



EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR RESEARCH ON LEARNING AND INSTRUCTION

# SIG19 Religious and Spiritual Education

## Newsletter

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*The Religious and Spiritual Education SIG is advocating research on religious and spiritual development that includes cognitive, social and emotional components. Values and beliefs are important aspects in religious and spiritual education that need an own forum for discussion.*

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## EDITORIAL

You are now reading the first newsletter of EARLI SIG19. 'The Religious and Spiritual Education SIG is advocating research on religious and spiritual education...' is a quote from the programmatic statement issued to EARLI in 2003. We believe that a newsletter promotes this aim. Religious and spiritual education is an integral issue in learning and instruction and needs and deserves to be articulated in the context of EARLI. We are grateful to EARLI for accepting our application for this SIG. In addition, we want to acknowledge the role of certain people from our SIG, such as, Zehavit, Fritz, and Kirsi, whose vision has been decisive in the creation of SIG19 Religious and Spiritual Education. Many of us were not there in the beginning, but a special feature offers background information concerning the start of SIG19.

The issue has got six sections. For instance, this particular issue begins with interviews focusing on three members in our sig. This time the reviews include conferences on RE. This area is also suitable for your and your students' literature reviews, etc. In each number there are also some announcements to the readership. We welcome you to use this channel and to make a contribution to the community. In Cyprus, a need for database for CV's etc. was expressed. We will not operate that due to limited resources. If you wish, we will add your homepage to the memberlist.

The newsletter editors are Elina Hella and Martin Ubani, Ph. D. students, from the University of Helsinki. The editorial work will be shared between us for the next two years. Our joint editorship will be carried out so that we will take turns as the editor in charge. It is our sincere wish that this newsletter builds up the research community by offering a forum where education, religion, and spirituality can meet and have a fruitful dialogue.

Martin Ubani  
Co-Editor  
Ph. D. student  
University of Helsinki

## INTERVIEWS

### FOCUS#1

#### Sharing thoughts with Carmine Maiello

*The first interview in our string of introductions starts from Switzerland. We had a pleasant opportunity to get to know who is Carmine Maiello from the University of Fribourg.*

**Question:** In our sig, there are people who have been involved with EARLI for a longer period, and then we have people who were introduced to EARLI just during the Cyprus conference. Carmine, for how long have you been involved with EARLI?

**Carmine:** Since 2001

**Question:** About half a decade? This time has probably given you some personal perspective concerning the purpose of SIG19. How would you describe the role of SIG19 in EARLI?

**Carmine:** Sig19 should highlight the relevance of religiosity and spirituality for health, personality, values and education promoting and carrying out cooperative research on the nature of religiosity/spirituality and on the implications of these dimensions.

**Question:** Now we would like to concentrate a bit more on you and your professional self. Please describe your path how you became a researcher.

**Carmine:** First I studied law at the University of Naples. But, I realized very quickly that theory and application of law may differ substantially because of political and economical issues. Consequently, I came to the decision to enroll for the study of political sciences. However, after one year of political studies, I realized that politics often requires compromises that I never wanted to make. So, I left Italy and studied German in Munich and Berlin. At that time I was very amazed by the German way of life and enjoyed observing and trying to understand behavioral differences between Italians and Germans. Accordingly, I took pleasure in crossing the East German border to notice differences between the East- and West German behavior. These social psychological issues

Religion is a system of beliefs that concern the nature and purpose of life. It includes "rules" that affect human behavior. Carmine Maiello

fascinated me. Consequently, I decided to study ethnology and later psychology at the Free University of Berlin. Maybe, from this moment on I was already a researcher. I benefited from many brilliant teachers who stimulated my curiosity with reference to almost all topics of science. Following my graduation I worked in the field of adult education at the Technical University of Berlin and later in the field of psychoimmunology at the Center for Psychobiological Research in Trier and at the Virchow University Hospital in Berlin. Later, I left Germany and worked in the field of methodology and educational psychology at the University of Berne. Currently, I am working as a lecturer at the Department of Education of the University of Fribourg.

**Question:** This is actually quite a path. You mentioned that you are currently working at the University of Fribourg. Could you please tell us a little bit more about that?

**Carmine:** I teach statistics, methodology and diagnostics at the Department of Education of the University of Fribourg. With reference to methodological issues and data analysis I am involved in almost all research projects of the department and give advice to all students and young researchers.



Carmine Maiello

#### FACTFILE

**Who** Carmine Maiello **Title**  
Displ. Psych. **Age** 42 **Institution**  
University of Fribourg **Country**  
Switzerland **Family** 1 Child **Book**  
**recommended**  
*Verhaltenswissenschaftliche*  
*Forschung für Einsteiger* by  
Carmine Maiello **Key words**  
Religiosity, Spirituality,  
Personality, Psychobiology,  
Measurement, Methodology,  
Health

**Question:** You seem to be involved and deeply committed to your institution. Furthermore, one of your professional inspirations belongs also to the same institution. Please tell us more about who has influenced your career most and in which ways the person has done so.

**Carmine:** Many people have influenced (and are influencing) my career in a positive way. However, Fritz Oser had the greatest and most positive impact. This man is not only a valuable expert of religious development. His greatest virtue is his warm and sincere friendship: his capacity to transmit strength and confidence thus creating an atmosphere of overall agreement.

**Question:** Having a good and appreciative relationship with your peers is a bonus and a rewarding aspect in our work. Speaking of your work, what are your current research interests?

**Carmine:** My work focuses on the exploration of the nature of religiosity and its related constructs such as religious experience and spirituality. Specifically, I am interested in those components of these constructs that are invariant across religions and cultures. The underlying hypothesis is that these invariant components are core components that can be regarded as personality factors and are therefore of substantial relevance for psychological research. According to this framework variations are interpreted as characteristics of specific religions and/or cultures. With reference to religiosity I have presented evidence of a second order factor that can be reliably measured across cultures and religions (Maiello, 2005). The second part of my research program deals with the relationships between religiosity and classical psychological traits and states.

**Question:** And, you also have some other interests which partly stem from your first interest?

**Carmine:** Another domain of personal interest is a methodological one. I enjoy creating new methods to effectively teach statistics in the social sciences. Recently, I wrote a book on elementary statistics in which I presented scientific theory, methodology, theoretical and practical statistics in a comprehensible and interconnected fashion.

Currently, I am developing a multimedia program with a focus on the visualization of complicated statistical models.

A third domain of personal interest is related to biology and biological correlates of personality. I made extensive research on glucocorticoid sensitivity in the past. Currently, I am elaborating models to study the influence of cytokines on natural killer cells.

**Question:** You seem to have a wide expertise in different topics. If we focus now back on the field of sig 19, what do you feel are currently the most important areas of research in Religious and Spiritual education and why?

**Carmine:** I think that the relationships between religiosity/spirituality and mental/physical health must be considered more deeply in education and in future research. Spiritual healing and spiritual well-being have been part of the culture of various Asiatic and African folks for centuries. However, the mechanisms underlying these phenomena are generally unknown. Scientific knowledge of these mechanisms may be broadly implemented in education to prevent a number of mental and physical disorders and consequently improve broad-spectrum healthiness.

**Question:** We think that your answers and descriptions of your interests have caused the readers to become interested also in your publications. Please name up to three publications of your own (in APA style!), which you would like to represent here. Please describe the reason for choosing each particular item.

**Carmine:**

Publication #1:

Maiello, C. (2005). Degrees of Belief in God: A measure of belief for use in cross culture. *Mental Health, Religion & Culture, 8*(2), 87-95.

Reason:

This paper is a contribution to the understanding of the nature of religiosity. Its focus is on the measurement of a hypothesised core component of this construct which is reliable across cultures and religions thus representing a higher order factor.

Publication #2:

Dieckmann, B. & Maiello, C. (1998a). Glaube und Lebensalter. Zusammenhänge religionssoziologischer Merkmale mit dem Lebensalter [Belief and age. Relationships between sociological traits and age]. In K. P. Jörns & C. Großholz (Eds), *Was die Menschen wirklich glauben. Die soziale Gestalt des Glaubens - Analysen einer Umfrage* (pp. 53-79). Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus.

Reason:

This paper presents a number of interesting correlations between belief and age. More importantly, it is a preliminary exploration with reference to items that proved to be useful to measure religiosity within the Christian tradition.

Publication #3:

Dieckmann, B. & Maiello, C. (1998b). Glaube und Geschlecht [Belief and gender]. In K. P. Jörns & C. Großholz (Eds), *Was die Menschen wirklich glauben. Die soziale Gestalt des Glaubens - Analysen einer Umfrage* (pp. 9-51). Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser Gütersloher Verlagshaus.

Reason:

This paper presents a great number of interesting relationships between belief and gender.

**Question:** Especially, the first article sounds interesting. We hope that many people have a chance to read it.

Unfortunately, our brief interview is coming into an end. However, as a correct finish, you have now a chance to send your greetings and express your wishes for whole EARLI SIG 19. What is your message to the readership of this newsletter?

**Carmine:** I wish cooperation and gratifying research.

## FOCUS #2

### Chatting with Camilla Stabel Jørgensen

We had a pleasant opportunity to interview Camilla Stabel Jørgensen, 31, who is a member in our sig. Camilla is working as an assistant Professor at the Sør-Trøndelag University College in Norway. The interview was conducted via email. We asked her about different issues concerning her work and interests.

**Question:** Could you please describe your current work?

**Camilla:** I am working in teacher education, mainly teaching 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> year students the subject of religious education. In Norway that subject consists of Christianity, other religions and philosophy and ethics. As I studied comparative religion, I get the lectures about "other religions", though I teach all subjects involved in the Norwegian RE. Recently I've taken an interest in 'philosophy with children', and have also been working on applied ethics.

**Question:** Who has influenced your career most and in which ways?

**Camilla:** I believe that must be Richard Marks at the University of York, with/under whom I studied medieval stained glass, and who showed me it could be fun to do research to write an essay. More recently I'd say my students and my colleges, because they keep asking questions and remind me to be in touch with what's going on in primary and secondary schools.

**Question:** We all have different stories about how we became involved with research and the field of religious and spiritual education. You have also other kind of career than being merely a religious educator. It would be interesting to know about your path how you became a researcher in this field.

**Camilla:** For quite a while I thought I'd be working in stained glass restoration and conservation, or do research in the field of conservation work. Physical religious expressions have, as you see, been on my mind in many ways. Later I've been connected to a network called ENID (European Network on the Instruments of Devotion) consisting of people with an interest in visible and/or tangible religious culture. After working in a primary school in the very north of Norway for a while, I got the opportunity to teach and do research here at this teacher training college. And although I still keep my earlier interests, I'm now most concerned with research related to present practice in Norwegian schools.



Camilla Stabel Jørgensen

#### FACTFILE

<b>Who</b>	Camilla Stabel Jørgensen
<b>Title</b>	Assistant Professor
<b>Age</b>	31
<b>Institution</b>	Sør-Trøndelag University College
<b>Country</b>	Norway
<b>Family</b>	Girlfriend
<b>Book recommended</b>	<i>The Little Prince</i> by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry & <i>How Institutions Think</i> by Mary Douglas
<b>Key words</b>	RE in Norway, religious aesthetics

**Question:** You mentioned the research concerning present practice in Norwegian schools. Can you specify in more detail what are your current areas of interest?

**Camilla:** At the moment I am in the middle of a project where I try to look at what actually happens during RE lessons in schools. The current RE subject (a non-confessional, multi-religious, children-of-all-faiths-together subject) was introduced in Norway in 1997. Before there were Christianity and Ethics as two separate subjects, the first gathering all Christian pupils, the other being an option for everyone else. Since 1997

the subject has been revised twice (!) (2002 and 2005), and has been widely discussed. All denominations (including non-religious) are worried because the children are supposed to learn so much about religions that are not their own.

**Question:** And you are interested in the question whether the discussion has affected the class room practices?

**Camilla:** I wonder if this discussion made teachers afraid to do much else, but make the children read the approved textbooks, and do exercises from those textbooks. Does it have an impact if the class is multicultural, multi-religious? Does it make a difference if the teacher has a different background from most ethnic Norwegians (religiously or language wise)?

**Question:** It seems that your concern is not just a local Norwegian challenge. What do you feel are currently the most important areas of research in Religious and Spiritual education and why?

**Camilla:** As Europe, and other parts of the world, is becoming increasingly multicultural, and pupils in one classroom often represent/belong to different religions and denominations, I believe research in the field of Religious and Spiritual education need to take this into account. Also we need research on how religious education works, for instance, does it have an impact? How? When? Why?

**Question:** I think the other members would also be interested to know something about your publishing work. I know you have quite recently made a paradigm shift to religious and spiritual education but we would like you to name up to three publications of your own (preferably in APA style), which you would like to represent here. Please also describe the reason for choosing each particular item.

**Camilla:**

Publication #1:

Jørgensen, C. J. 2002. Tekster og bilder som kilder. [Texts and images as sources] *Chaos – Danish-Norwegian Journal for Studies in Comparative Religion*, 37.

Reason: I don't have that many publications, so I'm just picking the ones that I have.

Publication #2:

Jørgensen, C. J. Katolsk propaganda i Nidarosdomen?.

[Catholic propaganda in the cathedral of Trondheim?] *Din – Journal on Religion and Culture*, 2.

Reason: As above

Publication #3:

Short articles in an internet-encyclopaedia at the institute of comparative religions at the University of Oslo on: "Loven i islam" [The law in Islam] and "Kristen billedteologi" [Christian image-theology] (<http://www.hf.uio.no/iks/ariadne/Religionshistorie/framesetT.htm>)

Reason: As above

**Question:** Now, unfortunately, our interview is coming to an end. As a proper finish we would like ask a few short questions focusing on EARLI. First, for how long have you been involved with EARLI?

**Camilla:** Since July 2005.

**Question:** This means that your first touch with EARLI and our sig was in Cyprus. On the basis of your experience how would you describe the role of SIG19 in EARLI?

**Camilla:** A timely attempt to focus on important aspects of education.

**Question:** Finally, do you have any wishes or greetings for EARLI SIG 19?

**Camilla:** May we develop into an inspiring community of researchers who can cooperate on and learn from each others' studies!

## FOCUS#3

### A few words with Terry Lovat

The last interview of in newsletter focuses on Terry Lovat from Australia. He is working as a Professor and Pro vice-chancellor at the University of Newcastle. Terry was kind enough to answer a few questions focusing his research interests and SIG19.

**Question:** How did you become involved with EARLI?

**Terry:** My first EARLI conference was at Fribourg in 2001.

**Question:** Many of the members in sig19 already know you. However, it would be interesting to get to know more about your thoughts and background. First, could you please describe your work?

**Terry:** My main interest at present is in religious dialogue and movement, principally but not exclusively in the intersections between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and the education forms that can promote and facilitate understanding and strengthening of the ties between people of these traditions.

**Question:** And what you are working on at the moment?

**Terry:** Since a short study leave at Oxford University, I have become particularly interested in mysticism as a way of tracking the intersections between Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The Aristotelian influence on significant theologians of mysticism, like Al-Ghazzali, Aquinas and Cordovero, is a particularly fertile research path.

**Question:** From a global perspective, what do you feel are currently the most important issues for research in Religious and Spiritual education and why?

**Terry:** The most important areas of research are those that touch on the world's current conflicts and misunderstandings. So many of these revolve around religion and religious narrowness. Finding ways that we can re-interpret towards broad and embracing understandings, and then finding the educational means of effecting these interpretations, is the challenge of the age. It is the true test of the effectiveness and value of religious education.



Terry Lovat

#### FACT FILE

**Who** Terence Lovat **Title**  
Professor **Age** 56  
**Institution** University of  
Newcastle **Country**  
Australia **Family** Wife  
Tracey, children Amy  
Emma, and Thomas  
**Book recommended**  
Killer Angels by Michael  
Shaara **Key words**  
Religion, RE, Spirituality,  
Mysticism, Religious  
Movement, Ethics

**Question:** One can notice that your own current work is tied with the global challenges of today. How would you describe the path how you became a researcher?

**Terry:** I first studied theology, then became a teacher and involved in implementing religious studies syllabuses in schools. I came to realize how little research had been done on the different faith communities in Australia, other than the dominant Christian traditions. This led to an array of research projects aimed at better understanding of non-Christian faiths, including mainstream traditions and 'new' religions.

**Question:** Who has influenced your career most and in which ways?

**Terry:** Dietrich Bonhoeffer probably had the most influence as my research interests were shaping up. He influenced me to value the religious dimension of life and to understand the power that religious values can have in shaping one's life and moral responses.

**Question:** In our newsletter we want to get to know a little bit more about the professional self of our members. One integral

part of research is reporting and publishing our insights. Could you please name up to three publications of your own (in APA style!), which you would like to represent here. And please describe the reason for choosing each publication.

**Terry:**

Publication #1

Lovat, T. (2005). Educating about Islam and learning about self: An approach for our times. *Religious Education, 100*: 38-51.

Reason: This recent publication captures my most updated research interests and makes the connection between the research and religious education.

Publication #2

Lovat, T. (2002). *What is this thing called RE: A decade on?* (second edition). Sydney: Social Science Press.

Reason: This book, originally published in 1989, has been the text that has become most associated with my religious education research and curriculum implementation. It has sold in most English-speaking countries and has been used in religious education programs in universities across the world.

Publication #3

Lovat, T., McGrath, J., Follers, J. & Fletcher, E. (2005). *Studies of religion*. Melbourne: Nelson Thomson.

Reason: This book, first published in 1993 and about to be released in its third edition, is a school-based text, designed for senior high school students. It is the book that captures best the relevance of my work for school-based religious studies.

**Question:** In the end of this interview we would like to focus again a little bit on EARLI. As you have been involved with this organisation for the past four years, you have had time to reflect on the relationship of SIG19 and EARLI. How would you describe yourself the role of SIG19 in EARLI?

**Terry:** The role of SIG19 is to affirm the importance of religion, spirituality and morality as features of education that are vital to the human community, hence vital to education and that they function best when based on the same levels of rigorous research as any other area of education.

**Question:** One could say that those theses reflect the importance and relevance of SIG19 to the educational discourse and practice in general. Now, would you like to send any greetings and wishes for the people involved in our SIG?

**Terry:** May we all meet up happy and research fortified in Budapest in 2007. In the meantime, let's all stay in contact.

Interviews: Martin Ubani

## REVIEWS

### The second Finnish-Baltic conference in Religious Education

'Neutrality and Commitment in Religious Education – the Nordic-Baltic Context and Reality' was the theme of the second Finnish-Baltic conference in Religious Education that was held in the Faculty of Theology in the University of Tartu in 23.-27.09. 2005. It brought together 30 researchers and religious educators from Finland, Estonia, Latvia, and Russia.

The papers presented during the conference dealt with various topics in relation to the conference theme. For instance, the presentations dealt with the challenges of the grounds for religious education in the pluralistic context; introduced research outcomes about RE teacher training and IT possibilities in it, the influence of RE upon pupils' orientations

*Spiritual experience is a particular form of human experience that involves a link with a state or dimension that is perceived as transcendental. Spirituality is a trait characterized by a steady experience, which is associated with a dimension or state that is perceived as transcendental.* Carmine Maiello

and their attitudes regarding the subject. Also the topics about religion and spirituality, human rights education, Godly Play methodology, and conflict theory and RE were presented.



Professor Friedrich Schweitzer was the invited key note lecturer. His topic was 'Children's Right to Religion: A Challenge to Educational Neutrality?' Photo R. Aikonen

The keynote speaker of the conference was prof. Dr. Friedrich Schweitzer from Tübingen. In his paper "Children's Right to Religion – a Challenge to Educational Neutrality?" he made a strong case for the children's rights as the grounding principle for RE. According to Schweitzer, educational policies and strategies cannot be developed responsibly anymore without taking children's rights into consideration. Basing religious education on the child's own rights becomes an important possibility for at least two reasons:

First, stated Schweitzer, religious educators, who consider children's rights as the basis for their work, also do justice to today's view of the child as a person of his or her own rights. Religious education should acknowledge and affirm what is important for the children themselves.

Second, as was reasoned, children's rights are the only basis strong enough to function as a rationale for religious education after the respective claims of state and church have lost much of their acceptance and plausibility. At least in the long run, only a religious education based on children's rights will be convincing for parents, educators, and politicians. In many cases, it is only this kind of education based on the needs of the child that they will feel committed to.

The next conference will be in 2007 in Riga, Latvia. More information about the 2005 conference and its presented papers is available from the FBI conference web site: <http://www.ortoweb.fi/tarto.htm>

Dr. Pille Valk  
Chair of the FBI conference  
University of Tartu, Estonia

## ICCS 2005, Malta

The sixth International Conference on Children's Spirituality was held in Malta during the second week of July. The theme of the conference was: 'Intergenerational Wisdom and Modern Construction of Knowledge: A Dialogue between Traditions and Disciplines'.

More than seventy participants from seventeen different countries attended a conference that celebrated diversity not only in nationality but also in faith, ideology and professional background. However, this diversity did not hinder a healthy sense of community. Participants were united by their enthusiasm to learn and share and to confront themselves with each other.

The conference centred on the dialogue between traditions and professions. The twenty-six papers presented at the conference explored how children are to benefit from the interaction of the two forms of knowledge from philosophical, psychological and sociological point of views, in educational, church and social work settings, and from religious and non-religious understanding of spirituality.

The keynote papers also highlighted the interdisciplinary theme. Anthony Frendo, a biblical scholar, illustrated how ancient wisdom in the near east was handed down to us from generation to generation through religious tradition. Caterina Cangia, a lecturer in Social Communication, discussed how multimedia can contribute to an intense spiritual experience for children. On the other hand, Clive Erricker was more interested on the framework in which we work. He suggested that we can draw on the wisdom of tradition with insight from contemporary knowledge through a post-modern re-reading of faith. Karen Marie Yust, a lecturer in Religious Education, nicely wrapped up the main themes of the conference and offered her own reflections.



The social programme completed a wholistic approach to the Maltese generational wisdom and tradition.

The social programme complemented the theme of the conference, with participants coming into contact with the generational wisdom of the Maltese through the archeological evidence of prehistoric temples, Palaeo-Christian catacombs and contemporary popular religiosity. Next year's conference will be hosted by Jane Erricker at King Alfred's University at Winchester during the third week of July. For more information about the conference, please visit the conference web site (<http://home.um.edu.mt/theology/conference/index.html>).

Adrian Gellel  
Conference convener  
University of Malta

*When I use it (spirituality), it is often in relation to certain people who I find are particularly spiritual. Perhaps I could say they are people I care to talk to, maybe even just listen to, because there's always a (potential) challenge in what they say.* Camilla Stabel Jørgensen

## Religion, Spirituality, and Identity... and the Nordic

The 8<sup>th</sup> Nordic Conference on Religious Education was held in sunny Finland in June 2005. The Department of Practical Theology at the University of Helsinki had an honour to host the conference. The chairman was Professor Kirsi Tirri from the Department of Practical Theology. NCRE offered a meeting place for researchers, teachers and students; the participants could have an overview of the current research topics on RE in Nordic countries. This time, the theme of the conference was Religion, Spirituality and Identity.



The University of Helsinki main building hosted the key notes, presentations and Vice-Rector Hannele Niemi's reception.  
Photo: Elina Hella

Keynote speakers of the conference were Prof. Leif Gunnar Engedal from Norway, Prof. Hannele Niemi and Prof. Heikki Kotila from Helsinki and Dr. Andrew Wright from London. There were also a number of symposia and paper sessions, in which both researchers and graduate students presented their research projects or results to the critical colleagues. Scientific program was interesting and fruitful and the themes were discussed in theory and practice. The research of spirituality and identity formation was presented from different viewpoints. In addition to the main themes, other aspects of religious education were under discussion. For instance, participants enjoyed the presentations of teaching and learning RE in school, multicultural aspects to religious education and educational technology. The elected papers will be published in a book during winter 2006-2007.

Religious education has to face a lot of challenges in the modern, changing world. By gathering the Nordic scholars together, NCRE2005 gave an opportunity to identify the role of RE in the context of education and theology. The next NCRE conference will be held in Norway. The exact date will be decided on December. Meanwhile, please be free to visit the NCRE2005 conference web site:  
<http://www.janua.helsinki.fi/ncre/index.htm>

Kristiina Holm  
Ph. D. student  
Dept. of Practical Theology  
University of Helsinki, Finland

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## SPECIAL FEATURE#1

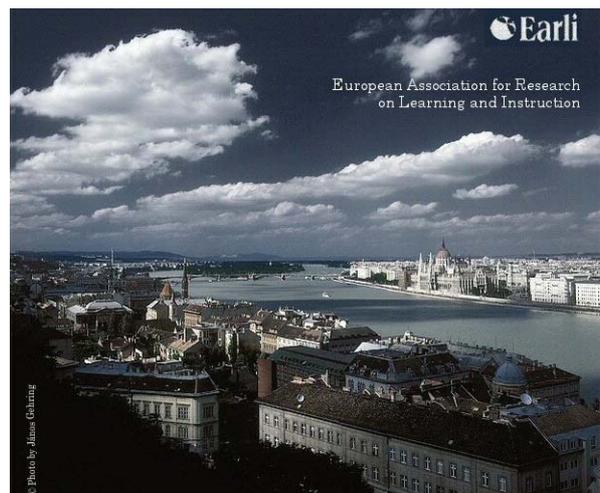
### A Need Addressed: SIG for Religious and Spiritual Education

The 2003 EARLI conference was held in Padova, Italy. During the conference there was an invited symposium called "European world views, morality and religion" that was organized by Professor Kirsi Tirri. The paper presentations dealt with different religious orientations and their influence on teaching and learning. The discussion in the symposium was intense. Religion and spirituality were identified as important factors in the context of learning and instruction. During the conference an initiative to make this area visible in education and in EARLI started to take shape. As a result, more than twenty participants signed their name into a list that was

presented to EARLI. The names in list were signed for one purpose. The aim was to install SIG19 into EARLI.

The name of the special interest group was to be 'Religious and Spiritual Education'. According to the application to EARLI, this network would support high quality research on values and beliefs, different world views and religious orientations. The emphasis would be on religious and spiritual development and teaching and learning in these areas. Furthermore, the network would provide a forum to share research results and reflect on good scientific based instructional practices in Religious and Spiritual Education.

As in EARLI there was already a SIG of 'Moral and Democratic Education', a possibility for close co-operation was being suggested. After all, both special interest groups share some similar interests. However, there is also something special in the interests of SIG19. In fact, the name of the SIG alone is challenging and not without tensions. Most of the European schools have a subject or other activities that can be described as religious education. In other words, connecting religion and education has been a norm in education. However, the name of SIG19 includes a third concept, 'spiritual'. The discussion on what is spirituality has been a hot topic in education for the past twenty years. Namely, is spirituality a content or is it one kind quality of education? If spiritual education is understood as a content, would it mean that it would resemble a viewpoint to what Goldman (1964) would describe as focus on things 'opposing to material'? On the other hand, if spirituality is approached as a quality in education, the subjective perception would be emphasised more. The problem is that this is not easy for education to address or to assess.



The next business meeting for SIG19 will be at the 12<sup>th</sup> Biennial EARLI conference in 2007 in Budapest, Hungary.

However, some tension is always good for dialogue and development. In EARLI there has been a strong dominance of cognitive oriented psychology. However, dominance equals to power, and today alternative readings that challenge the status quo are encouraged. It is a challenge for SIG19, too. Therefore, in its programmatic statement SIG19 acknowledges that human development includes not only cognitive, but social, and emotional components, too. Furthermore, SIG19 intends to stand as a forum where traditional interpretation is put under scrutiny and not into a pedal. This soul-search includes theoretical and critical perspectives on what is the 'religious' and 'spiritual' in education, and also what is the justification for this emphasis. In fact, the benefit of having a separate SIG is that it attracts scholars from other sciences like theology and philosophy to discuss religious and spiritual education from different viewpoints. Furthermore, a close interaction with other areas of social sciences and humanities in the EARLI community is integral for speaking the same language as the rest of education.

*(Spirituality is) a common human faculty connoting everything from impulse and interest through to affirmed belief in the dimension of 'otherness'. I tend to align with Otto's notion that it is a kind of 'sixth sense' that, at its most basic level, life consists of more than the standard five senses can grasp while, at its most sophisticated level, that there is a force (numinous) that sits behind the 'other'. Terry Lovat*

The first business meeting of SIG19 was in Cyprus 2005. Again some 20 people attended from different parts of world. It seems that the SIG is already contributing to the creation of European research network for scholars in this field. The meeting was led by co-chair Professor Kirsi Tirri. Among the participants there were also people who were already involved in Padova, for instance, co-chair Dr. Zehavit Gross, Professor Terence Lovat, and Professor Fritz Oser. It seems that after the first phase of establishing the network, SIG19 has decided to proceed to the next phase. The meeting discussed the methods of widening participation and sharing projects. One concrete step of co-operation was the decision to launch a newsletter. This newsletter will help the members to get to know each other better, to share interests, and to pass relevant information. The newsletter is published twice a year electronically. As there are many JURE people involved in the SIG, it was suggested that the PhD students should be supported in their publication careers. The publication policy was discussed even further. It was proposed that somewhere in the future, SIG19 would publish an edited collection of essays. It can be said that while the present is dynamic, the future seems to be very promising in the field of Religious and Spiritual Education.

Martin Ubani

*We would like to thank Zehavit Gross and Kirsi Tirri for their input on this article.*

## SPECIAL FEATURE#2

### USKONET - A Thematic Network for RE Teacher Training and Research

USKONET is a Finnish pioneer project involving four Finnish universities. It aims at increasing co-operation in RE and research, sharing expertise between institutions, developing virtual training and learning for Religion Education, and gathering and sharing relevant information. USKONET has been established in autumn 2004. In USKONET there are representatives (professors, researches and teaching staff) from the University of Helsinki, University of Joensuu, University of Jyväskylä, and University of Turku. Currently the project is administrated by the University of Joensuu.



The launching of USKONET in 21.10.2004, University of Joensuu. The meeting included RE teacher trainers, teachers, and student teachers. Photo: R. Aikonen

In Finland the RE lessons are being given by subject teachers in secondary and upper secondary school and by primary school teachers in grades 1-6. The resources concerning education and research in this field are spread between different universities. The Finnish primary school teachers are trained at eleven Finnish speaking universities and at one Swedish speaking university. The subject teachers are trained at the universities of Helsinki, Åbo Academy (Swedish speaking) and Joensuu. Only the University of Joensuu trains the Orthodox RE teachers. RE teachers are trained also at the University of Turku (Department of Cultural Studies). In addition to these, the departments of practical theology at the theological faculties in these aforementioned three universities deal with RE.

Before this project there has been no virtual environment or meeting point for the Finnish professionals in this field. Also so called normal collaboration between different institutions involved with RE teacher training has been quite limited. In addition, one clear need that this network can answer is the provision of supportive activity over the Internet for those institutions which have no full time lecturers or other staff for RE teacher training. Thematic networks can also be used for promoting the new tools and methods of e-learning among the academic staff. Building a well-functioning and outcome-oriented community of practice within one academic field can also be used for overcoming the problems related with lack of co-operation between higher education institutions.



Besides to virtual interaction, USKONET enhances face to face collaboration among professionals in RE teacher training. Photo: R. Aikonen

The USKONET network has got an open part (<http://www.uskonet.fi>) and a closed virtual environment. The closed virtual environment is built with MOODLE and it is used for communication and collaboration among the people involved. In MOODLE the key idea is to establish and maintain a marketplace with its 'stalls' focusing on different kinds of relevant areas of expertise. For example, the stalls include the themes concerning research in RE, training programs, information concerning RE and virtual course(s) for RE for primary school teachers. The work and responsibility for stalls is shared between different universities according to their skills and interest. After having a stable and functional national virtual environment for RE training and research purposes, the next and natural step is to strengthen co-operation between Nordic and Baltic countries.

Risto Aikonen  
Lecturer of Orthodox RE  
University of Joensuu, Finland

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**Homepages?** Many of our members have a homepage. Please, feel free to send your address to the newsletter so that we can include it in the list.

**Religion, spirituality, and Identity.** An edited book by Kirsi Tirri. It includes 13 chosen articles from the NCRE2005 conference papers. The projected date of publication is early 2006. The book will be published by Peter Lang.

## NEW MEMBERS

We want to welcome the newcomers into our sig. However, as this is our first newsletter we acknowledge that many of you have been members of SIG19 before this newsletter. Of course, old members are also welcome! But for practical reasons the criterion for 'new members' is joining after Cyprus 2005. The new members will be listed after they have joined this network.

## NOTES AND GUIDELINES

We want to encourage a wide participation in SIG19 and in the newsletter. If you intend to contribute to the newsletter, please take into account the following issues. You can make suggestions concerning to content of the SIG19 and the newsletter. However, the editors retain the rights to alter and modify the contributions.

*Interviews:* In each newsletter we will focus on two or three researchers connected to the SIG19. One of the covered researchers is preferably a junior researcher. Please do not hesitate to make suggestions concerning the interviewees.

*Reviews:* In this section the SIG members can review different things, such as, books, articles and conferences, etc. Please do not hesitate to contribute and to present also your own works. A review should not exceed 250 words.

*Special feature:* This section we feature some interesting and inspirational aspect concerning the SIG19 areas of interest. The author is invited by the editors with regards to the suggestions by the members. The contributions should not exceed 500 words.

*Announcements:* If you feel that there is something relevant happening in the interest areas of SIG19, please use this section. Such things are up-coming conferences and projects. This section can also include propositions for shared projects. The announcements should be 100 words at maximum.

*New members:* We welcome the new members to our SIG. We will list the new members in this section after we have been informed by them.

*Publication & contact:*

The newsletter is published twice a year. If you intend to contribute to the newsletter, please take into account the following dates.

	Deadline	Publication
Spring	31.3.	30.4
Autumn	31.10	30.11

Please send your contributions and suggestions to: [earlisig19-news@helsinki.fi](mailto:earlisig19-news@helsinki.fi)

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