

XXI. The dimensions of learning in Religious Education

It is a truism that pupils should learn something in Religious Education but it is more difficult to answer the question of what this exactly means. This is not only dependent on the changing conditions for Religious Education at school and therefore on the redefining of requirements in that field. It is more about the question of understanding religious learning in general and the associated dimensions.

The term 'dimensions of learning' asks about perspectives in which people learn, recognise, deal with and organise religion. These perspectives cannot be dissected and detached from each other as they are closely connected. Despite this, it is important to distinguish between them in order to prevent losing sight of any one aspect and limiting religious learning.

Learning is a "value neutral concept"¹. First of all, it deals with changes without asking whether these are good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Certainly, normative qualifications should be considered as well. They define a frame in which relevant decisions concerning the shape of religious learning should be consciously made.

1. What does learning mean?

All creatures have to pay attention to the requirements of their surroundings in order to be able to stay alive.

"This ability of a living system concerning durable changes of its state can be said to be the most general concept of learning."²

1 H. Gudjons, *Pädagogisches Grundwissen. Überblick – Kompendium – Studienbuch*, eighth edition, Bad Heilbrunn 2003, 214. The following citations are translated into English by the present author based on the references given.

2 A. K. Treml / N. Becker, II.6 Lernen, in: H.-H. Krüger / W. Helsper (eds.), *Einführung in die Grundbegriffe und Grundfragen der Erziehungswissenschaft*, ninth edition, Opladen / Farmington Hills 2010, 103 – 114, here 104.

A creature gains the ability to change its state on the one hand – due to genetic dispositions and on the other hand – due to involvement with the environment. While the evolvement and development of interior and exterior characteristics due to genetic presuppositions is usually named maturation, the active interaction with and in an environment which is not inherent but rather acquired is called learning from experience. In this, the actual learning is not directly noticeable. It is rather deduced from the durable changes of behaviour based on experience. A first type of such learning is ‘imprinting’.

“Shortly after birth a whole range of variable possibilities is restricted to a specific possibility of behaviour due to a specific experience in and with an environment – thus: learnt.”³

This is why the spectrum of theoretical possibilities, which could be practically realised, is constrained. The imprint leads to a pre-structuring.

1.1 Implicit and explicit learning

There is no denying that in childhood and youth “learnt patterns of thinking and behaviour can show themselves as persistent in spite of attempts of change.”⁴ There is no exception for religiousness. The interpretive and participation patterns learnt in childhood cannot be denied completely. However, this should not be understood deterministically. Reorientation is possible.⁵

The learning of “a specific repertoire of mentality and behaviour which is principally reversible, but also relatively resistant against changing attempts” is named “with a variety of terms”. Here it is named implicit learning. In the literature one can find alternative terms (latent learning, functional upbringing, socialisation, incidental learning and habituation). The logic of such learning “consists in the repetition of specific experiences that imprint themselves on specific manners and reactions.”⁶ To build these up and to possibly restructure them again as required by the circumstances takes a lot of time. “It is therefore evolutionarily beneficial when a form of learning is developed (that) [...] produces learning processes methodically even before a possible need occurs.”⁷

Exactly this is achieved by the deliberate, methodical and conscious learning which is known as explicit learning in learning and memory research. This is the sort of learning that is first and foremost associated with Religious Education.

3 Ibid., 105.

4 Ibid.

5 Cf. M. Domsgen, *Familie und Religion. Grundlagen einer religionspädagogischen Theorie der Familie*, second edition, Leipzig 2006.

6 Cf. A. K. Tremml / N. Becker 2010, 106.

7 Ibid.

Indeed, explicit religious learning has to consider implicit learning as well. It can be understood as a form of background matrix which cannot be allowed to be neglected because it influences the explicit learning processes.

1.2 Different views of learning

Learning itself is not observable. Only the results – a change in the relationship of the learners to their environment – are noticeable. Psychology often defines learning in dependence on the classical, often quoted definition of Gordon H. Bower and Ernest R. Hilgard⁸ “as durable changes of types of behavioural or potential behaviour based on experience”⁹. The pedagogues Alfred Treml and Nicole Becker point out that learning cannot be identical with changes in behaviour, but are merely expressed in these changes. Therefore they understand learning as:

“all processes in an organism, first of all in its central nervous system (brain), that cannot be observed directly. They are conditioned by experience (not maturation) and result in a relatively durable change and development of the behaviour repertoire. In other words: learning is an experience inducing a change of the possibility of a living system to develop a state within an environment that is compatible with the continuation of its own autopoiesis.”¹⁰

During the course of its history, the psychology of learning has devoted itself to the phenomenon of learning in various perspectives. It has not developed a consistent theory but a myriad of different approaches. In the 1950s and 1960s, behavioural approaches were very popular (behaviourism), since the 1960s it has been cognitive assumptions (cognitivism) and since the 1980s it has been constructivist concepts (constructivism). Hence the three most well-known theories of learning can principally be distinguished by the underlying anthropology and by their assumptions about the correlation / interaction between learners and the environment. The following overview from Detlev Leutner presents this visually:¹¹

8 Cf. G. H. Bower / E. R. Hilgard, *Theorien des Lernens*, vol. 1, Stuttgart 1983, 31.

9 A. Fritz / W. Hussy / D. Tobinski, *Pädagogische Psychologie*, München 2010, 244.

10 A. K. Treml / N. Becker 2010, 107.

11 D. Leutner, *Bildungspsychologie auf der Mikroebene: Individuelle Bedingungen des Lehrens und Lernens*, in: C. Spiel et al. (eds.), *Bildungspsychologie*, Göttingen et al. 2010, 359–376, here 360.

	Behaviourism	Cognitivism	Constructivism
Learning	Changes of the probability of behaviour	Changes of cognitive structures and processes	Development in competence
Model of the learner	'black box'	'glass box'	Learner as the constructor of the contents of the 'glass box'
Teaching aim/Learning objective	Behaviour; but also: knowledge, skills and attitudes	Cognitive structures and processes	Problem-solving and self-learning competence
Teaching and Learning principles	'rote learning': learning by heart, practising, reinforcing	'meaningful learning': Understanding-oriented learning	'open learning': discover and let sb. discover sth.

While behaviourism concentrates on the observable processes, cognitivist and constructivist theories allow for internal processes and structures.¹² Behaviourism examines the development of conjunctions between sensory impressions and stimuli (classical and operant conditioning), which can be reinforcing or punishing. Problem solving is treated as 'trial and error'-behaviour. The inner processes of learning are not regarded. However, they are examined in cognitivism and constructivism. Here the learner is understood as an active constructor of one's environment. Piaget's investigations into the development of structures of knowledge are fundamental for this. To create equilibrium between subject and environment, existing schemes are extended (assimilation) or – when this is not sufficient – transcended and further developed (accommodation). The solution of problems is the result of insight and meaning-related learning. Therefore it is no longer 'trial and error'-behaviour.

The different theoretical paradigms of learning lead to different impulses for shaping learning and teaching processes in specific ways. With the transition from behaviourism to cognitivism a "shift of the instructional psychological interest from production to processes" can be observed. The transition from cognitivism to constructivism leads to a shift "of interests from the teacher's to the learner's side".¹³

Within religious didactics, the psychological learning theories – especially in comparison to developmental psychological theories – play a smaller role, which is due to the complexity of religious learning. Religion does not simply originate

12 Cf. the overview A. Fritz / W. Hussy / D. Tobinski, 2010, 222 – 246 and in more detail A. Krapp / B. Weidenmann (eds.), *Pädagogische Psychologie. Ein Lehrbuch*, fifth edition, Weinheim / Basel 2006, 204 – 267.

13 D. Leutner 2010, 360.

“out of the mere addition of individual behaviour, skills, feelings [...] Only when these form a whole [...] one can speak of religion.”¹⁴

Learning theories encounter limits here. These theories can enlighten single aspects of religious learning, but they do not do justice to the phenomenon of religion. Nevertheless, regarding Religious Education at school, the knowledge of these theories is necessary to understand teaching processes better and to improve them. Under these premises a number of core aspects will be mentioned.

1.3 Learning as an active process with different dimensions

Cognitivism and constructivism understand the learner as an active constructor of his / her environment. This perspective concerning the subject has already found broad approval. Learners have always brought their own ideas with them and control their learning themselves. People interpret what they hear and see using their knowledge and their presuppositions. This process is strongly influenced culturally. The subject-oriented perspective does not only consider the learners but the contexts in which they interact as well. Regarding this aspect, learning from role models plays an important role. Its most important representative, Albert Bandura, speaks of a social-cognitive perspective. Learning is understood as an interaction of cognitive processes and environmental control.

Ideas from a constructivist perspective can be helpful here. There it is stressed that one cannot create insights for the learner by “simply giving information”¹⁵. An active involvement is supported when the learners realise their own shortcomings of their previous knowledge and therefore motivation is aroused to fill self-recognised and acknowledged gaps in understanding. This motivation is highest when the learners “have an environment that does not threaten them [...], but experience social support.”¹⁶ Learning as a construction of knowledge is always bound to a certain space and social context. Learners process the given information “in connection with the context, from which the information originates.”¹⁷

Learning is always connected to cognitive processes but is never to be reduced to them. This realisation has been mentioned at different times in history. It is very obviously shown by Comenius who identifies three dimensions. First, the

14 F. Schweitzer, *Religionspädagogik. Lehrbuch Praktische Theologie*, vol. 1, Gütersloh 2006, 115.

15 G. Mietzel, *Pädagogische Psychologie des Lernens und Lehrens*, eighth edition, Göttingen et al. 2007, 48.

16 *Ibid.*, 49.

17 *Ibid.*, 50.

aspect of the imparting of knowledge which is an "information-processing mental process with reproductive and creative performance in cognition"¹⁸, second, an emotional level (joyfulness, passion, personal relationships, sympathy and antipathy respectively) and third, the aspect of activity, the application, the practice, "not to produce knowledge from a dead hand."¹⁹

These pioneering thoughts were continued, refined and converted into learning strategies by prestigious educators like Pestalozzi, Herbart, Diesterweg and others. In this way Paul Heimann, for example, constitutively incorporated the idea of learning dimensions into a practically oriented model for the analysis, planning and implementation of lessons.²⁰ He primarily regards the human being as an agent who feels propelled to accomplish something in the world. His / her actions are accompanied by mental and emotional processes. That is why Heimann distinguishes a cognitive-active dimension (thinking) with the purpose of the illumination of existence, a pragmatic-dynamic dimension (willing), referring to coping with life and an emotive-effective dimension (feelings / emotions) which is described as fulfilment of life. All three dimensions are mutually interwoven with each other.

"There is no cognitive process which proceeds without traces of experience and moments of content, there is no experience without knowledge, no action without experience and thinking."²¹

At the same time Heimann distinguishes different levels in every one of these dimensions to indicate an advancing on the way. In the cognitive-active dimension there are skills, perceptions and beliefs; in the pragmatic-dynamic dimension there are abilities, skills and habits, in the emotive-affective dimension there are experiences and attitudes.

The idea of a sequence of steps in the description of learning processes can be found in the work of different educators and psychologists as well. The development of taxonomies, that are classification systems to find and classify a hierarchy of learning forms and aims, has become quite popular due to the work of Benjamin Bloom and his colleagues. Bloom assumes that learning aims can be categorised in three big areas: a cognitive, an affective and a psychomotoric area. The individual dimensions include main classes which are designed hierarchically because they are ordered according to their complexity, from the easiest to

18 K. Reich, *Lerndimensionen*, in: D. Lenzen / K. Mollenhauer (eds.), *Theorien und Grundbegriffe der Erziehung und Bildung*, Stuttgart 1983, 495–498, here 496.

19 *Ibid.*

20 Cf. P. Heimann, *Didaktische Grundbegriffe*, in: id., *Didaktik als Unterrichtswissenschaft*, Stuttgart 1976, 103–141.

21 K. Reich, *Dimensionen der Persönlichkeit und Probleme der Lernzielbestimmung*, in: *Verwaltung und Fortbildung* 11 (1983), 2, 76–90, here 86.

the most complicated learning aim. The learning process is understood as cumulative whereby the more complex behaviour is in general considered to be established on simple behaviour. From this position, it is distinguished in the cognitive dimension between knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, synthesis as well as assessment²² and in the affective dimension between receiving, reacting, values, value order as well as being shaped through values.²³ In addition, complex relationships between both dimensions are indicated. "In principle every area is used as a tool for the others."²⁴

Bloom's taxonomy was further developed later on.²⁵ Yet it remains true that learning occurs "in different forms of different complexity"²⁶ and cognition and affect interact with each other.

2. What does learning within Religious Education mean?

Learning in Religious Education has the same characteristics as shown above but also specific features. Religious Education is embedded in the overarching system of the school which can be characterised as the "place in which teaching and learning are pursued methodically"²⁷ School represents, above all, intended, consciously targeted and sequential-conceptual learning processes. Here, learning means lessons with deliberate and planned actions. Thereby the transfer of knowledge in the sense of an active acquisition of important knowledge is at the centre. School as a place of arranged lessons gains a special profile, since children and youth "acquire a considerable part of our cultural knowledge in a relatively short amount of time"²⁸. This should not be underestimated. If children did not obtain schooling, "they would know just as much about dinosaurs as Plato and Aristotle, namely absolutely nothing"²⁹.

In a way this also applies for religious learning. Religious sociological studies – mostly in former East Germany – show that children and youths who are brought up in an environment predominately void of religion and above all

22 Cf. B. S. Bloom (ed.), *Taxonomie von Lernzielen im kognitiven Bereich*, Weinheim / Basel 1972, 31.

23 Cf. D. R. Krathwohl / B. S. Bloom / B. B. Masia, *Taxonomie von Lernzielen im affektiven Bereich*, Weinheim / Basel 1975, 34.

24 *Ibid.*, 59.

25 Cf. G. Mietzel, *Pädagogische Psychologie*, 433 ff.

26 B. Porzelt, *Grundlegung religiöses Lernen*, Bad Heilbrunn 2009, 25.

27 H. Fend, *Neue Theorie der Schule. Einführung in das Verstehen von Bildungssystemen*, second edition, Wiesbaden 2008, 31.

28 A. Fritz / W. Hussy / D. Tobinski, *Pädagogische Psychologie*, 239.

29 M. Tomasello, *Die kulturelle Entwicklung des menschlichen Denkens. Zur Evolution der Kognition*, Frankfurt a. M. 2002, 209.

without any impulses for explicating religion in their families barely have any traditional religious interpretive patterns. This does not mean that religious questions in a wide sense do not emerge in these biographies. However, an explicit religious thematisation of these questions is only very rarely encountered.³⁰ Insofar it also applies for religious learning that the “domain-specific knowledge and the expertise of children is virtually completely dependent on the accumulated knowledge of their cultures and its ‘transfer’ to them through verbal and other symbols”³¹. Certainly religious learning is more than the introduction of religious knowledge. After all, it is not only about knowledge, but also about the dimensions of the acquisition of knowledge in the sense of getting involved existentially. Religious education cannot settle for a walk through the “mausoleum’ of religion”³². Yet how should one learn in Religious Education?

2.1 The relationship of Religious Education and religious learning

Due to changed ways of parents’ religious influence on their children, Religious Education plays an important role as an “intentional and reflective attempt to introduce religion”³³. Many parents see Religious Education “consciously as a replacement for the lack of individual, direct religious upbringing of their children”³⁴.

At the same time, Religious Education at school is not the only place where religion is learned, although, due to mandatory schooling and therefore the possibility of a broad audience, Religious Education is of special importance. Religion is not only learned at school but in other places as well. Therefore, Religious Education at school is only one part of religious learning, that is of everything that “arises from the encounter with religion in character, attitudes and behaviour”³⁵.

30 That it is nevertheless possible – given respective accompaniment and support – is shown by the results of the Rostock long-term study on the understanding of God and the relationship to God of children growing up in a context which, for the most part, is non-religious. Cf. A-K. Szagun, *Dem Sprachlosen Sprache verleihen*, Jena 2006.

31 M. Tomasello, *Die kulturelle Entwicklung*, 210.

32 F. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion. Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern*, Stuttgart, 2007, 81.

33 R. Englert, *Religionspädagogische Grundfragen. Anstöße zur Urteilsbildung*, second edition, Stuttgart 2008, 275.

34 U. Schwab, *Religion*, in: J. Earius (ed.), *Handbuch Familie*, Wiesbaden 2007, 500 – 517, here 513.

35 R. Englert, *Religionspädagogische Grundfragen*, 274.

2.1.1 Religion as a specific interpretation of the world and of life

Initially the term 'religion' referred to emancipation from ecclesiastical faith. In the course of the Enlightenment, one posited a universally approved religion behind all the faith communities in their limitation and polarity. This turned out to be not very realistic. Despite this, the challenge remains to look for an acquisition of religion within the religions beyond a 'natural religion'.

Religion is an umbrella term but not one that can simply describe the smallest common denominator of the various religions. It is helpful in finding common structures within religions. The strength of the term lies on the one hand, in being able to connect interpretation processes of common sense and on the other hand, in establishing a "religious certainty"³⁶. It can define religion as an "anthropological basic configuration"³⁷ and at the same time refers to a particular kind of reason.³⁸ From the Christian perspective 'having a religion' seems to be an 'implication of creatureliness' and is therefore a hint to the relationship between humans and God "which a person just misses when he or she does not have a God-given insight into the true relationship of the creator and the humans."³⁹

From the cultural-theoretical perspective religion represents a "basic form of human interpretive culture"⁴⁰. Thereby a specific perspective of interpretation of human lives is captured which is not only internally orientated but also determined as related to "body and soul"⁴¹. Religion can be understood as a "mode", "in which people try to understand themselves [...] regarding an ultimate and absolute dimension of reality that bears an individual being reaching out for a last absolute and the individual entity bearing dimensions of this reality"⁴². Faith is "the trustful certainty which articulates itself in this mode"⁴³. It is "an individual relationship with oneself that is interpreted as a relationship with God. Religion by contrast is the space in which "faith can articulate and reflect itself as trust in God"⁴⁴.

36 D. Korsch, Religion – Identität – Differenz. Ein Beitrag zur Bildungskompetenz des Religionsunterrichts, in: *EvTh* 63 (2003), 271 – 279, here 274.

37 R. Englert, Religionspädagogische Grundfragen, 279.

38 Cf. D. Korsch, Religion, 274.

39 Cf. C. Schwöbel, Religion und die Aufgabe der Theologie, in: *RGG*⁴ vol. 7, 2004, 279 – 286, here 283 f.

40 U. Barth, Was ist Religion?, in: *ZThK* 93 (1996), 538 – 560, here 558.

41 D. Korsch, Religion, 274.

42 J. Lauster, Religion als Lebensdeutung. Theologische Hermeneutik heute, Darmstadt 2005, 146.

43 B. Dressler, Unterscheidungen. Religion und Bildung, Leipzig 2006, 128.

44 *Ibid.*

2.1.2 Basic types of religious learning

Whoever speaks about religion speaks about a specific manner of living life and giving life a meaning in the face of the finitude of human existence. Succinct on this topic is Schleiermacher's definition of "sense and taste for the infinite"⁴⁵. Religion wants to mediate the finite and the infinite and, by this, to support people in finding the wholeness of their existence.

Religious learning can be understood as a tentative process "in which the religious potential of a person is actualised and developed in the direction of ideals of religious maturity by a methodically more or less strongly reflected procedure."⁴⁶ In the course of religious and Christian history, a few basic types have become clear which R. Englert describes with the keywords of conversion, enculturation, formation and expedition.⁴⁷

Above all the beginnings of Christianity were marked through the type of conversion, an autobiographically new orientation. "Religious learning meant to understand the offer to leave 'the old' behind and to become a new person (cf. 2 Cor 5,17 ff.)"⁴⁸. This was changing gradually in the course of Christianity spreading out. Perspectives which assumed a continual process of religious learning gained importance. Above all, people in the Middle Ages learned the Christian religion by growing into an everyday culture influenced by Christianity and taken for granted. Englert speaks of an "inculturation into a society with broad Christian cultures"⁴⁹. With the Reformation and the connected confessionalisation forms of an explicit religious instruction gained poignancy. They took over "the function of the cultural tradition taken for granted [...]. Religious learning here serves the formation of a specific religious identity"⁵⁰.

With the emphasis of individuality and self-determination in present times, religious learning takes on the character of an expedition into 'open land'⁵¹. Religious traditions are selectively incorporated. Fundamental for this is the connection with autobiographical challenges. The autonomy of the subject and the plurality of religious offers are constitutively presupposed. This is definitely an advantage, like the previous theoretical reflections show, and it is theologically well compatible. Nevertheless it has to be asked whether this "form of religious learning offered as an open searching process is intense enough to create significant changes in attitudes at least in some cases"⁵². Despite all ap-

45 F. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion*, 36.

46 R. Englert, *Religionspädagogische Grundfragen*, 281.

47 Cf. *ibid.*

48 *Ibid.*, 282.

49 *Ibid.*

50 *Ibid.*

51 *Ibid.*, 283.

52 *Ibid.*, 284.

preciation for individuality, the individual person is in danger of being overburdened.

Even if Englert's classification is ideal-typical and different profiles of religious learning can be shown through all epochs, he still describes basic developments which cannot be denied. Into the last century religious learning had "in as much as it happened casually or 'functional', an essentially inculturating character, and in as much as it happened deliberately or 'intentionally', an essentially formative character."⁵³ This has fundamentally changed over the last decades. In the course of the individualisation and deinstitutionalisation, the individual person and her development are in the focus. Although this should not be understood in an individualistic sense because close relationships, especially within the family, continue to be important for religious development,⁵⁴ there cannot be any doubt concerning the prominent position of the subject. In former times the individual had to integrate him/herself into a religion, today the challenge is the reasonable integration of religion into the individual autobiography.

2.1.3 Religious learning and experiences with religion

As well as the position of the learning subjects the relationship of implicit and explicit religious learning has changed. While well into the 20th century explicit religious learning processes were widely supported by experiences of the learners or of their central caregivers, this has changed fundamentally. For an increasing number of children and youths, Christianity today has become a "foreign religion"⁵⁵. This depicts a fundamental challenge, since the specific worldview of religion does not exist on a meta-level but only as a worldview of a specific, exemplary religion. Therefore it is not enough just to know something about a religion. Whoever wants to be religiously competent, even without having internalised that worldview, needs experiences with religion.

"The Native American saying: 'If you want to understand the other, walk 20 miles in his moccasins', focuses on this fundamental dimension of experience."⁵⁶

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 283.

⁵⁴ Cf. M. Domsgen, Zur Bedeutung familialer Beziehungen für Theorie und Praxis der Gemeindepädagogik. Grundlegende Perspektiven, in: ZThK (106) 2009, issue 4, 477–500.

⁵⁵ B. Dressler, Darstellung und Mitteilung. Religionsdidaktik nach dem Traditionsabbruch, in: rhs 45 (2002) issue 1, 11–19, here 13.

⁵⁶ H. Schluß, "Wie viel Religion braucht die Bildung?", in: M. Schreiner (ed.), Religious literacy und evangelische Schulen. Die Berliner Barbara-Schadeberg-Vorlesungen, Münster et al. 2008, 83–101, here 98.

It is evident that this has fundamental implications for the didactics of Religious Education. At the same time such a perspective points beyond the instructional level and widens the view on the school in general.⁵⁷

2.1.4 Religious learning in Religious Education

Karl Ernst Nipkow rightly emphasises that the proper characterisation of religion depends “on a characteristic empirical-hermeneutic circumstance”, namely “the comprehensive conception and interpretation of reality based on an encompassing religious experience”⁵⁸. Religion is not limited to discourse or action. Friedrich Schleiermacher describes it as the “feeling of absolute dependence”⁵⁹ on the universe.

Such a perspective presents a special challenge for the instructional treatment of religion (in religious as well as in ethics education!). Neutrally informing about religion is not suitable to initiate an analysis of the depth dimensions of religion. This is true because the “positive assumption of the truth [is] the motor for intellectual dispute processes”⁶⁰. This can also be confirmed by theories of religion. Only from the internal perspective one can understand how the world presents itself in a religious perspective. Christian religion cannot be learned as dogmatics but essentially only as a process and through processes. Religious Education at school may, however, not be turned into faith education in the sense of imparting this faith. Instead, the foundations for reflecting on religion should be established by intentionally organised experiences because the respective experiences are lacking in the life-world. There is an ongoing discussion about a suitable way to realise that without converting Religious Education into religious practice. This discussion within religious didactics is led under the keyword of Performative Religious Education.⁶¹

Religious Education as one of the school subjects is affiliated to the inner logic of the school system. However, it is not possible for Religious Education to join

57 Cf. M. Domsgen, *Schule und Kirche – Chancen und Grenzen ihrer Kooperation. Religionspädagogische Perspektiven*, in: id. / M. Hahn (eds.), *Kooperation von Kirche und Schule. Perspektiven aus Mitteldeutschland*, Münster et al., 23 – 38.

58 K. E. Nipkow, *Religionsunterricht und Ethikunterricht – “Dialogpartnerschaft” in einer zerstrittenen Welt*, in: M. Domsgen / M. Hahn / G. Raupach-Strey (eds.), *Religions- und Ethikunterricht in der Schule mit Zukunft*, Bad Heilbrunn 2003, 85 – 105, here 91.

59 F. Schleiermacher, *Der christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche im Zusammenhange dargestellt*, vol. 1, second edition, R. Schäfer (ed.), Berlin 2003, 39.

60 G. Raupach-Strey, *Philosophieren lernen als Ziel des Ethik-Unterrichts*, in: M. Domsgen / M. Hahn / G. Raupach-Strey (eds.), *Religions- und Ethikunterricht in der Schule mit Zukunft*, Bad Heilbrunn 2003, 279 – 300, here 289.

61 Cf. S. Leonhard / T. Klie (eds.), *Schulplatz Religion. Grundzüge einer performativen Religionspädagogik*, Leipzig, 2003 sowie: T. Klie / S. Leonhard (eds.), *Performative Religionsdidaktik. Religionsästhetik – Lernorte – Unterrichtspraxis*, Stuttgart 2008.

this inner logic completely because it is more. Limits of a performative approach are not only given when religious performance is hardly compatible with the inner logic of schools, but also concerning the central importance of authenticity for the learners. Therefore, the performative dimensions of religious education cannot be realised without a change in learning venues. Chances are then offered for “learning with a true and sincere character.”⁶²

Concerning the theories of learning one has to be reminded that learners always process the given information in connection with the context from which the information originates. “Contextualised information [is] more meaningful than abstract information”⁶³. This aspect is very important for religious didactics. It can be assumed that such a configured environment is more inspiring than a process of trying out within lessons. The limits given by the inner logic of the school system should be broadened didactically by finding connections with “everyday education”⁶⁴.

2.2 Dimensions of religious educational learning

It is justifiable through religious didactics and the theories of learning that religious learning in Religious Education needs a connection to practised religion. Religious learning at school has to draw on external as well as internal perspectives. The question is, however, how this can be done in lessons without overwhelming the school as a specifically shaped place of learning and without neglecting the differences between school and church.

In this respect, a distinction which comes from the English speaking countries can be of help. Concerning the background of multi-religious challenges, religious educators distinguish between learning in religion, learning about religion and learning from religion. Learning in religion is understood as the introduction into a religion in the sense of religious nurture.⁶⁵ Learning about religion stands for a multi-religious model which is based on the possibility of a simultaneous and gradual introduction to different religious traditions and worldviews.⁶⁶ Learning from religion addresses the big questions of life and

62 T. Rauschenbach, *Zukunftschance Bildung, Familie, Jugendhilfe und Schule in neuer Allianz*, Weinheim 2009, 198.

63 G. Mietzel, *Pädagogische Psychologie*, 50.

64 T. Rauschenbach, *Zukunftschance*, 87.

65 “... to immerse young people in the dynamics of a particular tradition and render them full-fledged participants of that tradition”. B. Roebben, *Seeking Sense in the City*, *European Perspectives on Religious Education*, Berlin 2009, 136.

66 “[...] young people can be introduced simultaneously or successively to various religious traditions and worldviews, since they have no specific affinity with one or other tradition and can thus decide for themselves purely on the basis of information given”, *ibid.*, 137.

searches for similarities and differences between one's own opinions and religious traditions and worldviews.⁶⁷ Taking up these concepts and re-adjusting their meaning, one could introduce three dimensions concerning the content of Religious Education at school. Each dimension describes a specific mode of religious reference.

'Learning about religion' describes the level of knowledge of religious belief, rituals and ethical implications for the conduct of life. The focus is on the cognitive dimension of knowledge, understanding and analysis with the aim to develop and improve pupils' religious competence.

'Learning from religion' indicates the level of the existential analysis of faith and its meaning. The focus is on the affective dimensions of receiving, judging and being determined by it with the aim to develop and improve pupils' self-competence and social competence.

'Learning in religion' indicates the level of the discussion of religious practises. The focus is on the affective and pragmatic dimensions of perceiving and trying out religious forms with the aim to develop and improve pupils' competence of creatively working with religious forms as well as their self-competence.

Based on Roebben's ideas⁶⁸ and their modifications, the following outline results in which the goal of religious learning is rendered as 'referring to religion'.

	Referring to religion	
Internal perspective		External perspective
Learning about religion	Learning from religion	Learning in religion
Knowledge, understanding, analysing	perceiving, valuing, attunement	Perception, trying out
Beliefs, rituals, ethical implications	Beliefs and their meanings	religious practises, rituals
Cognitive	Affective	Affective, pragmatic
Religious expertise	Self-competence and social competence	Competence of working with religious forms, self-competence
Learning for knowledge	Learning to live together	Learning to shape life

67 "[...] explores the deep questions of life, to which religious traditions and worldviews answer in parallel and/or differently", *ibid.*

68 Cf. *ibid.*, 148.

3. How are the different dimensions of learning in Religious Education to be evaluated?

“Religious Education is a communicative event.”⁶⁹ This is why the local conditions play a significant role in the shaping of Religious Education and the evaluation of different religious learning dimensions. Above all the pupils’ presuppositions, what has influenced them (implicit learning) as well as the context in which they live will essentially determine the concrete lesson planning of the explicit learning. Therefore, the learning dimensions are evaluated differently because the definition of goals and the shaping of Religious Education must be ‘equally compatible’:

- “with the life-world of the pupils,
- the general educational and pedagogical aims of the school”⁷⁰.
- At the same time they must “conform to the specific matter of ‘religion’:
- as it is theologically determined
- and legally established in a constitutional framework.”⁷¹

Thus the given thoughts provide a frame for a justified evaluation. It has to be considered that the single dimensions have to be distinguished from each other in order to establish clarity but do not have to be separated from each other.

For further reading

- B. Dressler, *Unterscheidungen. Religion und Bildung*, Leipzig 2006.
- R. Englert, *Religionspädagogische Grundfragen. Anstöße zur Urteilsbildung*, second edition, Stuttgart 2008.
- A. Fritz / W. Hussy / D. Tobinski, *Pädagogische Psychologie*, München 2010.
- H.-H. Krüger / W. Helsper (eds.), *Einführung in die Grundbegriffe und Grundfragen der Erziehungswissenschaft* (ninth edition), Opladen / Farmington Hills 2010.
- B. Porzelt, *Grundlegung religiöses Lernen*, Bad Heilbrunn 2009.

69 Cf. C. Grethlein, *Fachdidaktik Religion. Evangelischer Religionsunterricht in Studium und Praxis*, Göttingen 2005, 189.

70 *Ibid.*, 271.

71 *Ibid.*