

SIG 19 Religions and Worldviews in Education Newsletter

Issue 1/2023

Dear SIG 19 Members and Friends,

EARLI and JURE conference "Education as a hope in uncertain times" on August is approaching. There we have our invited symposium titled "Religious and worldviews in education providing hope for social sustainability". We are looking forward to seeing you there discussing with us about interesting topics together. You are able to see speakers and abstracts from this newsletter. Also, in this newsletter, we are presenting two portraits of symposium presenters.

This year the SIG 19 is celebrating its 20th anniversary. Therefore, we will launch in this newsletter a mini-series, where we would like to introduce a few coordinators of the SIG group over the years. In this newsletter *Professor Kirsi Tirri* will get us an inside in the early stages of the SIG 19.

Furthermore, we have an interview with *Professor Martina Kraml* from the University of Innsbruck, Austria. She will speak about her experiences during her career as religious education researcher.

Finally, we would like to remind you of the call for SIG 19 Coordinator Position and SIG 19 JURE Coordinator Position that will be filled during the next business meeting in Thessaloniki. Please submit your application.

We wish you a nice summer break!

Petra and Sanna

(Newsletter Editors)

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> NUMBER OF SIG19 MEMBERS 31

European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction EARLI Special Interest Group 19: Religions and Worldviews in Education is advocating research on religious and worldview development that includes cognitive, social and emotional components. Values and beliefs are important aspects in religious and worldview education which need a discussion forum of their own.

REMINDER OF JURE AND EARLI 2023 CONFERENCE & SAVE THE DATE FOR NEXT SIG 19 CONFERENCE

The 27th JURE 2023 Pre-Conference Date: 20-21 August 2023 Host: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh), University of Macedonia, Greece Venue: Thessaloniki

The 20th Biennial EARLI Conference

Date: 22-26 August 2023 Host: Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (AUTh), University of Macedonia, Greece Venue: Thessaloniki

The theme of the conference is "Education as a hope in uncertain times".

EARLI programme can be found from here: <u>https://www.earli.org/events/EARLI2023#section-programme</u>

JURE Pre-Conference programme: <u>https://www.earli.org/events/jure2023#section-programme</u>

For further information regarding the conference please see: <u>https://earli.org/EARLI2023</u>

SAVE THE DATES:

- Hearty invitation after the SIG 19 Business Meeting for a dinner together. Further information will be announced at the Business meeting.
- The next SIG 19 conference "The Existential Art of Education" will take place during 18 20 September 2024 at the University of Oxford, United Kingdom. The JURE conference will be on 17th September 2024. Hosts: Liam Gearon & Arniika Kuusisto.

Further information of the conference will follow. We look forward to your participation.



Symposium title: Religions and worldviews in education providing hope of social sustainability

Organizers: Martin Ubani (Finland), Alexander Unser (Germany) & Sarah Delling (Germany) **Chair:** Martin Ubani (Finland) martin.ubani(at)uef.fi **Discussant:** Vassiliki Mitropoulou (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece)

This symposium discusses through fresh studies how education about religions and worldviews can contribute in the promotion of social sustainability. Arguably, the purpose and mission of education is to ensure that all students can benefit from learning so that they are able to 'participate fully in public, community and economic life' (NLG, 1996). Many times in political documents and policy recommendations education is portrayed as the principal answer to many challenges (Niemi 2021). Poverty, the in-equal distribution of resources, is one of the 'wicked' and 'persistent' problems of humankind and includes, for instance, physical, psychological, social and also educational consequences (Comber, 2015). It is usually agreed that the concept 'sustainable development' includes bio-physical/environmental, economic, and social sustainability (Vallance, Perkins, & Dixon 2011; Dillard, Dujon, & Brennan, 2013). The emergence of the concept of social sustainability in public consciousness can be traced to the UN General Assembly (1983) that aimed for initiatives that lead 'to the achievement of common and mutually supportive objectives which take account of the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development'.

We argue that education about religions and worldviews can contribute to the promotion of social sustainability. According to Jenkins the 'transition toward sustainability requires engagement with the religious symbols that shape a global moral consciousness'. As religions have significantly shaped the cultural roots of sustainability problems we need to critique and reform the elements of religion that contribute to unsustainable worldviews (Jenkins, 2008) in education and research.

Keywords: Religion, worldviews, social sustainability

Presentations:

- Theologies, Religion and Literacy: Towards Socially Sustainable Religious Education? *Martin Ubani (University of Eastern Finland, Finland).*
- A digital response-tool to grasp students' personal orientations underlying everyday sustainability conflicts Stefan Altmeyer (Faculty of Catholic Theology, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany)
- Diversity as an Element of Social Cohesion the Findings of an Empirical Research Based on the Analysis of Church School Students' Narratives *Kodácsy-Simon, Eszter & Seres-Busi, Etelka (Lutheran Theological University, Hungary)*
- Existential Resilience and Well-being, Hope and Meaning: Cultivating Existential Sustainability in Worldview Education Arniika Kuusisto (University of Helsinki, Finland & University of Oxford, United Kingdom)

Abstracts:



Theologies, Religion and Literacy: Towards Socially Sustainable Religious Education? Martin Ubani (University of Eastern Finland, Finland)

With this theoretical presentation I discuss the question of the place of religious literacy in the social sustainable development framework. The presentation first discusses the concept of literacy and argues how the spreading of literacy in societies has included aspects related to, on the one hand, worldview and value development and, on the other hand, individual social empowerment and grander socio-cultural change, and how these aspects should also present standards for religious literacy today. Social sustainability has been attributed elements such as inclusivity, impartiality, meaning making and also cohesion of 'textures' of society through common values, mutual understanding and shared cultural memory. The presentation maintains that religious literacy as a critical skill is essential for promoting socially sustainable development that not only acknowledges the role of religion in, for instance, society and culture (i.e., to be able to 'read', to be literate) but also involves the knowledge, skills and attitudes related to religion in public exchange (i.e., to be able to act literate). Finally, the presentation concludes with implications for religious education in public schools.

A digital response-tool to grasp students' personal orientations underlying everyday sustainability conflicts

Stefan Altmeyer (Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany)

While there is a broad consensus that education in general as well as religious education should contribute to the goals of education for sustainable development (ESD), it remains largely unexplored how it should achieve the intended goals. This becomes even more critical as empirical studies have repeatedly shown that the goals of education for ecological sustainability are as indispensable as they are difficult to achieve. In particular, the discrepancy between sustainability awareness and everyday actions seems to be particularly large and strongly dependent on personal factors. Against this background, the paper argues that the evaluation of everyday sustainability conflicts should be considered; it aims to show how underlying personal orientations can be identified and educationally addressed. The main attention will be on the so-called "poplar dilemma tool", a digital response-tool that focuses on an everyday sustainability dilemma and its evaluation. Being developed and tested in an empirical study among more than 1,100 secondary school students in Germany and Austria, the use of this instrument allows for the identification of five types of personal orientations, each of which is characterized by a typical evaluation pattern. The paper concludes that the poplar dilemma is applicable to educational practice as classroom tool, to develop teaching programmes that can deal with personal predispositions in an appropriate and differentiating manner.

Diversity as an Element of Social Cohesion – the Findings of an Empirical Research Based on the Analysis of Church School Students' Narratives

Kodácsy-Simon, E. & Seres-Busi, E. (Lutheran Theological University Budapest, Hungary)

The issue of fragmentation is a clearly visible and observable phenomenon in Hungary that can be seen in a number of issues emerging in our society. For several decades, the role of church schools and their processes of value transmission have also come to the fore from time to time, both as a legitimation dilemma from outside and as an identity dilemma from within.

From time to time, the voice of students is also explored, but there is an under-representation of studies and research on the school experiences of students in church schools and their own interpretations of school.



Present exploratory research interviewed 37 students from church schools with different backgrounds. In our analysis, we will discuss

- 1. the ways in which certain concepts (society, nation, community) appear in students' responses, and the associations they make to these concepts;
- 2. how they interpret concepts (for example power, responsibility, norms) that determine both public discourse and social perception, and how they make this "tangible" in relation to school stories;
- 3. which elements (re-creating and reinterpreting traditions, rules, shaping personal beliefs, etc.) and prosocial values they identify as personal resources that can later promote their integration and participation in society and help achieve social cohesion.

In the analysis the aspect of "diversity" emerged as a core concept among the codes, mentioned by students as a factor activating their personal resources, for example in dealing with life issues or shaping their own worldview and beliefs. The presentation will show the connections between the core concept, the meanings students give to it, and the barriers students perceive.

Existential Resilience and Well-being, Hope and Meaning: Cultivating Existential Sustainability in Worldview Education

Arniika Kuusisto (University of Helsinki, Finland)

This paper approaches existential resilience and well-being, education for hope and meaning, through arguing for cultivating of existential sustainability in education. The topic is approached both through theoretical and conceptual literature and empirical extracts from data constructed by young children (N=42; ages 3-8) through digital audio-visual tools, on what they find personally important and valuable. Resilience can be seen "at the heart of existentialism", "opening new roads for multidisciplinary research on existential resilience" (Vos, 2015). Through existential perspective to resilience and well-being, it is here examined as an existential query to coping with difficult life situations (ibid.), finding hope and meaning. At present, the pandemic, climate crisis, and global turmoil have contributed to many children's existential anxiety. Their coping is critically linked with the support, or lack thereof, for resilience resources (Koirikivi et al., 2021)—with potential implications into worldview education.

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Stefan Altmeyer, Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz, Germany

Stefan Altmeyer studied Catholic theology, mathematics, and education at the University of Bonn. In his research, he has specialised in the field of religious education and has been working as a full Professor of religious education and catechetics at the theological Faculty at the University of Mainz since 2016. His research focuses on religious language and language integrated learning, empirical impact research on religious education and catechetical programmes, as well as the contribution of religious orientations to education for sustainable development (ESD).

At the symposium in Thessaloniki, Stefan will argue that in the context of ESD it seems both necessary and promising to look at everyday sustainability conflicts and to address the personal factors underlying the evaluation of such situations. Presenting a digital response tool for use in class, he will show how basic students' orientations can be identified, reflected upon and made the starting point of differentiating learning bringing also orientations from religious traditions into play.



Eszter Kodácsy-Simon, Lutheran University, Budapest, Hungary



Eszter Kodácsy-Simon is an Associate Professor and leader of the Department of Religious Education at the Lutheran Theological University in Budapest, Hungary. Her research interest focuses on the challenges of learning from different religious texts and on learning methodologies of social, ethical, or interdisciplinary questions in the context of a denominational and mainly confessional Religious Education. She also investigates the identity and role questions of church schools in her context.

Her contribution to the SIG-19 symposium at Thessaloniki will be the findings of an empirical research based on the analysis of church school students' narratives. She co-led this research with her colleague Etelka Seres-Busi. In this analysis the aspect of "diversity" emerged as a core concept, mentioned by students as a factor activating their personal resources. The presentation will show the connections to the core concept, the meanings students give to it and the barriers students

(Portraits and Pictures were sent by the participants.)



MINI-SERIES ON THE OCCASION OF THE **20TH EARLI SIG 19** ANNIVERSARY



EARLI's Special Interest Group, SIG 19 - Religious and Spiritual Education (nowadays Religions and Worldviews in Education) was established during the 10th Biennial EARLI Conference in Padova, Italy in 2003. This year the SIG 19 is celebrating its **20th anniversary**. On the occasion of this anniversary we are doing a mini-series on behalf of founders, coordinators and leader figures of SIG 19 who will tell us about their experiences.



Professor Kirsi Tirri

Professor Kirsi Tirri was one of the two first coordinators of Earli SIG 19. At the moment, she is a full Professor at the Faculty of Educational Sciences at the University of Helsinki, Finland. Her research interests include school pedagogy, moral and religious education, talent development and gifted education, teacher education and cross-cultural studies.





Could you tell us something about the context, 20 Years ago? Do you remember why SIG 19 -Religious and Spiritual Education was founded?

The late Swiss Professor Fritz Oser was very active in the studies related to religious and spiritual education. He knew that I was appointed as a full Professor of Religious Education at the Faculty of Theology, University of Helsinki in 2002. He wanted to strengthen research on religious and spiritual domains in European level and suggested that we propose SIG Religious and Spiritual Education to EARLI. He also wanted me to take a lead of this SIG because of my new position related to this field and my active publishing on religious education and spirituality. Moreover, EARLI was very cognitive-focused at that time, and we wanted to give more room to the holistic approach in education that include religious and spiritual domains and their development in the lifespan of human beings.

How was it to be the first Coordinators of SIG 19? What was your goal for SIG 19 during your coordinator period?

I have good memories of that time 20 years ago! I was a young and eager Professor and very committed to international research in my field. I wanted to advance research in religious and spiritual education and bring Finland forward in the field. I had good friends in Finland and abroad who joined the SIG and I started to plan special issues and symposia at EARLI right away to have impact and make the SIG visible. We were very active in each EARLI conference and arranged symposia with international focus. We published special issues and books.

What was your vision for the SIG 19? Were there major chances or challenges for SIG19 in your perspective in the beginning? Did your vision - 20 years after the foundation - came alive?

My vision was to advance good quality international research and teaching in the field and build collaboration among the members. That's what I did with the help of my colleagues and doctoral students. The challenge was to prove EARLI leaders that we can conduct good research and publish in good journals and books. That's what we did! Not everybody found religious and spiritual education as important field, we really had to prove that we are good researchers. My reputation in teacher education and moral education helped to start this SIG. We also had to argue that religious and spiritual education. EARLI education.

My vision came alive! The SIG is still alive and renewing itself that needs to be done.

(Drawn pictures were taken from pixabay.com Picture of interview partner was taken from official webpage)





Position: Professor, Dr.
Institution: University of Innsbruck
Country: Austria

1. Since when are you in the field of religious education and worldviews and what started your career as a researcher in this field?

I started in 2001 with a post-doc position at the University of Innsbruck. Because of my dissertation-thesis on the topic of Eucharistic catechesis, I was initially more active in the field of parish catechesis. Together with researchers from different theological disciplines I was involved in the development of the research program Communicative Theology which focuses on the reflection and culture of people's practices of theology. This concentration on different theology practices is also where my interreligious engagement began.

In 2013, studies in Islamic religious education were established in Innsbruck. Since then, there has been intensive cooperation between Islamic and Catholic religious education. A series of publications followed. In particular, the publication on *conflicts in interreligious education* should be mentioned where theory and practices were analyzed.

2. What changes do you notice throughout your career as religious education expert?

Over time, there has been a more open approach to theology in German-language religious education from my point of view. When I started the approach concerning the philosophy of science of religious education was much narrower. Questions of normativity and descriptivity have recently been a recurring theme. Especially in Austrian religious education there was an opening in the direction of interconfessionality and interreligiousness. This shows e.g., in the Austrian religious education working group where Protestant and Muslim colleagues are since many years part and also in leading positions.



3. What chances and/or challenges do you see at the moment for religious education and worldviews and why?

Opportunities and challenges exist in the area of interfaith and worldview cooperation. This also applies to Religious education at schools. There are many different approaches. Speaking form an Austrian point of view, the question of the future of religious education as general education arises. Furthermore, this leads to the question of the significance of confessionality and denominational religious education. The perspectives of philosophy, ethics and religious studies have to be included in religious education.

4. What suggestions would you have for the future generation of researchers in the field of religious education and worldviews?

Promoting young talent is a particular concern of mine. For the future I still see room for further development in this field.



Call for the positions of the Coordinator and the JURE-Coordinator

EARLI SIG 19 invites **applications** for one of the coordinators and the JURE coordinator positions **by 30 June 2023**.

The coordinators are responsible for the development of SIG 19 and represent the SIG in the EARLI council. This position lasts from 09/2023 to 08/2027.

The JURE coordinator is primarily responsible for junior researchers in SIG 19. This position lasts from 09/2023 to 08/2025.

In case of multiple applicants per position, an online poll will be conducted in early August with SIG 19 members as eligible voters.

A person, who wants to apply for one of the positions, is requested to send **100 to 200 words** of description of themself. The descriptions can be sent to the following email: <u>alexander.unser(at)tu-dortmund.de</u>

Two positions must be filled during the next business meeting in Thessaloniki: the position of co-coordinator (2023-2027) and the position of JURE coordinator (2023-2025).

The election will take place during the next business meeting in Thessaloniki.



Dear friends of SIG 19,

As you know, we are one of the smaller SIGs within EARLI and need every year a minimum of 30 members to continue our work. The Religions and Worldviews in Education SIG brings together researchers from various backgrounds, such as theology, religious studies, psychology, pedagogy, educational studies and philosophy. The SIG 19 is advocating empirical and theoretical research that includes cognitive, social and emotional components.

If you have not subscribed yet, please consider renewing your membership in our SIG for 2023.

Become a member now!



- 1. Dr. Alexandra Blinkova, Oslo Metropolitan University, Norway
- 2. Prof. Dr. Fahimah Ulfat, University of Tübingen, Germany
- 3. Prof. Dr. Stefan Altmeyer, Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Germany
- 4. G. M. Gaans, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 5. Dr. Shira Iluz, Bar Ilan University, Israel
- 6. Associate Prof. Dr. Eszter Kodacsy-Simon, Lutheran Theological University in Budapest, Hungary
- 7. Dr. Semiha Sözeri, Utrecht University, Netherlands
- 8. Dr. Aline Muff, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Germany
- 9. Sini Niemelä, University of Eastern Finland, Finland
- 10. Dr. Yves Mühlematter, University of Zurich, Bern University of Teacher Education, Switzerland
- 11. Dr. Rosanne Aantjes, Canterbury Christ Church University, Netherlands

We are very happy to be able to welcome new members to SIG 19!

We hope our new members will enjoy being a part of Earli SIG 19.

For any questions please contact the SIG 19 coordinators or Newsletter editors who will be happy to help you.



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:

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