Religious Education in Switzerland as a Field of Work for the Study of Religions: Empirical Results and Theoretical Reflections

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Abstract
The following article addresses the current state of religious education in Switzerland and the involvement of the study of religions in this field. Since the 1990s, the existence of different religions and world-views has become a politically and socially significant factor in Switzerland. Not only representatives of public schools and particularly teachers of religious education, but also scholars of the study of religions, are challenged by the consequences of this multireligious and multicultural situation. During the past few years, religious education therefore has become a scholarly issue for this discipline in the German-speaking area. The article demonstrates what the engagement of the study of religions in the practical field of religious education should be like and how this has already been worked out. The authors differentiate between basic research, applied research and application, referring to their own research and practical experience. Based on empirical data, two basic forms of religious education are generated: religiöser Unterricht, which treats objects of religious traditions in a religious manner, including a dogmatic and a life-world sub-type, and religionskundlicher Unterricht, which treats objects of religious traditions in the scholarly way of the cultural studies. In the last part of the article some cornerstones for the implementation of the school subject Religionskunde and for the development of an applied didactics in the perspective of the study of religions are presented.

Keywords
religious education in Switzerland, religion and school, religious education and the study of religions, basic and applied research, object and frame of religious education, religiöser Unterricht and religionskundlicher Unterricht, didactics of Religionskunde
1. Multicultural Diversity and the General Situation of Religious Education in Swiss Public Schools

Similar to other Central European countries, the study of religions (Religionswissenschaft) in Switzerland only recently discovered religious education (Religionsunterricht) as a field of research. This is due to the changes in the religious landscape of European societies and the development of contemporary religious studies as an area of research. Until the 1970s, Switzerland, unlike former colonial empires like Great Britain or France, only had to integrate foreigners from Southern European countries like Italy, Spain or Portugal. As people from these countries usually were members of the Roman Catholic Church, their integration into the Swiss religious landscape was comparatively easy. Pupils attended religious education provided by the Roman Catholic Church and/or the school subject “Biblical History” (Biblische Geschichte).

Since the 1980s school classes have become more and more heterogeneous concerning religious orientation, caused by an increased immigration from countries in which non-Christian religions are practised. The subject “Biblical History,” with Christian theology and Christian religious pedagogy as its disciplines of reference, no longer seemed to be suitable for pupils of different religions and world-views as well as for a multicultural society in general. The study of religions was not only induced to start research in this field but also to actively contribute to new models of religious education, taking into consideration the multireligious society — and also the growing number of “secular” children who do not have any religious background.

1.1. The Demographic Situation

Demographic data from the year 2000 show that the number of Christian Church members in Switzerland has decreased considerably. During the past ten years, the proportion of Roman Catholic Church members decreased from 46.15 % to 41.82 % and that of Evangelical-Reformed Church members from 38.51% to 33.04% of the total population.1 In contrast, the population with non-Christian religious or

1) We follow the official publication of the Swiss Federal Statistical Office: Bovay 2004. The data relate to the national census, which unlike other European countries,
secular orientation has increased: 4.3% (ca. 311,000 persons) are Muslims, about 1% belong to other non-Christian religions, whereas the population without any religious affiliation amounts to 11.1% (ca. 810,000 persons). Among the Muslim as well as the non-confessional groups, the proportion of young people (under the age of twenty) is much higher than among the rest of the population. As a result, the proportion of Muslims and non-confessionals in classes at school is estimated to be three times larger compared to the proportion they comprise among the total population. A teacher therefore may expect 15–20% of the pupils in his class to be Muslim and 20–30% to be non-religious.

1.2. Religious Education in the Federal Constitution of Switzerland

In Switzerland, freedom of religion is an important part of the Federal Constitution, whereas the relationship between church and state, as well as public school affairs, are regulated on a cantonal basis. Nonetheless, the article on freedom of religion in the Federal Constitution (which is written in German and French) entails a section on religiöser Unterricht/enseignement religieux (religious teaching), carefully balancing the positive and negative aspects of freedom of religion:

4. Niemand darf gezwungen werden, einer Religionsgemeinschaft beizutreten oder anzugehören, eine religiöse Handlung vorzunehmen oder religiösem Unterricht zu folgen.²

In preparing religious education as a subject to be taught at school, the cantons have to take this section into consideration. As a consequence of the changing religious landscape, some cantons have developed new models of compulsory religious education, which — by the interpretation such as Germany, regularly ascertains data of Christian Church members as well as of non-Christian religious orientations.

²) "Everyone has the right to join or belong to a religious community and to participate in religious teaching. Nobody can be forced to join or belong to a religious community and to participate in religious teaching" (our translation).
of the cantons — are not subject to this article of the Swiss Federal Constitution.

1.3. The Organisation of Religious Education in Public Schools

The organisation of religious education in Switzerland is generally rather complicated. Almost all of the 26 cantons have their own standards. Principally there are three organisational models:

(a) The cantonal authorities of education themselves have the responsibility for religious education. In some cantons, religion is part of a subject-combination like Mensch und Umwelt (Human beings and the Environment), Natur, Mensch, Mitwelt (Nature, Human beings, Social world), etc.

(b) The cantonal authorities ask the Christian Churches (and sometimes other religious communities as well) to offer religious education at the public schools.

(c) The cantonal authorities have the responsibility of providing religious education, additionally offering the religious communities opportunities to provide confessional school lessons within the school schedule and in the classrooms.

In practice, these models of organisation are sometimes combined (Belleriger 2002; Loretan 2005). Especially in the first model, religious communities and their theologians often are involved in advising politicians, designing teaching material and training school teachers at colleges of education (Pädagogische Hochschulen) and universities (Jödicke and Frank 2007).

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3) At the moment, there is a project, organised by the Erziehungsdirektorenkonferenz (the Federal Council of the Ministers of Education), which aims at harmonising the cantonal curricula and syllabuses, including the syllabuses for religious education, called HarmoS. See http://www.edk.ch/d/EDK/Geschaefte/framesets/mainHarmoS_d.html [10.11.07].
2. The Study of Religions and Religious Education

The pluralisation of religious orientations in Switzerland — and similarly in other countries in Central Europe — challenges the study of religions (Religionswissenschaft) to develop its own approach as a discipline of reference for religious education. Nevertheless, the historical development has been different: Having been responsible for conventional models of religious education, Christian theologians were the first ones to conceive the inconsistencies of these models. In order to develop their own approach, they tried to include non-Christian religious traditions, asking either insiders of the respective traditions or colleagues from Religious Studies to provide the information needed. As a discipline of reference, they occasionally made use of the (pluralistic) theology of religions, a sub-discipline of theology (for a comprehensive overview, see Schmidt-Leukel 1997). The paradigm of interreligious dialogue, which has been important for religious education programmes in England and Wales (e.g. Hull 1996), as well as Germany and Switzerland (e.g. Leimgruber 1995), is connected to this sub-discipline of theology.

From a study-of-religions point of view, it seems problematic that the theology of religions only concerns the Christian understanding of non-Christian religious traditions. If these concepts are applied for religious education purposes, it is not possible to take into consideration the educational aims of non-Christian religions, which may differ from Christian educational aims. And, what is more, they do not take into account religiously indifferent attitudes. The school authorities considered this situation unsatisfactory. Therefore, in French-speaking countries and parts of Switzerland like Geneva, public agents, and also different academic disciplines (e.g. the science of education) pleaded for an inclusion of religions in school education in a non-theological way (for France cf. Debray 2002, for Switzerland cf. Hutmacher 1999).

2.1. Religious Education: A New Challenge for the Study of Religions

In the German-speaking area of Switzerland the study of religions is closely connected with the development of this discipline in Germany. Although the juridical and traditional frameworks of religious
education of both countries are rather different, the scholarly discourses follow the language boundaries. One of the first events that compelled the study of religions in the German-speaking countries to look at its new task, was the reunification of Germany in 1989/1990.4

Because of the high degree of secularisation in Eastern Germany, the conventional Western models of *Religionsunterricht* (religious education) did not seem appropriate. Scholars of the study of religions were at that time engaged in the design of a model for a new school subject (Grözinger et al. 1999). At a conference organised by the Potsdam Institute for the Study of Religions and the German Association for the History of Religions (DVRW), outlines of a new subject called *Lebensgestaltung — Ethik — Religionskunde* (life skills — ethics — religion in a study-of-religions perspective — abbreviated as LER), were developed for Brandenburg, one of the new federal states. In retrospective, the challenges to organise religious education in Eastern Germany after the reunification seem to mark the starting point for a new field of research and — what is perhaps even more remarkable — also a new field of application for the German-speaking study of religions.

As a starting point for the study-of-religions public contribution to this issue in Switzerland, a conference in Zurich can be mentioned. It was organised by the two authors of this article in March 2003 on the occasion of the introduction of the new school subject *Religion und Kultur* (religion and culture).5

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4) Even before, some scholars of the study or religions actively participated in this field, cf. Körber 1988, or various publications of Udo Tworuschka, mainly related to confessional and interreligious models of religious education, e.g. Tworuschka 1983.

5) Cf. chapter 4.2. The conference title was *Kulturelle Tradierung und religiöse Sozialisation* (cultural transmission and religious socialisation). Having been organised in cooperation with the Faculty of Theology at the University of Zurich, it included participants from all Swiss chairs of the study of religions (Richard Friedli, Karénina Kollmar-Paulenz, Maya Burger, Martin Baumann, Philippe Borgeaud) and some other scholars from Switzerland, including Ulrich Rudolph (Islamic Studies) and Peter Schreiner (Indology) and from Germany, including Peter Antes and Burkhard Gladigow. As an experimental step, representatives of the religious communities of the Canton of Zurich were invited to present basics of their respective religious traditions, which they considered to be integrated in the syllabus of the new school subject. In this way, an encounter between the perspectives of insiders and outsiders was arranged.
Research in the field of religious education from a study-of-religions perspective entails a double challenge: On the one hand, there has hardly been any research before in contemporary European societies. Until the second half of the 20th century, scholars of our discipline usually solely studied foreign cultures and past epochs, leaving the present and the religious traditions of their own societies to theologians and sociologists. On the other hand, the study of religions was not used to doing research in a field which had so many practical implications. From the outside of its own academic discipline, the study of religions was regarded as a new competitor in the field of religious education — and, among Christian theologians, as a new rival of religious pedagogy.

2.2. Basic Research, Applied Research, and Practice: A Clarification

In the present situation, the study of religions first of all has to clarify its own role in the field of religious education. It is necessary to distinguish between the following aspects of the task:

- religious education as a subject of basic research (1)
- religious education as a subject of applied research (2)
- religious education as a field of practice or application (3)

(1) Basic research is necessary in fields where there is little knowledge about the subject. This applies to religious education in contemporary European societies. We know little about religious transmission (Tradierung) in multireligious classes at public schools. Several important questions have to be answered: Which religious traditions are the objects of education? How do teachers conceptualise them, and how do they conceptualise the multireligious dimension? How many children are religiously educated and which religious traditions do they belong to? What do curricula and syllabuses look like? What are the specifics of religious education, compared to other school subjects like history or human geography? What are the differences between religious education and ethics or life skills (“Lebenskunde”)? This type of research deals

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6) Concerning Islamic syllabuses and curricula, see Mohr 2006.
with a large variety of categories. It is not designed to represent specific interests of religious groups or political stakeholders.⁷

(2) Applied research concentrates on topics that are directly related to practical work. Important questions are the following: How do curricula and syllabuses have to be examined from the perspective of the responsible agents, for instance, religious communities or state authorities?⁹ How can curricula and syllabuses of education be improved or what should a new programme look like on the basis of the findings of this type of research? How does a certain religious education model work in reality?¹⁰ Which corrections could be made? Applied research therefore has to refer to a certain set of tested criteria elaborated in basic research dealing with the same questions. Yet, unlike basic research, applied research has to take into account the different interests of the involved parties or stakeholders.

(3) Concerning the practical dimension of the study of religions we have to distinguish between different spheres:

- A scholar trained in the study of religions can work as an adviser to politicians and lawyers who implement the principles of education. The political situation is crucial for religious education in a certain country or a canton. Politicians have to respond to the changes in society. Therefore they are interested in appropriate advice.¹¹

⁷ Examples for this type of research are: Katharina Frank’s empirical research on teaching strategies in religious education at Swiss public schools, cf. below, chapter 3. Another example is a new project of Ansgar Jödicke, University of Fribourg, on “Religious Education between the State and Religious Communities”, which is part of the National Research Programme 58, “Religion, state and society,” of the Swiss National Science Foundation, see: http://www.nfp58.ch/e_projekte_jugendliche.cfm.

⁸ In the following paragraph we take into account the research of Robert K. Merton, cf. Merton 1949.

⁹ In this context, for instance the problem of religious normativity — in its open and also hidden aspects — has to be taken into account as an object of research. Cf., for example, Bochinger 2003; Frank 2007.

¹⁰ E.g. Asbrand 2000. This qualitative-empirical study, starting from an intercultural pedagogic perspective, analyses interreligious school lessons in Hamburg and specifies the teacher’s didactics and aims. Thus, practical effects of the guiding concepts are shown.

¹¹ For example, the involvement of the Seminar for the Study of Religions at the University of Zurich in advising the local Bildungsdirektion could be mentioned,
– Scholars of religious education may collaborate with others in conceptualising teacher training or may actively take part in this training.  
– On a more practical level, scholars of the study of religions can design curricula, syllabuses and teaching material — or cooperate in interdisciplinary settings.  
– Furthermore, they can teach classes as far as they are trained in the didactics of the study of religions (see chapter 5).

Although these roles of the study of religions have to be clearly differentiated, they should be related to each other. Practical application should make use of the findings of basic research as well as applied research in the field of religious education, whereas observations stemming from experiences in the different fields of application should be taken into consideration in further research.

### 2.3. Terms and Concepts

Until now, we have used “religious education” as a generic term for all kinds of education that impart knowledge about religion(s) in one form or other. However, the semantics of this term are rather ambiguous. Besides its function as a generic term, it may also be taken to refer to a model of teaching which is religious in itself. The term is especially dubious in the context of continental European discussions because of its proximity to the German term *religiöser Unterricht* and the French term *enseignement religieux.* Both of them clearly signify the religious orientation of this model of teaching, as discussed above in the context helping to develop teacher training for the new school subject *Religion und Kultur* — and also criticising the syllabus made by Christian theologians for its hidden normativity, cf. below, chapter 4.2.

12) This is the case in Zurich.

13) For example, Udo Tworuschka has developed a variety of teaching media for religious education, focusing on interreligious teaching models, but also on teaching “world religions,” especially Islam, in confessional Christian school teaching. As another example, Christoph Bochinger was a member of the local commission for the development of a syllabus for the teaching of “Islamic religion” in the German Federal State of Bavaria (the so called Erlangen Model, cf. 2.4.).

14) Cf. the analogous problem with the term “religious studies.”
of the Federal Constitution of Switzerland (see chapter 1.2.). Therefore we doubt whether “religious education” is an adequate term. However, as the alternatives that were proposed by some Anglo-Saxon authors, for instance “religion education” (e.g. Chidester 2002), are not yet established, we provisionally retain the term “religious education” with its generalising generic meaning.

The German term *Religionsunterricht*, which can be literally understood as a generic term for all kinds of religious education, poses a similar problem. In this sense, the term is particularly used in the German-speaking parts of Switzerland, whereas in Germany, due to special regulations of the German Constitution, it is often restricted to a religious model. Therefore, we have to stress the fact that we do not follow the usage of *Religionsunterricht* in the sense of German theologians and also specialists in constitutional law, who tend to restrict the term to the model of religious education that is in accordance with the principles of the respective religious communities (cf. Art. 7, 3 of the German Constitution).

In spite of this controversial use of terminology, we consider a generic term as an imperative for research and application in this field. There has to be a distinction between school subjects, in which religion(s) is (are) taught, and other subjects like ethics, life skills, history or geography. Therefore, we will use both terms in their generic sense, covering all variants of respective school subjects.

2.4. Common Models for Religious Education

During the past twenty years, different concepts have been presented in programmatic literature dealing with religious education as a school subject. They are usually divided into three models:15

(a) confessional education (in German: *konfessionsgebundener Unterricht*)
(b) interreligious education
(c) *Religionskunde* (religious education in a non-religious way).

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15) This distinction is especially familiar in German-speaking countries, but we suppose that it is partly comparable with the common differentiation between education-into, from and about religion.
Ad (a): The confessional model of religious education orientates itself towards a specific religious tradition, which is the teacher’s as well as the pupils’ “own.” This model of religious education intends to introduce pupils to a certain religious tradition and/or to deepen their understanding of this tradition. Now that society has become religiously plural, also non-Christian communities demand their own “confessional” education at public schools.

For this model of religious education the following criteria seem to be typical:

- The lessons focus on one’s “own” religious tradition, its specific ideology and its practice.
- Teachers are members of the respective religious communities.
- The pupils’ participation is very often voluntary (since they and their parents have the right to exemption) — which is also true for the teachers, who may not be asked to teach this subject against their will.
- As far as other religions are the object of teaching, the tradition of the teacher (and the pupils) is used as a frame of reference.

In Switzerland, confessional education is institutionalised in different cantons. The Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Church usually administer their own religious education classes at public schools. In the Canton of Lucerne however, Islamic religious education has been taught for several years now.\footnote{16) Cf. \url{http://www.sad.ch/Projekte/deatil/Islamischer-Religionsunterricht-im-Schulhaus/onecat/Alle-Projekte/0/all_items}. [10/12/2007]

17) In Germany, especially the “Erlangen Model” can be mentioned as an example of this type. It was implemented by the Bavarian regional government. Unlike other German models of Islamic teaching at public schools it includes most characteristics of the confessional type.} Also in Austria and some schools in Germany, a confessional model of religious education for Muslim children has been introduced.\footnote{17) In Germany, especially the “Erlangen Model” can be mentioned as an example of this type. It was implemented by the Bavarian regional government. Unlike other German models of Islamic teaching at public schools it includes most characteristics of the confessional type.}

Ad (b): The interreligious model of school education has often been recommended for classes where several religions and world-views are represented. For this model the following criteria seem to be typical:
- Unlike model (a), more than one religious tradition is addressed. Theoretically, there is a common frame of reference, referring to a multitude of religious traditions and drawing on principles of interreligious dialogue.
- As in the confessional model, “religion” and “religiousness” have positive connotations, because they are considered to be anthropogenic constants in a wide sense, presupposing personal openness towards “religion” and towards “religious pluralism.”
- Teachers and pupils reveal their own creeds and convictions.

In Switzerland, this model of religious education is implemented in several syllabuses, aiming at all pupils of the respective classes. In Germany, the so called Hamburger Weg is arranged according to this model (Doedens and Weisse 2000).

Ad (c): For the third model (Religionskunde), the following criteria seem to be typical:

- Unlike model b), “religion” (or “religiousness”) is not supposed to be an anthropogenic constant. This model takes into account that there are many individuals (teachers, parents, pupils) in modern society who do not have any religious convictions.
- Religions are seen as cultural phenomena, which are to be treated just as other cultural phenomena. There should be neither a positive nor a negative connotation regarding “religion” and “religiousness.”

In Western European countries, this model of religious education is still new.18 In German speaking countries, Religionskunde was first institutionalised in Brandenburg, Germany, as an integral part of LER (cf. chapter 2.1). It has to some degree also been institutionalised in Religion und Kultur in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland (cf. chapter 4.2.).

Many Swiss syllabuses draw from more than one of these three models of religious education. In addition, even if they explicitly relate to

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18) Interestingly, a model of distanced religious education, aiming at “informing” all pupils of a class about religion, has also been implemented many years ago in Turkey in the framework of the Kemalist perspective on laicism. About this model and its political background see Tosun 2005.
one of the models, there is a big difference between the basic concepts of the syllabuses and school practice. This is why it is interesting to do empirical research on the school practice itself.

3. Basic Research on Religious Education in Public Schools in Switzerland — Findings and Results of a Research Project

Although the third model of religious education is close to the approach of the study of religions by nature, the other models can also be the object of basic research in a study-of-religions perspective. In the following chapter, we will therefore present some of the results of a research project, which was carried out by one of the authors, Katharina Frank, between 1999 and 2006.19 We would like to define this project as basic research on religious education in public schools.

The project involved participant observation and the collection of supplementary data at the primary school level. The researcher visited school lessons in fourteen classes in different cantons of Switzerland. As a premise, only classes were chosen at which all pupils of the class were expected to participate and which were held by the class teachers. Nevertheless, there was a great variety of terminologies, conceptual frameworks and syllabuses of the respective school subjects, which in most cases did not explicitly refer to either of the models of religious education mentioned in chapter 2.4.

Although research has been based on data gathered only in the German-speaking part of Switzerland, the generated concepts, dimensions and categories are intended to be used for all models of religious education institutionalised in modern, functionally differentiated societies. Switzerland is an ideal field for this kind of research because of the multifaceted situation of religious education at its public schools. Hence, a wide diversity of teaching styles was to be expected.

As mentioned earlier, the political and juridical framework in Switzerland principally leave room for two organisational models of religious education in public schools. Either the religious communities or

19) The project was guided by the late Fritz Stolz at Zurich University and financed by the Swiss National Science Foundation. It will be submitted as a PhD-thesis during the next months.
the cantonal authorities have the responsibility to organise the classes.\textsuperscript{20} Although the educational goals of the two institutions — religious communities and school authorities — seem to be quite different from each other, experience has shown that (up until now) they hardly differ in practice.

3.1. Initial Research Questions and Methodology

In the beginning of the research project very fundamental questions were asked: Which styles of religious education can be observed? Which religion(s) are the objects of teaching, and which aspects and issues are communicated? Which methods are used in order to convey these issues to the pupils? Do teachers intend identification with certain religious contents on the part of the pupils or do they just intend to convey objective facts? The main goal of the project was to find as many variations of teaching as possible in regard to the aforementioned questions. Therefore, a qualitative empirical approach, based on the methodology of Grounded Theory, was chosen (Corbin and Strauss 1996). Following this procedure, data from contrasting cases were collected, as long as there were new insights for the research topic.

Very early on, it became clear that it was the teachers who essentially controlled the educational process. Even when they tried to include the pupils’ wishes and needs, the teachers ultimately decided whether or not and in which manner an issue was addressed. In conclusion, one can say that, in practice, the educational style depends on the teacher.

3.2. Object and Frame: Data Based Categories of the Sequences of Lessons

As a central result, the study was able to show that, for the most part, the structure of teaching stays the same. In nearly all sequences of the lessons, the teachers first presented an object of a religious symbol system or of any religious or non-religious area. As a second step, the teachers framed this object in a certain way, applying different manners of speaking (cf. Goffman 1980). By analysing the sequences of lessons, categories were generated in relation to the objects of teaching and also in relation to the frames of reference.

\textsuperscript{20} In some cases, both models are implemented separately at the same school.
3.2.1. Religious and Non-religious Objects

As for the objects, it can be said that teachers drew on a great variety of religious traditions: Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, Greek religion, Australian religion, Indian Lakota religion were mentioned, including many different elements of the respective traditions, such as texts, rituals, beliefs, everyday behaviour. Sometimes teachers also started a sequence of a lesson by introducing issues which usually are not — or not exclusively — regarded as originating from the religious field, for instance the concept of friendship, the expulsion of foreigners from Switzerland, class conflicts or gender differences.

Although it may initially seem quite easy to distinguish between “religious” and “non-religious” objects, for the main research question it was crucial to decide from a study-of-religions perspective whether a certain object is related to the religious field or not. Consequently, the first step was to ask whether a certain object was part of some kind of religious symbol system: objects like karma, God, the dance of Shiva, zakat, prayer, or Moses are definitely part of religious symbol systems, but what about meditation, yoga, mythology, witches, fairytales, marital rites and similar topics? In these cases it depends on the respective context whether they can be called “religious” or not. Therefore, in a second step, one has to ask whether a certain object is, (a) related to specific codes marking transcendence within the respective symbol system, and (b) at the same time possesses undisputable validity for its users. Only if both requirements were met, we decided to call the respective object “religious.” If the object, however, does not refer to any religious symbol system, or only fulfils one of the further conditions, we call it “non-religious.”

3.2.2. Dimensions and Categories of Framing

Concerning the teacher’s frame of reference, the dimensions and categories generated by the data relate to several communicative aspects:

1. The first dimension refers to the question whether the framing process only relates to a single object, originating from a single religious symbol system, or to two or more objects, originating from different religious symbol systems.

2. The second dimension refers to the relation between the object and its frame. The following categories have been generated:
– No framing.
– A slight discontinuity between the object and its frame, which is only recognisable by a change in how the teacher articulates himself — or herself (e.g. from a narrative to a dogmatic manner of speaking). The recipients usually do not have a chance to clearly differentiate between object and frame.
– A clear discontinuity between an object and its frame by a verbal, paraverbal or nonverbal pause and an introductory question of the teacher. Here, the recipients can distinguish between object and framing and therefore are able to notice intuitively that other frames could be related to the object as well.

(3) The third dimension refers to the speaker’s position and his or her manner of speaking during the framing process. In this case we have to distinguish between three categories:
– A we-speaker uses dogmatic religious codes like “if we ask God to forgive us, he will forgive us” or “God wanted to prove Abraham’s faith when he ordered him to kill his son Isaac,” etc.
– A you-speaker requests the pupils to relate the presented object to their own lives. In this case, the pupils become a part of the framing process. When framing the object, pupils use codes of life-world\textsuperscript{21} language like happiness, fear, etc. In some cases, they presented comprehensive statements like “I have drawn a sun because God is warm.”
– A they-speaker uses the third grammatical person in the process of framing. He refers to cultural-studies\textsuperscript{22} codes to describe a ritual or a text of a religious symbol system, introducing a historical and/or social frame by using scientific words and concepts.

3.2.3. Definition and Types of Religious Education
On the basis of these categories, generated in relation to the objects of teaching and the frames of reference, two clarifications can be achieved:

\textsuperscript{21} In German Lebenswelt, cf. Schütz and Luckmann 2003.
\textsuperscript{22} In German kulturkundlich or kulturwissenschaftlich, cf. Gladigow 2005.
(1) The difference between religious education and non-religious education, for instance ethics or life skills, can be described more precisely.

(2) Concerning religious education, a new typology can be developed, replacing the models described in Chapter 2.4.

Ad (1): *On the level of school lessons, we can speak of religious education, if there is a religious object (as defined above), and/or if the teacher chooses the position of a we-speaker, using dogmatic religious codes in the framing process.* In other words: if the teacher uses dogmatic religious codes in the framing process, we have to speak of religious education no matter whether the object of teaching is religious or not. If, on the other hand, the teacher acts as a you-speaker or they-speaker, referring to life-world language or to cultural-studies codes, it depends on the object whether the lesson can be called religious or not. Therefore, in these cases we can only speak of religious education if the object is religious. This is an important issue, because religious education (*Religionsunterricht*) is the only field of teaching that has to be in accordance with the Federal Constitution of Switzerland (see above). Most of the lessons observed during the project could in fact be defined as “religious education” in the above sense.

Ad (2): On the basis of the dimensions and categories mentioned above, which were generated in the course of the empirical analysis, seven different types of religious education emerged. Keeping in mind the scope of this article, we subsume them under the three following types:

- **Dogma-related religious education.** In this type, religious or non-religious objects are framed in a dogmatically religious manner, and the discontinuity between object and frame is marked either only slightly or very clearly.

- **Life-world-related religious education.** In this type, religious objects are framed by life-world experiences (which are related to the pupils) or a general anthropogenic perspective (related to the pupils and all human beings).

- **Cultural-studies-related religious education.** In this type, religious objects are framed in the typical manner of cultural studies, related to historical or social categories or in a systematically comparative manner.
3.3. Some Examples

3.3.1. Dogma-Related Religious Education
A sequence of the first type of religious education is the following one. During the Easter season, a teacher told her pupils about the death of Jesus as described in the Bible. When the researcher visited the lesson, the teacher asked the pupils to recount the story in different ways: how Jesus walked into Jerusalem, how he went to the Mount of Olives, was betrayed and crucified and was then resurrected from the dead after three days. The pupils (including Muslims and non-confessional pupils) were asked to act out these scenes. They had to sing the story and draw the crucifixion scene as told in the biblical text. After that, the teacher asked them to sit in a circle in the front of the classroom. Then she asked a certain pupil: “Now, what does the story of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection mean?” After having given him some assistance, the pupil was able to repeat what had been stated in the last lesson about the same issue: “Jesus wanted to show us that life will go on even after we have died, that we will all rise from the dead just as Jesus did.”

This sequence of religious education shows how an object of the Christian religious symbol system is framed in a dogmatic way. The teacher asked a pupil to repeat an interpretation of Easter which was not restricted to the Christians among the pupils but valid “for all of us.” The teacher assumed that everyone was part of a Christian we-group, although Muslim and non-confessional pupils were present. In this case, both the object and the frame are “religious,” following the definitions explained in chapter 3.2.

3.3.2. Life-World-Related Religious Education
To give an example of the second type of religious education, we present the following sequences: One of the teachers discussed the concept of “God” with the pupils. Everyone in the classroom was asked to draw his picture of God on a piece of paper. At first, the pupils were a little confused, but soon they started drawing. After that, the teacher asked the pupils to sit down in a circle in the front of the classroom and explain to the other children what they had drawn. A boy said that his picture, displaying a man holding the world, was meant to be Zeus — and that this was the image of God he had in his mind. One girl had drawn a
circle with rays coming out of it. She explained: “I have drawn a sun because God is warm.” Another boy had drawn a man in a boat floating on clouds in the sky — explaining that this was God who was looking at the humans; that he saw everything that was going on in their lives and on earth. Another girl had drawn God on a crucifix. A third girl, who had not received any religious education before, explained that at first, she had not known how to draw God and that she now had drawn God as a circle.

In another lesson the teacher started from the Greek pantheon of gods. He then asked the pupils to create or choose and finally draw their own god. The names and the drawings were also very individual and diverse.

Both examples show that the respective objects — in the first example “God,” in the second example “a god” — have been framed according to the life-world of each single pupil.

3.3.3. Cultural-Studies-Related Religious Education

Some sequences of the third type of religious education are the following. At the beginning of the lesson, the teacher showed the pupils a picture of the temple of Jerusalem. He and the pupils then contextualised the building through social categories (he asked: “Which religious community is this building important to?”) and also through historical categories (his question was: “When was this temple built, how was it used, what was its function and what is its meaning for modern Jews living today?”).

Another teacher started his lesson by telling the Lakota Indian story of cosmogony and anthropogony. At first, the pupils had to reproduce what they had read previously. After that, the teacher asked them what these Indians imagined the world to be like and how human development was explained in their tradition. A Muslim pupil brought up the element of a rib, which human beings were made from. The teacher asked all of the children which religious tradition this new element belonged to. Although it would have been possible as well to relate this element to the Islamic tradition, the pupils and the teacher in their further discussion only mentioned the Biblical act of creation. Nevertheless, the teacher included the new element of the rib, which a pupil had added to the discussion. Stimulated by this, the teacher generalised
the Lakota story by relating it to a concept of “theories of cosmogony and anthropogony.” He then asked the pupils whether they knew of any other “theories” of this kind. In consequence, the pupils referred to different “theories” of cosmogony und anthropogony and described which religious community or world-view the story belonged to.

Another teacher presented two texts, taken from a magazine and a biographical study, portraying the everyday life of two Muslim girls. He asked the pupils to reconstruct the two girls’ religious life and assisted them in developing superordinate categories in order to compare the two kinds of lived Islam.

In the first example the teacher contextualised the religious object historically and socially. In the other examples similar phenomena were compared, developing functional criteria in order to relate different stories of cosmogony and anthropogony or different ways of acting out one’s religion to the respective religious symbol systems.

3.3.4. Different Forms of Participation
Looking at the aims insinuated by the framing process of the religious objects, different forms of participation can be observed:

- **Dogma-related religious education** invites the pupils to adopt a fixed religious idiom. The pupils participate in a certain religious symbol system.

- **Life-world-related religious education** also invites the pupils to communicate in religious codes, but it allows them to use an individual way by which they can express their religiousness through individual or anthropogenic life-world codes. The pupils also participate in a religious symbol system — which is transformed into an individual or anthropogenic form.

- **Cultural-studies-related religious education** invites the pupils to see religions as life-orientated dimensions of persons not present in their lessons. Teachers and pupils communicate in cultural-studies codes, as for instance codes of history, social sciences, or comparative reflection. The participation is restricted to an observation of religious symbol systems, religious communities and their members. The mode of their participation is therefore purely mental and temporary.
3.4. A New Classification for Religious Education

The empirical typology, explained in chapter 3.3., results in a new classification for religious education. The multitude of forms of participation and the different aims of teaching which have been outlined can be connected to a variety of different approaches within the field of academic studies. The first type (dogma-related religious education) can be easily connected to dogmatic theology, just as cultural-studies-related religious education can be combined with the study of religions.

The problem, however, is which academic subject is related to the second type (life-world-related religious education). A thorough analysis of the style of communication of this type can only lead to one answer: since the communication process during the religious education class has to be called “religious,” it goes together with dogma-related and not with cultural-studies-related teaching. Teachers and pupils communicate in codes of transcendence derived from a certain religious symbol system. The terms God, gods, resurrection, reincarnation, book of revelation etc. are used as if they were real to each and every pupil sitting in the classroom as well as to society as a whole. The teachers presuppose that all humans have a basic religious orientation. They therefore think that they have to provide their pupils with a religious code — whether in a theological-dogmatic or a life-world-related form. This kind of perspective on religious objects is characteristic of theological approaches — including Christian pedagogy of religion, theology of religions and also the classical approaches of the phenomenology of religion. For this form of religious education, we propose the German term Religiöser Unterricht (or the French term enseignement religieux), to be paraphrased in English as religious education in a religious way on the basis of a theological approach.

In relating the teaching of religions to different approaches of cultural studies, knowledge becomes a central aspect. When using the term “knowledge” we take into account the entire mental dimension, including cognitive and emotional aspects. The pupils know that the respective religious object serves as life orientation for someone else but not necessarily for them. The pupils neither have to agree with a dogmatic perspective nor do they have to reveal their own position on a certain religious topic. For this form of religious education, we would suggest the German term Religionskundlicher Unterricht or Religionskunde. We
can also take into account the Swedish term *religionskunskap*. In English, we paraphrase this term as religious education in a non-religious way on the basis of the study-of-religions approach.

Considering the fact that the Federal Constitution of Switzerland guarantees its citizens freedom of religion, the difference between those two forms of religious education seems to be crucial. The first form, *Religiöser Unterricht*, cannot be compulsory for all the pupils (see chapter 1.3.), whereas the second form, *Religionskundlicher Unterricht*, does not affect this article of the Constitution. In addition to these reflections on terminology, based on our own empirical categories, we consider further discussions about adequate terms for new and conventional forms of religious education indispensable. We propose not to use programmatic terms (such as “interreligious education”) but terms that are empirically based and tested.

4. Applied Research in the Perspective of the Study of Religions

In our understanding, applied research in a study-of-religions perspective has to be founded on basic research providing basic knowledge and criteria for the selection of data and on a methodical design (cf. chapter 2.2.). Because of its direct relation to the practical dimension, applied research presupposes a principal distinction between religious education aiming at all pupils of a class and education which is restricted to the members of a certain religious community or confession. In the following paragraphs, we will present two different examples.

4.1. Example I: Islamic School Teaching

As an example of applied research related to confessional religious education, we would like to refer to an interdisciplinary PhD-project which was mentored by one of the authors, Christoph Bochinger, in collaboration with colleagues from pedagogy and (Christian) pedagogy of religion (*Religionspädagogik*). With this guidance, a German Muslim school teacher, Harry Behr, developed theoretical perspectives for confessional Islamic education curricula at public schools, drawing on a variety of existing Islamic curricula, which he analysed using a qualitative empirical design (Behr 2005). This constituted, to some extent, the starting
point of a new academic discipline in Germany, which can be called “Islamische Religionspädagogik” (Islamic pedagogy of religion).\(^{23}\) Although Behr did not share the perspective of the study of religions, but clearly had in mind a theological model of religious education, the study-of-religions approach was pivotal for defining the scope of his applied studies: an important step was to make a clear distinction between a Muslim theological perspective and already existing perspectives of Protestant and Catholic Christian Religionspädagogik (pedagogy of religion).

4.2. Example II: Religion und Kultur in the Canton of Zurich

The second example refers to the school subject of Religion und Kultur in the Canton of Zurich, which was introduced as a compulsory subject at the upper level of the Volksschule of public schools.\(^{24}\) From the perspective of the cantonal authorities, Religion und Kultur was planned as a “regular” school subject like history or geography, and not corresponding to the peculiarities of “Religiöser Unterricht” according to the definition of the Federal Constitution of Switzerland. As a consequence, we suppose that its scope has to be “secular” and not “religious” — otherwise its compulsory status would contradict the demands of the constitution. Therefore, following our classification, Religion und Kultur necessarily has to be structured according to the criteria of a religionskundlicher Unterricht.

Prior to the analysis of the new syllabus, we will give a short review of the history of this new subject. In 1991, the Canton of Zurich introduced a confessional-cooperative model of religious education (konfessionell-kooperativer Religionsunterricht, abbreviated KokoRU), combining Protestant and Catholic religious education. As an optional subject, this type of religious education was organised by school authorities

\(^{23}\) Soon after submitting his thesis at Bayreuth, Behr was appointed to a new chair for “Islamische Religionslehre” at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, cf. http://www.izir.uni-erlangen.de/ [1.11.2007].

\(^{24}\) The upper level (or secondary school level I) is a part of the Volksschule, which all pupils attend until year 9. The upper level is attended by adolescents from the age of 12 to 15.
in accordance with the two officially recognised Landeskirchen (the Reformed Church and the Roman Catholic Church), which supplied the curriculum and the teaching media. Due to a decrease in participation and other reasons, the Canton of Zurich in the year 2001 decided to develop Religion und Kultur as a new model. Unlike KokoRU, only the cantonal school authorities are responsible for this new subject. In order to integrate the religious communities, the authorities have appointed an advisory board, chaired by a professor for educational science from the University of Zurich. This board includes members of Christian and non-Christian religious communities and a representative of the College of Education of Zurich (Pädagogische Hochschule, Zürich). The model started to be implemented in some public schools during the current school year (2007/2008). It is going to gradually replace KokoRU.

In order to prepare the new school subject, the University and the College of Education of Zurich have developed a joint programme for teacher training: The University is responsible for the scholarly perspective (the so called fachwissenschaftliche Anteile), and the College of Education for didactics (fachdidaktische Anteile). The subject Religion und Kultur is optional for prospective teachers, and it has to be combined with other school subjects like maths or French. The teacher training courses offered by the respective academic disciplines at the University of Zurich, including Indology and Islamic Studies, covers five so called “world religions.” Christianity is taught by members of the Faculty of Theology, who — just like the other disciplines — are supposed to follow a cultural-studies perspective. The representatives of the study of religions serve as coordinators and also provide some of the scholarly parts of the training.

When the new subject was prepared, the school authorities asked the College of Education to develop a syllabus (which is the usual procedure in the Canton of Zurich). Therefore, the academic disciplines that cooperate in the training of the future teachers were not part of this procedure. The first syllabus was published in 2006. Soon after its publication, it was criticised by scholars of the study of religions because of its closeness to (inter-) religious models of religious education (see chapter 2.4.), which do not correspond to the criteria defined by the cantonal Council of Education. A revised syllabus has been available
since the end of 2006.25 The new version, however, still seems to be close to religiöser Unterricht. Because of the basic conditions of the Federal Constitution mentioned above, the character of the syllabus is not only a matter of academic debate, but may have major legal consequences.

To give an example for applied research, we are going to analyse this syllabus on the basis of our categories:

To begin with, the importance of the pupils’ religious identities are emphasised in the syllabus (p. 1). It is argued that a multireligious society and multifarious media entail new challenges for individual identity. In consequence, the competence of knowing how to handle individual religious questions and also accepting different religious traditions is considered to be the central goal of Religion und Kultur. Therefore, the representation of “world religions” is closely connected to the pupils’ life-worlds (cf. pp. 2–3).

Taking into account the essentially secular character of the new subject, we consider the starting point of the syllabus to be wrong. Educational efforts should not focus on the pupils’ individual religious identities. “Religion” should rather be regarded as a part of the pupils’ environment, because they have to learn how to live, behave and act as citizens within a multireligious society — no matter whether they consider themselves “religious” or not. From this viewpoint, religious questions, or items, are not “anthropogenic.” Therefore, one can not expect the pupils to have “religious questions.” The questions, as well as the related answers, can rather be associated with religious traditions or communities. If the teacher presents religious questions as if they were anthropogenic or universal by nature (seeming like questions the pupils would have), and therefore tries to acquaint them with answers different religions may give, he constructs some sort of religiousness of the pupils. This is not adequate for secular school teaching — and it seems hardly in conformity with the prescriptions for positive and negative freedom of religion of the Swiss Constitution.

In the following paragraphs, the syllabus presents three major approaches to teaching religion(s): a historical-descriptive approach (historisch-deskriptiver Zugang), a society-oriented, political approach

(gesellschaftsorientiert-politischer Zugang), and a life-world approach (lebensweltlicher Zugang). It also presents several examples, which do not only demonstrate these approaches but closely connect them to different objects of teaching (cf. pp. 3–4).

Hence, the syllabus does not sufficiently distinguish between the objects of teaching and the approach (or frame). It implies that certain objects can only be discussed on the basis of the respective approach. Especially the life-world dimension of religions, for instance “Leben als Muslime in der Schweiz” (living as a Muslim in Switzerland; p. 6), which is an object of teaching, is confused with the life-world of the pupils. Again, this approach is not appropriate, because it forces pupils with a Muslim background to personally identify themselves as being Muslim. Generally speaking, the approach tries to promote the pupils’ (Muslim or non-Muslim) religious attitudes. The life-world dimension of religions should instead be approached in an ethnographic or sociological way, which allows everybody (the pupils and the teacher) to maintain a personally distant perspective towards the object of teaching, in case he or she wishes to do so.

In summary, it can be said that the syllabus Religion und Kultur is still phrased like a syllabus for religiöser Unterricht. This is probably due to the fact that all of the authors, who are either members of the College of Education or teachers, are trained in Protestant theology and Christian religious pedagogy. Although they dissociate themselves from dogma-related teaching, they assume that the pupils, as well as all human beings in general, have a “religious life-world” — not unlike classical phenomenologists of religion. In our view, the new challenges of the multireligious situation in a secular society and the intention of state and school religious authorities to bring up pupils as citizens of this society,

26) Cf. p. 3: “Die Inhalte (die Traditionen der Religionen) und die Lebenswelt (und die damit verbundenen Erfahrungen der Jugendlichen) sind aufeinander zu beziehen. Sonst besteht . . . die Gefahr, dass . . . ein auf religionskundliche Inhalte beschränkter Unterricht die Jugendlichen in ihren konkreten Fragen und Anliegen nicht erreicht.” (“Contents [the religious traditions] and life-world [and related experiences of the young persons] have to be corresponding. Otherwise . . . there is the risk that an education which is limited to the contents of Religionskunde will not get through to the teenagers with their concrete questions and concerns”; our translation).
demand a different type of religious education. A clear distinction
between religiöser Unterricht (whether related to dogmatics or to the
life-world) and religionskundlicher Unterricht is necessary. The basic
perspectives of these two types of teaching are totally different from
each other. The syllabuses of a compulsory Religion und Kultur-Unter-
richt have to start with religious plurality in a secular state, which also
includes the option of not identifying oneself with religion at all. Free-
dom of religion does not only entail the right to choose whether to be
religious or not, but also includes the right to be indifferent, which
means that nobody may be forced to personally relate to any religious
issue. Therefore, the study-of-religions approach, which does not favour
any of those positions, should not only be used for teacher training, but
also for structuring and organising syllabuses and school pragmatics.
This, of course, entails strong efforts from the applied study of reli-
gions, which is related to the field of religious education.

5. The Study of Religions and Practical School Teaching: A New
Field of Application

In the following section we would like to discuss some possible contri-
butions of the study-of-religions approach to the future development of
religious education in its practical aspects, related to the situation in
Switzerland and other European countries. To this end, we would like
to distinguish the political level from the conceptual one.

5.1. Political Positioning

Until now, the study of religions in Switzerland — and also in other
European countries like Germany — has hardly taken any political
action in the field of religious education, with the exception of advising
politicians and implementing standards for teacher training pro-
grammes (see chapter 1). Nevertheless, the media often ask scholars of
the study of religions to comment on political issues and to recommend
political strategies for the further development of religious education in
public schools. This is particularly the case in Switzerland. We therefore
believe that our discipline has to develop a distinct political position in
the field of religious education.
At this point, the authors would like to present their own position. Based on our research and our experience with institutions and persons involved, we suggest that a twofold organisational model is the most appropriate in a multi-religious context. This model, which has partly been put into practice in some of the Swiss cantons, is a combination of the two subjects religiöser Unterricht and Religionskunde. It allows both, religionskundlicher Unterricht as a compulsory subject for all pupils and religiöser Unterricht as an optional subject introducing the pupils to a certain religious tradition. Both subjects should be taught in public schools. This double strategy has several advantages.

– Pupils will learn that there are two different ways of speaking about religious items. They, therefore, will have the chance to learn both of these two “languages.”
– They will be able to decide where and when it is appropriate to speak about religious items from an insider’s point of view and when they should apply an outsider’s view, both relating to their own religion (in case they are religiously affiliated) and towards other religions.
– Pupils will also learn how to deal with the tension between these two perspectives.
– If the state is responsible for Religionskunde and the religious communities for religiöser Unterricht, both sides have a common practical field of institutional communication and relationship.

Possibly, some of the pupils (or their parents), who feel deeply committed to their own religious tradition, may be offended by a Religionskunde, because participation is compulsory, contradicting, as they may argue, the positive side of religious freedom. We think this is an important objection, when it refers to the life-world type of religious education. However, when it comes to the subject of Religionskunde, a distanced approach towards religious traditions should not be mistaken as somehow being of a “religious” – or a “anti-religious” standpoint. Religionskunde does not aim to interfere with the pupils’ convictions, but rather to provide them with a basis for discussions about religious issues.

5.2. Some Cornerstones for Teaching Religionskunde

In the following section, we would like to define some cornerstones of Religionskunde from the perspective of the study of religions.
5.2.1. Conditions of the Organisational Context

– In order to achieve the abovementioned goals, one has to make a clear distinction between didactics in *religiöser Unterricht* and in *Religionskunde*.

– Furthermore, there has to be a clear-cut differentiation between the responsible agents of both concepts. The difference is that *Religiöser Unterricht* is the concern of the religious communities, whereas *religionskundlicher Unterricht* is the concern of public school authorities. *Religiöser Unterricht* has to be conceptualised as well as taught by representatives of the respective religious community (or communities) and representatives of the discipline of reference, which will normally be some kind of theology and/or religious pedagogy. *Religionskundlicher Unterricht*, on the other hand, has to be conceptualised by representatives of the secular state, its main discipline of reference being the study of religions. Therefore, school teaching should be conducted in a study-of-religions manner — and not a theological manner.

– The same differentiations also apply to the dimensions of teacher training, the designing of curricula and syllabuses as well as creating teaching media.

– These presuppositions do not exclude theologians of Islam, Christianity etc. from presenting their insider-perspectives in a *religionskundlicher Unterricht*. In the same way, representatives of the study of religions can participate in a confessional training of future teachers or *religiöser Unterricht* of a certain religious tradition. However, the responsibilities should be clearly defined, theologians being responsible for *religiöser Unterricht*, and the scholars of the study of religions for *Religionskunde*.

5.2.2. Conceptual Cornerstones

– The school subject “religion” in the sense of *religionskundlicher Unterricht* should not be understood as the next developmental level of *religiöser Unterricht* (as defined in chapter 3.4.). On the contrary — it has to be conceptualised autonomously. The concept of *Religionskunde* should start from a point of view which sees the pupil as a member of secular society. It should not mistake a
multireligious situation in the respective society for individual identity questions or the pupils’ supposed religious or spiritual needs.

– In order to provide suitable means for the practical dimensions of a religionskundlicher Unterricht, the study-of-religions approach is bound to conceptualise its own didactics (Fachdidaktik).

– The conceptual design has to make a clear distinction between objects and the frames of reference or — phrased didactically — the approaches.

– The objects of teaching are elements of religious symbol systems. The responsible school authorities, which represent the respective society at every school level, have to decide which religions and which religious elements they want to be represented. The selection should be based on the question of how to educate pupils as citizens of their country — not as religious individuals or as members of religious communities.

– The approaches to teaching have to derive from methods used by the cultural sciences, elementarised according to the respective school level.

5.3. The Didactics of Religionskunde: Searching for an Appropriate Programme

As a consequence, the Religionskunde form of religious education is in need of a specific didactical concept. Unfortunately, the study of religions has not designed or institutionalised its own didactics yet. This is due to the basic conditions of religious education in most European countries, which until now have not favoured a study-of-religions approach to religious education. In the following paragraph, we will roughly outline a possible concept of applied didactics. This concept is predominantly characterised by German-speaking discourses on didactics, but hopefully it can be seen as a starting point for more intensive discussions in an international context. Referring to the cornerstones, the concept is based on the didactic model of Jank and Meyer, which we consider to be an adequate basis for the development of a religionskundlicher Unterricht (Jank and Meyer 2002:30).
## Didactics of Religionskunde

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<td><strong>Complementary Historical Disciplines:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Core Discipline:</strong> Study of Religions</td>
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<td>– Indology</td>
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<td>– Cultural Studies of Christianity and Judaism</td>
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<td>– etc.</td>
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<th>(2) General Didactics:</th>
<th>(3) General Theories of Development and Socialisation</th>
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<td>e.g. Concept of Competence</td>
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<th>(4) Practical Field</th>
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<td>Religionskunde/Religionskunskap in Public Schools</td>
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This design refers to the four major fields which are necessary for the development of applied didactics of the study of religions:

1. It is evident that the central parts have to be provided by its core discipline, the study of religions, supplemented by other academic disciplines which can contribute their specific knowledge concerning certain religious traditions, but also systematic approaches for interpretation.

2. The didactics of *Religionskunde* has to draw on the same field of general didactics as any other school subject. As a suitable model from general didactics, we recommend the concept of competence, which has already been adopted in several other secular school subjects. For the needs of specific didactics, we suggest to

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27) Cf. for example: [www.kompas.bayern.de](http://www.kompas.bayern.de) [20.10.2007].
develop a concept of elementarisation of approaches and objects of the study of religions.28

(3) The third aspect is concerned with different theories of socialisation and development. Didactics of Religionskunde should relate these theories (e.g. Hurrelmann 2001) to objects and approaches of the study of religions.29 In addition to these general theories, specific concepts of teaching and learning have to be taken into consideration. We recommend the approach of Inquiry Learning (forschendes Lernen) as it has been developed in the didactics of geography and history (Aepkers and Liebig 2002).

(4) Finally, the practical field has to be taken into account. We therefore advocate the continuation of applied research in the field of religious education in public schools. A close contact between the representatives of Religionskunde and those who are responsible for religiöser Unterricht will be valuable to clarify the differences, benefits and problems that arise for the pupils, especially if both models of religious education are applied at the same time. Respectively, a close contact with representatives of other school subjects like geography or history may be useful as well.

6. Conclusion

As this article has shown, the study of religions as a scholarly approach has an essential task in analysing, classifying, and criticising existing models of religious education, but also in shaping new concepts according to its own disciplinary standards. Especially new concepts of religious education like Religion und Kultur in the Canton of Zurich are in need of new scholarly approaches, particularly on the level of applied research.

As a result of empirical research in public schools, two basic forms of religious education have emerged: Religiöser Unterricht and religions-

28) This kind of elementarisation has already been developed for similar purposes in the field of religiöser Unterricht, drawing on theology as its discipline of reference, by German pedagogues of religion like Friedrich Schweitzer and Karl Ernst Nipkow. Cf. Hanisch 2007.

29) Again, there are analogous approaches in Christian pedagogy of religion, relating theories of socialisation and development to theological topics. E.g. Nestler 2007.
kundlicher Unterricht — treating objects of religious traditions in a religious manner or in the scholarly way of cultural studies. Whereas theologies (or pedagogies of religion) serve as the main disciplines of reference for religiöser Unterricht in the context of the respective religious traditions, Religionskunde draws on the study of religions as its discipline of reference. As our analysis of the new syllabus of Religion und Kultur has shown, the distinction between the two basic forms of religious education does not only refer to the area of school classes, but also to teacher training, creating syllabuses and teaching media. Therefore, the study of religions has to develop its own didactics, comparable to other secular school subjects and their respective disciplines of reference like history or geography. Worked out in this way, religiöskundlicher Unterricht is not in competition with religiöser Unterricht, but provides a general basis for understanding religious issues in a secular society.

References


