religious Education	Cognitive interest
P U n i v e r s i t y p r a c t i c e	(4) Theory of science analyses and captures the production of knowledge	Empirical-analytical, hermeneutical, critical and symbolic-critical approaches	Disclose the theoretical basic positions in science
	(3) Conceptualizing and conveying pedagogical, content, pedagogical content, technological pedagogical content theories	Conceptions to teaching religion education, models of (subject-specific) lesson preparation, digitalization, principles to teach Religious Education	Build up (new) conceptions of Religious Education
	(2) Developing and contrasting professional theories	Guiding advice, e.g. for narration in Religious Education	Teach Religious Education
	(1) To raise and understand subjective theories	e.g. one idea of what a teacher-pupil relationship is all about	Experience Religious Education
	School practice of Religious Education		

Fig. 7: Four theory types of university practice

It will always be an impossible task to scientifically clarify school proceedings, which makes the following knowledge forms for professional and professionalized action inevitable.

*Four forms of knowledge in school-relevant expert repertoire*

In order to meet the needs of a categorical difference, prescientific forms of knowledge have to be taken into consideration. Not only completely elaborated theoretical structures or empirical research results will be considered, but also theory fragments, simple theses and initial hypotheses, as well as prejudices and ideologies, as can be found in practical theories.

In accordance with these four theory types, four forms of knowledge can be detected, containing particular knowledge domains which are, in our opinion, necessary, yet insufficient basic prerequisites for practical reflections.

*Knowledge form 1: Having beliefs, attitudes, aims, motivation and performing self-regulation.* Relevant for religious-educational considerations are beliefs as implicit or explicit conceptions, subjectively regarded as truthful, which have an impact on the perception of the environment and actions in general. These beliefs, as distinct from knowledge, do not have to satisfy criteria of consistency or requirements of argumentative justification and discursive validity. The individual belief is sufficient (cf. Baumert/Kunter 2006, 497; see also Op'T Eynde/de Corte/Verschaffel 2002). Such beliefs are usually regarded as profession-related beliefs, or better *teacher beliefs* (cf. Reusser/Pauli/Elmer 2011, 478). Here, teachers' world views and conceptions of the human being (ibid., 478; Baumert/Kunter 2006, 497), as well as the personality of the teacher (cf. Reusser et al. 2011, 489) are only taken into account marginally. The same counts for value commitments (German *Wertbindungen*, Baumert/Kunnert, 2006, 496-498), which are seen as professional ethics (ibid.) without considering personal, ideological or religious values of teachers. One can as a result see that every action has certain aims and self-regulation processes, and that every action contains reasons and individual motivation.

Besides the specific meaning of certain values (e. g. educational justice, cf. Grümme 2016) for teachers, one can assume an interdependence between the aforementioned aspects and the religiousness of teachers in general and



teachers in Religious Education in particular (cf. Pirner 2013, esp. 205ff.; Pirner/Scheunpflug/Kröner 2016). The heuristic allocation is as follows: teacher beliefs and religious beliefs, values and religious values, motivation and religious motivation as well as self-regulation and religious and spiritual practice (cf. Pirner/Scheunpflug/Kröner 2016, 85).

Freshmen at university are not simply a blank sheet which has to be filled with the ink of knowledge (in stock) until the systematic of a subject can be outlined. On the contrary, students have a huge amount of presuppositions and prior knowledge, which should be elaborated through subject-specific (of course aiming at the system of a subject) propositions (cf. Fried 2004, 238). If this remains undone, a parallel structure may occur, in which beliefs remain the guiding principles, although theory types and knowledge forms numbers two to four should be understood. Knowledge which objects to personal beliefs does not yield any relevance for perceptions and actions.

*Knowledge form 2: Applying professional knowledge.* Usually professional knowledge contains standard instructions which in practice, however, do not always fit to the current situation or case. Rules have different categories. If they exactly determine how something is to be done and thus contain didactical routines, they have to be regarded as deficient (*naive rules*). If they are conveyed openly, including reflective parts, they enable teachers to find situational and case-related solutions (*reflected rules*). If this happens to correspond with scientific theories, they are called *scientifically reflected rules*. Thus the application of rules can take place in manifold ways. Professional knowledge of Religious Education teachers with their individual religious knowledge can correspond with knowledge interpreted from a religious standpoint (cf. Pirner/Scheunpflug/Kröner 2016, 85).

*Knowledge form 3: A typology of knowledge domains* (cf. Baumert/Kunter 2006, 482), which mainly includes pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and technological pedagogical content knowledge. Even if there are controversies between the structural and competence-based theoretical approach (cf. Baumert/Kunter 2006; Helsper 2007), we hold the opinion that these core areas can be further elaborated and described as professional competences (cf. Allemann-Ghionda/Terhart, 2006; Weinert 2001; Benner et al. 2007), so that there

won't be any delusion during the analysis of professional competences. One might falsely think we talk about firm theoretical knowledge, or even about disciplinary structured and separated forms of knowledge, when we attempt to describe and analyse how the profession succeeds in coping with everyday situations (cf. Tenorth 2006, 589).

Systematically, *organization knowledge* and *consulting knowledge* could be complemented here (cf. Fried 2002; Rambow/Bromme 2000). However, this would only be reasonable if they were analysed in accordance with institutionalized and socially distributed knowledge forms, which would go beyond the scope of the discussion. For the sake of Religious Education one could argue with religious-educational principles (cf. Kalloch et al. 2010, 25ff.). If religious-educational principles are merely deductively subordinated to reality, the individuality of students and pupils will be denied. A more suitable way of dealing with these principles would be to apply them in specific situations and cases in accordance with other religious-educational principles. For example, whilst pedagogic action should distinguish itself by consistent action, a focus on the students can confine the first religious-educational principle in certain situations.

*Knowledge form 4: Knowing by intuition*, i.e. knowing without knowing how we know. Intuition means outlook by personalized professional experiences. It takes place in the unconscious, but the unconscious sees patterns and connects the dots to our conscious brain. It is a matter of direct emotional awareness of sense or essence without conveying discursive thought through will or critical reflection (cf. Strunz 1970, 1345). A certain situation, a religious-educational case is firstly sensually perceived (e.g. the recognition of a facial expression) and secondly "insensually" perceived as soon as the context becomes cognitively evident. Thus an intuitive, holistic classification and assessment of a specific case takes place and, as the circumstances require, an action will be initiated without a methodically guided prior perception. In contrast to naive intuition (e.g. the intuitive common sense, which, of course, is frequently mistaken), the professionalized intuition draws on a huge amount of scientifically profound and cognitively processed experiences (ibid.). Professionals do not act in a naive intuitive way, but appropriate to the demands of the situation. Here knowledge forms 1 to 3 are being integrated and simultaneously surpass



themselves. The intuitive capturing and designing of cases by professionals can only be critically reflected – if ever – in retrospect and in reference to reality. With an eye to theology and life as such, this knowledge form could be referred to most fittingly as wisdom.

#### *Scientific thinking and life praxis*

The aforementioned theory types and knowledge forms can be read in reference to Plato's analogy of the divided line (cf. Platon 2004, 509d-511e; see also Wieland 1999). Whilst Plato regarded scientific thinking and life praxis as identical, a scientifically guided teacher education requires a distinct differentiation into scientific and practical theory.

#### *Reflective practitioners*

Literature concerning professional theory offers many models to explain the connection of the different levels of professional knowledge. There is the model of the reflective practitioner by Donald A. Schön. He reconstructs the ability for reflective acting which can be distinguished on three levels: "implicit knowledge-in-action, reflection-in-action, reflection-on-action" (2000, 49, 68, 276; see also Altrichter/Posch 1998, 322ff.) (German: *unausgesprochenes Wissen-in-der-Handlung, Reflexion-in-der-Handlung, Reflexion-über-die-Handlung*). This connection of knowledge, reflection and action may be sufficient for a teacher training at school, but it cannot be satisfactory for a scientific education of teachers, as the respective theory types are not appropriately considered.

For the individual professionalization, one mainly has to take the discrepancies between practice and scientific theories into consideration. An experimental labour approach that demands a solid and situational assessment by teachers in order to connect particular cases in lessons with general principles could be highly productive (cf. Baumfield 2016, 168). The simulation has hitherto been rather a neglected experimental approach.

Finally it has to be considered that mere knowledge is not sufficient for the mastering and success of the professional daily routine (cf. Tenorth 2006, 590), the so-called organization of praxis (ibid.). Professional and professionalized schemata are necessary as well.

*Schemata – routines – domain-specific patterns of behaviour*

Heinz-Elmar Tenorth considers learning, constructing and proceeding of schemata (2006, 590) essential for the professional and professionalized mastering of daily life situations, as schemata, routines and patterns of behaviour have always played pivotal roles in everyday working life: „Damit sind neben Wissens- und Erfahrungsbeständen oder normativen Orientierungen auch operative Routinen eingeschlossen, damit ist auch die – erwünschte – Assoziation einbegriffen, dass die Handhabung der Schemata nicht Reflexivität zu jedem Moment unterstellt, dass manches wirklich ‚schematisch‘ geht, vor allem aber ist gesagt, dass es Koordinations- und Entscheidungsprobleme gibt, die nicht vom Wissen und Erkennen (gar vom Forschen und seiner Logik, wie beim Wissenschaftler) bestimmt sind, sondern vom Handeln und seinen Zwängen.“ (ibid.). It becomes obvious that, besides content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and practical skills are indispensable for working successfully. Whilst the terms “schemata” or “synaptic connectivity” are predominantly used in neuroscience (cf. Krais/Gebauer 2002, 63), social science uses the terms “scripts” or “patterns” and professional theory talks about “domain-specific patterns of behaviour” (cf. Heil 2006, 310). All terms refer to internalized experiences which can be applied trans-situationally. This opens a connection to competence-based teacher education.

This means that a particular repertoire of schemata or behavioural patterns is generally necessary to act in Religious Education classes. To have a certain repertoire means being able to draw on a stock of habitualized dispositions (cf. ibid.). Teachers of Religious Education build such a stock by internalizing specific professional cases by reference to specific situations, which then again helps dealing with new situations (cf. ibid.). Thus schemata or behavioural patterns are equivalent to highly compressed components (cf. ibid., 311) which enable quick action under pressure (cf. ibid.). Furthermore, they are always available, and routinized, which provides orientation and enables acting in professional areas (ibid.). The schemata and behavioural patterns not only contain patterns for interaction (cf. ibid.), but also other fields of application without personal interaction between multiple people, e.g. computer-based preparation for a lesson (cf. ibid.). At the beginning of a professional career, schemata and

patterns are only insufficiently available, as they have to be elaborated and developed in the course of a professional career.

Professional action, however, is not guaranteed by a certain stock of schemata and patterns, as it has to be adjusted to the unique requirements of the current situation or case. This requires a case-related transformation of behavioural patterns (cf. *ibid.*), whereby the transformation is not a transposition but a change of patterns, which in this way enlarges the repertoire of patterns (cf. *ibid.*). But how does this work exactly?

*Relationing of knowledge and action – or: How do you learn to use knowledge?*

We cannot go into detail about the exact relation of knowledge and action (cf. the outline of Kolbe 2004), or of material What-knowledge (declarative knowledge) and formal How-knowledge (procedural knowledge) (cf. Englert 2013, 90). It seems sure, however, that besides the individual acquisition of objective knowledge (individuation), the inner relation of objective knowledge (configured knowledge) is crucial. Three dimensions are important here: the type of knowledge (syntactic dimension), the inner coherence (semantic dimension) and the practical appearance (pragmatic dimension) (cf. *ibid.*, 56-59). But how can configured knowledge be formed and gained?

Taking a look at the notion of the usage and application of knowledge from a historical point of view, one can detect a distinct development, namely from *knowledge transfer* to *knowledge transformation* to the establishment of special professional knowledge by practitioners and professionals (relationing) (cf. Dewe/Ferchhoff/Radtke 1992, esp. 78ff.). The first position originated from the quasi technical transferability of scientific knowledge into schools and schooling. This notion was replaced by the idea of the transformation of scientific knowledge to practical knowledge by the (mere) reception of practitioners, thus by a linear notion of transformation. As, however, neither science induces new knowledge into practice (transfer concept), nor do practitioners select relevant aspects out of scientific knowledge (linear transformation concept), one currently assumes that the two concepts *complement* each other in the concept of relationing, namely in the sense of mutual relativization of perspectives and interrelations between different perspectives.

In this way, science provides structural interpretations of pedagogic actions which can be processed autonomously by professionals. Simultaneously, professional practitioners have a duty to report to practice and science, which is why they have to consider two – in part contradictory – modes of judgement: the situational and therefore educational and case-orientated aptness as well as the truth per se, as well as the reflexive notion of science in scientific case analysis.

Using the metaphor of the “cubic picture”, which simultaneously displays the same object from two or more different perspectives, one can explain the relationing of scientific theories and practical theories as a “reality sui generis”. The scientific perspective, which aims at framing a rule which the action was subdued to, and the practical perspective, in which the rule found compliance, do not complement each other, but stand side by side (cf. *ibid.*, 79). In this way, professional action becomes a form of relationing between theory and practice (cf. *ibid.*, 80) which can be understood as a process in the sense of the *reflexive transformation model* of change and learning (cf. Schäffter 2001, 30). Relationing includes interrelation and negotiation processes. Both have to be reflexive.

To sum up: professionalized teachers have to develop professional and reflective competences (cf. Meyer 2003, 101) in the sense of a double structured *habitus*, as a *scientific-reflective* and a *reflective-pragmatic* one, whose two sides relativize each other and can thus only collaborate as an anti-nomic unit (cf. Helsper 2001, 13). Finally, the impact of the *profession-biographical-reflective habitus* on professional and professionalized action in general should be made accessible.

### Example

The efficiency of the aforementioned model shall be demonstrated in the following situation. I merely focus here on particular aspects from one theory type and two knowledge forms.

At university a female student became acquainted with the principle of “being geared to pupils” (cf. Wiater 2014, 8), thus with pedagogical theory. Teaching in a pupil-geared way means abandoning teacher-focussed methods for an approach where the pupils are the centre of action and can also take part in planning and forming their own learning processes (cf.

ibid., 9). The student incorporated this principle and intended to immediately try and apply it during her upcoming internship. She asked many questions which her pupils were supposed to answer. The student wrote these answers on the blackboard in class, trying to stick to the utterances as closely as possible. When one pupil became aware of that, he deliberately gave a wrong answer in order to be provocative. The student thought for a moment, then wrote this wrong answer on the board as well. During the analysis after the lesson, the student explained that she was totally aware of the poor quality of the answer, but she did not want to abandon the pupil-gear principle of teaching. In a reflective discussion it became obvious that didactical principles must not be applied naively and rigidly. The religious-educational principle of pupil-gear teaching has to be sensitively applied to the respective situation. Some possible solutions were being developed so as to correct the provocative answer by reasonably arguing. By distinguishing both knowledge forms – professional and pedagogical (content) knowledge – it was possible to develop and differentiate the understanding of didactical and religious-educational principles within the scientific theory of theory type three with respective case relation.

### *Outlook*

It has to be pointed out that this model has the potential to adjust educational practice on different levels to the object, space and aim of Religious Education theory (cf. Mendl 2007, 208; see also Schambeck 2013; 2018). It is still paramount though that participants in educational practice have to perform through relationing between theory, action and reflection processes (cf. Grunder 2016, 185). This has to take place in the disciplinary discrepancy of theory and practice. To professionalize these individual participants seems feasible through Professional Simulation.