

SIG19 Religious and Spiritual Education Newsletter Spring/2007 Released: 04.05.2007

Coordinators:
Kirsi Tirri, University of Helsinki, Finland
Zehavit Gross, University of Bar Ilan, Israel
Newsletter editors:
Elina Hella, University of Helsinki, Finland
Martin Ubani, University of Helsinki, Finland
earlisig19-news@helsinki.fi

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 which need a forum of their own for discussion.

EDITORIAL

This is the fourth EARLI SIG 19: Religious and Spiritual Education newsletter. The purpose of this special interest group is to promote discussion on the importance of religious and spiritual aspects of education in the context of EARLI. This newsletter informs the members about latest and upcoming events in the field. Hopefully you enjoy reading this newsletter and we also hope that it reaches your friends and colleagues in the field so that we have a chance to wish more people welcome!

In this issue we have three interviews with the members of our special interest group. In the first interview we are happy to introduce our teacher and teacher educator, *Professor Arto Kallioniemi* from the Department of Applied Educational Sciences, University of Helsinki. In the second interview we have *Romali Rosales Chavarría*, a researcher and PhD student from the University of London. The third interview introduces *Dr Theo van der Zee* from the Netherlands. Last – but not least – we have an opportunity to know a little more about the man behind these newsletters: Dr. Martin Ubani, the other editor of this newsletter who works as a researcher and lecturer in religious education.

We are delighted to have one review and two special features in this issue. *Dr Ray Godfrey*, Reader in Education Statistics from Canterbury Christ Church University reviews two statistical reports on English state-funded faith school from the National Institute for Christian Education Research. He also provides weblinks to the original documents. Our first special feature is offered by *Dr Zehavit Gross*, one of the two co-ordinators of our SIG. She was invited as a representative of the official delegation of the State of Israel to participate in the informal thematic debate on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women in the United Nations General Assembly. Her invited address is a feminist message of peace. The second special feature is offered by *Dr Risto Aikonen*, a Senior Lecturer of Orthodox RE who introduces UskoNET, a web-based network of Religion Education as a communication forum for researcher and teacher educators.

This newsletter also includes announcements of a new conference coming up in Riga and of a new book. We would also like to welcome *Professor Bo Dahlin* from the University of Karlstad, Sweden to join our SIG! We thank all of you who have contributed to this newsletter.

In the EARLI 2007 conference in Budapest it is time for Martin and me to step aside from editing this newsletter and welcome others to take up this task. It has been like an educative hobby for us, a nice opportunity to learn about research in the field from other researchers in an informal manner! We would like to express our warm thanks to all who have sent in items for all the newsletters so far. Please consider becoming actively involved in editing this newsletter and inviting new members to developing our SIG together! We also encourage all members to keep the contributions flowing in.

On behalf of the EARLI SIG 19 we wish you cordially welcome to attend the SIG meeting during the EARLI conference. It is time to select a new co-ordinator for the SIG. Further details of time and place will be e-mailed to all members. We look forward to meeting you all in Budapest.

Elina Hella
Co-editor
University of Helsinki

INTERVIEWS

FOCUS#1

'Religion is one of human being's basic needs and also a basic character. Religion is usually concentrated on a certain religion. Spirituality is a broader phenomenon'. – Arto Kallioniemi

Arto Kallioniemi

Our first interview introduces Professor Arto Kallioniemi, who works at the Department of Applied Sciences in Education at the University of Helsinki.

Question: First, we would like to know some details about your career. How would you describe your work?

Arto: I work as a Professor in the Department of Applied Sciences of Education. I am responsible of teacher education in religious education in all levels from Kindergarten teacher education to Adult Education. Furthermore I am also a supervisor of PhD-students. I am a member of the board of our department and I do also some administrative work in Subject Teacher Education and Property Management.

Question: Would you tell us how you became a researcher?

Arto: I have studied several subjects in the university (theological subjects, religious studies, education and psychology). Before I began my current work as a Professor, I worked for 10 years as a university lecturer in religious education in the same department. First in my vocational career I worked as a Teacher of Religious Education and Psychology in secondary school. I have always been very interested in studying and doing research. I have had very good teachers in the university and they have encouraged me to have an academic career. I did my doctoral thesis approximately 10 years ago and the topic was the occupational profile of religious education teacher. The theory in my thesis was based on occupational psychology and sociological study of vocations. The content belonged to the field of religious education.

Question: Could you tell us a little bit more about your current research interests?

Arto: The main focus of my current research is in investigating different solutions of religious education in Europe. Because Finnish solution is a much debated issue and there is a lot of pressure to develop a Finnish solution. Therefore I study how religious education is organized in other countries. Furthermore, I am also interested in social pedagogy and how it can be applied to religious education.

Question: Who has influenced your career most and how?

Arto: My family and also my academic teachers who have encouraged me to do research and continue my studies.

Question: What do you think are currently the most important areas of research in Religious and Spiritual education and why?

Arto: I think that nowadays the application of spiritual education is very important. How the results of research on spiritual education can be applied to research on religious education. Of course, this also requires knowledge about models and practices of religious education in different countries and about how citizenship education, for example, has been organised in RE in different countries.

Question: Next we would like to discuss about publications and research. Could you name up to three publications of your own to and tell us why you have chosen these three

Arto:

Publication #1

Kallioniemi, Arto (2003). Adult Senior Secondary School Students' Concepts concerning Religious Education from a Qualitative Perspective. *British Journal of Religious Education*, 25 (3), 185–199.

Reason: this article gives a good overview of my main research.



FACTFILE

Who Arto Kallioniemi
Title Professor of Religious Education
Age 44
Institution Department of Applied Sciences of Education, University of Helsinki
Country Finland
Family Girlfriend

Publication #2

Kallioniemi, Arto (2003). Multiculturalism and Religious Education in the Nursery: a Finnish approach. *Journal of Beliefs and Values. Studies in Religion & Education*, 24 (3). 339–348.

Reason: this article represents one branch of my main research.

Publication #3

Kallioniemi, Arto (2004). Research in Religious Education in Finland in Larsson, R. & Gustavsson, C. (ed.). *Towards a European Perspective on Religious Education*. The RE Research Conference, March 11–14, 2004, University of Lund. *Bibliotheca Theologiae Practicae* 24. Skellftåe: Artos & Norma Förlag, 145–156.

Reason: this article gives a good overview on research in RE in Finland.

Arto: When and how did you become involved in EARLI? My colleges from our department have been participated in EARLI such a long time. So they appreciated me the conference.

Question: How would you describe the role of SIG19 in EARLI?

Arto: It is important that religious and spiritual dimension of education research has got its own sig that is concentrated on such questions to complete the whole conference.

Arto's greetings and wishes for the EARLI SIG 19:

We shall meet in the next EARLI. Despite the changing role of universities, concentration on research work is worth doing all the time. RE and spiritual education needs research on high-quality level.

FOCUS #2

'I understand religion as some sort of institutionalization or formalisation of spirituality, whereas spirituality would be more related to a personal experience of wholeness with some sort of divinity'. – Romali Rosales Chavarria

Romali Rosales Chavarria

In the second interview we have a pleasant opportunity to get to know Romali Rosales Chavarria from the University of London. We are happy to congratulate her as she has recently become a mother!



FACTFILE
Who Romali Rosales
Title Mrs **Age** 29
Institution Institute of
 Education, University of
 London **Country** (of origin)
 México, England since 2005
Family married, a child born
 in Jan 2007 **Book**
recommended Radical
 Simplicity **Key words**
 environmental education,
 ESD, primary school

Question: You come from Mexico, and are currently on a maternity leave. Would you describe your work as a researcher?

Romali: I am doing a PhD into NGO involvement in the delivery of environmental education in primary schools in London. As part of my research I have visited primary schools where I have done a number of observations and conducted interviews with teachers and head teachers I have also interviewed ENGOs representatives and environment officers within four local authorities in London.

Question: Would you describe your path of becoming a researcher?

Romali: Since my undergraduate studies I became very keen in doing ethnographic research within schools. As part of my final project to become an Educational Psychologist I conducted a study into civic ceremonies and the build up of a Mexican identity in a primary school. For my MSc I looked into the work of five teachers in regard to the teaching of civic education in primary schools and for my PhD I decided to change my focus to environmental education, as this is really a personal passion that has developed over the years. I guess I have an inquisitive mind and although I am quite novice at doing research I have used all the opportunities I've had at hand to gain some understanding about some issues that interest me.

Question: What are your current research interests?

Romali: I am interested in exploring the delivery of environmental education or education for sustainable development in schools and the role of NGOs and local authorities in this matter. I am interested in the implementation of policies at different levels and the relationship between different actors in these processes. I am also doing some independent research into recycling habits in my area.

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

Romali: Many teachers I have had the opportunity to work with and my peers. The Department of Educational Research, where I did my MSc has also had a very important influence in my career. I was through my experiences there that I became committed to doing research into mainstream state education as a way of contributing relevant knowledge to the field that may enhance the opportunities of thousands of children that may not have privileged circumstances. My supervisor there crafted my skills as a researcher in a nurturing way. My supervisor for the PhD has also been an important influence. He has supported me all the way through since my arrival to the UK. He has taught me much more than what is restricted to the academic sphere and has helped me gain confidence in my position as a researcher in full.

Question: How did you become interested in our SIG-group of Religious and Spiritual education and why?

Romali: I am not really familiar with this field. I joined this SIG due to my personal interest in spirituality and because I caught my attention the novelty of such field for me.

Question: When and how did you become involved in EARLI?

Answer: I attended the 2005 Conference in Cyprus, where I participated in a citizenship symposia.

Question: How would you describe the role of SIG19 in EARLI?

Romali: I think it is important that the voice of this emerging field and its contributors is heard within the spectrum of what EARLI comprises.

Romali's greetings and wishes for the EARLI SIG 19: I remember with affection the people of this SIG that I had the opportunity to meet back in Cyprus. It is not just about the interests in common that we may have, but also a sort of identity that makes me feel that we share something beyond our interests and current life situations.

FOCUS #3

'From a socio-cultural perspective religion can be seen as cultural practices in which people relate their lives, experiences, questions, etc to the transcendent reality. In these practices people can acquire knowledge, values or beliefs regarding this relationship and affirm these. In short, I understand religion as a composition of cultural practices regarding the transcendent reality (of God). Spirituality can be seen as the potential of people to self-transcendence. This means that people can transcend the here and now, to be connected with other human beings, the environment and with God. In short, I understand spirituality as the potential to be connected to others, the other and the Other'. –Theo van der Zee

Theo van der Zee

Dr Theo van der Zee has previously contributed to our newsletter, and now we have an opportunity to get to know a little bit more about him and his research on religious and spiritual education.

Question: Could you first tell us what kind of work do you do and where do you work in the Netherlands?

Theo: I am a researcher and project manager at the Institute for Catholic Education that is affiliated to the Radboud University Nijmegen. Primarily trained as a historian and theologian, I'm now doing research on the common ground of theology and educational sciences. Recently, I finished my dissertation, and currently work on a research project concerning inspiring activities and teachers in Catholic schools. Besides my work as a researcher, I direct several projects regarding the practical application of scientific knowledge into school material.

Question: How did you end up working as a researcher?

Theo: I worked several years as a religious education teacher in secondary schools and in teacher training schools. After a post-doctoral study in educational sciences at the Catholic University of Leuven (Belgium) I got the opportunity to become a researcher at the Radboud University Nijmegen. When the Institute for Catholic Education was founded in 2001 the director was looking for new staff. I applied for the job and was appointed.

Question: What are your current research interests?

Theo: Currently I work on a research project concerning inspiring activities and teachers in Catholic schools. Central question of this project is: What activities and which people are considered to be inspirational for students, parents and teachers themselves, and, even more interesting is the question: why? I work on this project together with a senior colleague.

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

Theo: Let me think about this question for a good while!

Question: What do you feel are currently the most important areas of research in Religious and Spiritual education and why?

Theo: Religious education in the Western countries is determined by Christian theology especially. The contemporary context which is characterised by de-institutionalisation, de-traditionalisation, dwindling transcendentalism and pluralism challenges the Christian determination. The question is whether the basic domain of religious education still can be (Christian) theology. What perspectives are offered by the domain of Religious Sciences? What is their formal and material object? What are their methods? Etc.

Question: Please name up to three publications of your own which you would like to represent here. Please describe the reason for choosing each particular item.



FACTFILE

Who Theo van der Zee

Title Dr **Age** 40 **Institution**
Institute for Catholic
Education

Country The Netherlands

Family Married, a son (1
year)

Book recommended *The
Discovery of Heaven* by Harry
Mulish

Key words religious
education, teacher training,
normative professionalism

Theo:

Publication #1

Theo van der Zee, Chris Hermans & Cor Aarnoutse (2007). The influence of feelings on cognitive achievement in religious education. *Journal of Empirical Theology*, 20, 21-51.

Reason: this article refers to the core of my doctoral dissertation and considers whether the hypothesis that feelings are influential in religious education is correct and has any empirical support. (Yes, it has!).

Publication #2

Theo van der Zee (2005). Komt God ter sprake op school?, *Tijdschrift voor Theologie*, 45 (1), 3-12. [Does God come up at school?]

Reason: this article has to do with to my engagement as a researcher: to speak about God in the contemporary context, especially at schools. (Unfortunately, in Dutch!)

Publication #3

Theo van der Zee, Chris Hermans, & Cor Aarnoutse (2006). Primary school students' metacognitive beliefs about religious education. *Educational research and evaluation*, 12 (3), 271-293.

Reason: the field of Religious Education in primary education is hardly explored. In this article metacognitive beliefs about religious education are explored for the first time. Hopefully this exploration will invite others to explore them further.

Question: When and how did you become involved in EARLI?

Theo: One of my supervisors is a member of EARLI for a long time, and he advised me to submit a proposal for the EARLI-conference in August 2005. I followed his advice and since then I have become involved in EARLI.

Question: How would you describe the role of SIG19 in EARLI?

Theo: As a very important special interest group regarding a domain that received far too less attention of educational research so far. The group is important in at least two directions. First, in the direction of educational scientists it is important to promote religious education as a full domain of research. Second, in the direction of theologians and scientists of religion it is important to promote empirical research. The SIG19 gathers researchers on the subject of religious and spiritual education to present their research and to comment on that of others. The subject deserves to grow up.

Theo's greetings and wishes for EARLI SIG 19:

Best wishes! Hope to see you all in Budapest in good health!

FOCUS# 4

'Spirituality is an articulation of our existential search. Religion is a canonised and institutionalised form for articulating existential search'. – Martin Ubani

Martin Ubani

In our third interview we have a chance to get to know the co-editor of this newsletter, Martin Ubani, who has recently finished his doctorate and currently works as a lecturer of religious education in the Department of Applied Educational Sciences in the University of Helsinki. This spring he is also very busy with organizing the Junior Conference of EARLI, JURE 2007.

Question: Congratulations Martin! You have recently finished your doctorate in education. What kind of work are you doing these days?

Martin: Thanks! At the moment I am working as the University Lecturer in Religious Education, at the Department of Applied Sciences of Education. This includes teaching, teacher practices and seminars. In addition, I always have a few small-scale projects in my sleeve just to keep me busy.

Question: How did you become a researcher in this field in the first place?

Martin: I worked for 2 ½ years as a teacher in Basic Education. After spending time home with my eldest child I became convinced that I wanted to learn more about Religious Education and what goes on in the minds of the kids in the class and was ready to move forward. I was blessed to get two Professors as my supervisors, Professors Kirsi Tirri and Arto Kallioniemi, who encouraged and supported me (and both are active in our SIG!). However, I still do not feel I'm a researcher but rather I feel that I'm a teacher who has done research.

Question: In your PhD study you focused on the spirituality of the Finnish gifted school children. What are your current research interests and plans for the future research?

Martin: I would like to move forward toward studying the pupils' orientations to the RE subject and, in particular, the existential relevance of RE. Due to my professional background I'm especially interested in 3-6th grade pupils.

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

Martin: I have had many people who I feel have influenced my career. I feel that my former teacher colleague, Kirsti Saari, has influenced most my pedagogical approach in Religious Education and my other Professor, Kirsi Tirri, my research perspective in Religious Education.

Question: What do you consider to be currently the most important areas of research in Religious and Spiritual education and why?

Martin: I feel that there is a need to move forward toward a dynamic approach of RE learning (both theoretically and methodologically). We have too often focused on beliefs and knowledge as something static and contained. For instance, we should get to know how existential search becomes manifest in the context of different subjects and in RE lessons in particular.

Question: Could you please name up to three publications of your own which you would like to present here. Please describe the reason for choosing each particular item.



FACTFILE

Who Martin Ubani **Title**
PhD, MTh **Age** 32
Institution University of
Helsinki **Country**
Finland **Family** Wife
Sanna, Dara, 6, Noel, 4,
Evan 10 months
Key words Religious
Education

Martin:

Publication #1

Ubani, M. (2007). *Young, gifted and spiritual – The case of Finnish sixth-grade pupils*. Thesis. Research report 278. Department of Applied Sciences of Education. University of Helsinki. Available also in electronic form: <http://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-10-3597-5>

Reason: I'm really glad that after completing my thesis I can concentrate on other things.

Publication #2

Ubani, M., & Tirri, K. (2006). How do Finnish pre-adolescents perceive religion and spirituality? *International Journal of Children's Spirituality*, 11 (3), 357-370.

Reason: this is a nice small quantified qualitative study with a simple structure.

Publication #3

Ubani, M. (2007). Spiritual science. An empirical study of Finnish gifted boys. *Educating Able Children*. In print (April 2007).

Reason: I'm really fond of the main title. In addition, it reflects my interests in Values in Gifted Education.

Question: When did you become involved in EARLI?

Martin: In Cyprus 2005.

Question: In the light of your active participation in the EARLI organisation as a whole and with our SIG, how would you describe the role of SIG19 in EARLI?

Martin: It shows that religious and spiritual education integrates well with the general field of education and learning.

Martin's greeting and wishes for the EARLI SIG 19: I hope to see you all in Budapest

REVIEWS

Two statistical reports on English state-funded faith school from the National Institute for Christian Education Research

At the Cyprus conference I mentioned that, although statistics has severe limitations in the light it can throw upon religious and spiritual education, in some cases at least it can set boundaries within which adherents of various views can weave their theories. I can now offer two published examples of such work. In England some faith schools are independent but some are wholly or partly state maintained. Both reports deal with evidence in the important political debate on whether maintained faith schools achieve superior academic results only by recruiting pupils with a better chance of success. Both reports were produced for NICER. one funded by the Anglican Church (<http://www.nicer.ac.uk/cofereport.pdf>) and one funded by the Catholic Archdiocese of Birmingham (<http://www.nicer.ac.uk/NICER%20RC%20REPORT.pdf>). Both reports consider all faith schools in the maintained sector in England. Both start from measures of attainment in English Mathematics and Science used in nationally published tables for pupils aged 7, 11, 14, and 16. The Anglican report adjusts scores for gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, local variations and types of school (selective/ non-selective schools, etc.). The Catholic report goes on to examine differences associated with the proportion of pupils in Catholic schools who are themselves Catholics and touches on the significance of Religious Education examination results. The results are broadly favourable to faith schools in general, especially those from minority Christian denominations or from other religions. A further study, examining Religious education results more closely is to be published in the British Journal of Religious Education in 2008.

Dr Ray Godfrey

Reader in Education Statistics
Department for Educational Research
Canterbury Christ Church University

SPECIAL FEATURE# 1

Informal Thematic Debate of the General Assembly on the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women 61st session of the General Assembly, New York, United Nations, 6 March 2007

Dr. Zehavit Gross was nominated as a representative of the official delegation of the State of Israel to the fifty first session of the Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) in the United Nations. She was chosen as an expert on research in education on the religious child - girl (Jewish and Arab) in Israel. Furthermore, she was nominated to give the main address on behalf of the State of Israel in the General Assembly. Dr. Gross said:

'When the president of the general assembly invited me to the podium I was of course very moved. At such times one brings their personal and collective memory to the situation. I thought that 61 years ago when my father and my grandparents left the concentration camps in Europe they wouldn't have thought that 61 years later their daughter/grand daughter will give an official address to the general assembly at the UN on behalf of a Jewish State - the State of Israel. If my grand mother would have been asked about it then she would have turned her eyes to heaven and would have said that that could only happen in the days of the messiah. We are privileged to live in these important days and therefore are committed to Jewish continuity and Jewish Education'.

Statement by Dr. Zehavit Gross

Thank You, Madame President.

At the outset, allow me to congratulate you for convening this informal thematic debate on a matter of such timely and great importance.

Though today's debate focuses on two particular aspects of the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women – women in decision making and microfinance – I wish to focus my remarks on the first issue.

Madame President,

In Israel, the role of women in decision making, as well as the number of women in decision making positions, has grown over the years.

Today, women serve as Speaker of the Knesset, the Israeli Parliament, and as President of the Supreme Court. At the moment, the Speaker of the Knesset is also serving as Israel's Acting-President. Women feature prominently in the current Government, holding two senior portfolios, Foreign Affairs and Education.

Efforts are geared to promote gender equality and empower women across the spectrum – in governmental, public, and private sectors. Current legislation, for example, emphasizes proper representation of women on governing boards, directorships, and councils.

Nevertheless, a great deal remains to be done. A balanced participation of men and women in the management of public affairs is central to any democracy.

Madame President,

Though no society is monolithic, women in Israel are often encouraged to pursue more traditional, less public roles than men. This is especially true amongst and within religious circles. Traditionally, both the Jewish and Muslim family views women, first and foremost, in the context of the home and responsible for domestic duties. Moreover, dereliction of this duty would be seen as a religious and social transgression, nourishing a repression of women and their ambitions for professional and outside-of-the-home achievement. As such, women would not always pursue their dreams and ambitions for fear of abandoning these domestic obligations. This approach effectively created a male hegemony.

Similarly, girls in Israel undergo a socialization process that preserves male hegemony. Gender stereotypes in the educational system emphasize the actualization of femininity in the home, rather than in the workplace. Over time, gender stereotypes become ingrained in the psyche of young girls, thwarting the real possibility of cultivating values of equality.

Incapacitating our societal ability to deal with many of these issues is also the lack of official data on the participation of women in the public sphere. Even if it is collected, the data is hardly analyzed and presented in terms of gender.

Over the years, however, Israeli society has undergone a fairly rapid process of modernization – particularly, in relation to its short lifespan as a country. Today, more women study in institutions of higher learning than men. The growth of enrolled women in universities is a sign that women and their families are recognizing that professional and vocational life can provide for self-fulfillment and actualization. This will help to steer women towards pursuing careers, in concert with familial and domestic goals.

Within the educational system, efforts have been made to remove gender stereotypes and teach values of mutual

respect and cooperation between the sexes. Boys and girls are educated in a system that aims to avoid perpetuating the social stereotypes that adversely affect the position of women later in life.

With refocused attention on women and their roles in shaping public life, data is also being analyzed to depict the growth of the status of women. Charting the progress will enable a more robust assessment of representation and other methods to ensure equality between the sexes.

Madame President,

A discussion of gender perspectives would be incomplete without referencing the manner in which security conditions influence the treatment of women and their place within public and private life. In situations of war and conflict, a tendency exists to amplify male values and marginalize the opinions of women. The almost reactionary propensity for male roles of power in such situations paralyzes the advancement of women into fields of decision making.

Thankfully, Israel, a year and a half ago, amended its Women's Equal Rights Law, in the spirit of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, to mandate that the Israeli government include women in any group appointed to peace-building negotiations or international conflict resolution. The mainstreaming of gender into all policies and programmes at the international and national level plays a crucial factor not only in the promotion and the advancement of the status of women, but also in curtailing and preventing sexual discrimination, exploitation, and abuse. If women are ever to truly see their needs recognized and interests represented, they must have access to peace negotiations.

Madame President,

No doubt, an integral element to altering the consciousness is the need to normalize female positioning in leading posts as the rule rather than the exception. The female perspective, and women's leadership as a whole, must be integrated into every aspect of public life, including areas of political, social, economic, and defense policy. There must be an awareness that basing a society solely on a masculine point of view leads to a partial, fragmented, and monistic perspective of reality. The equal incorporation of a woman's perspective improves humanity.

Israel is determined for women to take on an increasing number of decision making positions. Israel is hopeful that an enhanced role for women in decision making will not only build lasting bridges between the sexes within society, but also allow us to extend those connections to our neighbors, in the hope of rejuvenating all prospects for peace, with each other and with ourselves.

Thank You.

Dr. Zehavit Gross
Bar-Ilan University.

SPECIAL FEATURE# 2

UskoNet - A National Network for Religion Education and R.E Teacher Training

Under the Finnish Virtual University (FVU) project there has been launched several sub-projects. One of them was the KasVi –project (2001-2006). It was based on the idea to gather together all the Finnish Faculties of Education (8) to cooperate by utilizing new technology and networks. In this cooperation the pedagogical exploitation of the networks is emphasized and combined to develop to each institution's basic activities in teaching and learning. A special target is facing the ongoing challenges in the educational field with qualitative new methods. The Educational Faculties in Finland has agreed about the implementing the ICT based strategy in which they combine their expertise and coordinate their developing activities to achieve a wide and high level support models and ways in information and communication technology for their educational purposes.

The idea of shared experts and their experience between the universities, and the fact that in different universities at the same discipline there always exists more or less special knowledge. This was also the core idea why UskoNet (established in October 2004, <http://www.uskonet.fi>) has linked faculties and staff across a number of Finnish universities related to the training of religion teachers and the research of religion education. Mainly this was enforced in close relation to the primary school teacher training departments. As a result this initiative brought together eleven Finnish speaking teacher training institutions, one Swedish speaking and two related departments of theological faculties in Finland and their the best expertise and enhances the versatility of university education. At the practical level this thematic network also can be for acceleration of staff capacity when building a network for the educational use based on information and communication technologies. During the 2004-06 in the UskoNet it has been noticed that networks work as a powerful means when promoting the new tools and methods of e-learning among the academic staff. Virtual networking does not mean that so called normal meetings should be dropped in collaboration and co-operation.

The UskoNet has worked as national link to increase co-operation in Religion education and research, to share expertise between institutions, to develop virtual training and learning for Religion Education, to gather and share information (training and research). A link from the home-page to the MOODLE is for communication and collaboration between the colleagues who has signed themselves into it. In MOODLE the key idea is to establish and maintain a *marketplace* with its stalls to share thru them different kind of expertises. This work and responsibility for stalls is shared between different universities according to their expertise. The experiences have been researched by a questionnaire (Aikonen 2007) among the partners and the results clearly show the necessity of this kind of academic, network based collaboration. Among the results it is also worth of emphasizing that when working in this project, the colleagues from different universities has got acquainted with each others. Since establishing UskoNet is has been coordinated by Senior Lecturer Risto Aikonen at the Joensuu University (Department of Applied Education).

Risto Aikonen
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Applied Education
University of Joensuu

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The FBI conference 2007 for developing teacher training in RE: Holistic Education and Teacher Training

Since 2003 specialists of religious education at the Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia, cooperate closely with colleagues from universities of Tartu, Helsinki and Joensuu. One form of this cooperation is organizing academic conferences with the aim of acquiring a wider view of the results of current research in the field and creating opportunities for doctoral students to present their research on the international level. The first two conferences took place at the Tartu University (2003, 2005), and at the last conference the majority of participants decided to choose the University of Latvia in Riga as the venue for the next meeting.

Thus, we are pleased to announce the 3rd international religious education conference „Finish Baltic Initiative'2007 - „Holistic Education and Holistic Learning,” which will take place on October 2-5, 2007, in Riga, Faculty of Theology, University of Latvia. During this conference lecturers, researchers and doctoral students in religious education will be able to present their latest research findings on religious education. This is one of the few opportunities for doctoral students of the Baltic region to present internationally their research in a supportive and positive atmosphere, as well as for Baltic and Finnish universities to promote further cooperation and joint research projects in the field of religious education. More details on registration and the conference can be found from the conference web site: <http://www.ortoweb.fi/FBI/index.htm>

New Books

Values and Foundations in Gifted Education (K. Tirri, Ed.)

“Values and Foundations in Gifted Education” (Edited by Professor Kirsi Tirri) was published by Peter Lang in February 2007. The book brings together thirteen chosen articles from the 10th Conference of the European Council for High Ability, Lahti, Finland. The authors include leading international researchers in education, philosophy and psychology. The book discusses gifted education from various viewpoints, including spiritual intelligence. The book can be ordered from Peter Lang.

NEW MEMBERS

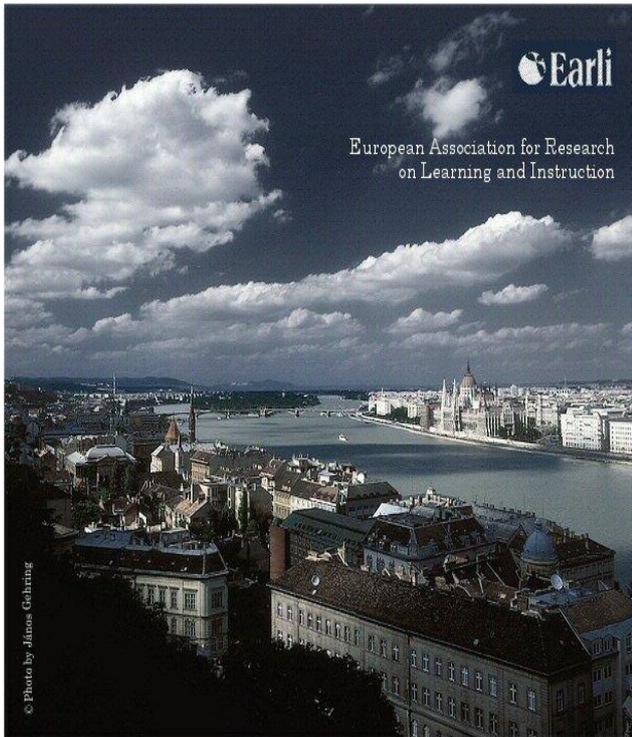
Prof. Bo Dahlin, University of Karlstad, Sweden

How to join us?

To become a member, you must first become a member of EARLI. For more information, please visit the EARLI website: <http://www.earli.org/>

Could you be the next newsletter editor?

For further information, please the current newsletter editors: earlisig19-news@helsinki.fi



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 wish new members warmly welcome to our SIG. 19! We will list the new members in this section after we have been informed by them.

Publication & contact:

The newsletter is published twice a year. If you intend to contribute to the newsletter, please take into account the following dates. Please send your contributions and suggestions to: earlisiq19-news@helsinki.fi

**12th Biennial Conference for Research on Learning and Instruction in Budapest, Hungary
August 28 - September 1, 2007**

http://www.earli.org/conferences/earli_biennial_conference_2007

SIG19 members:

Chavarrita Romali Rosaly, London University, UK, romali.rosales@gmail.com
Dahlin, Bo, Karlstad University, Sweden, bo.dahlin@kau.se
Gellel Adrian, University of Malta, Malta, adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt
Godfrey Ray, Christ Church Canterbury University, UK, rcg1@canterbury.ac.uk
Gross Zehavit, Bar Ilan University, Israel, grossz@mail.biu.ac.il
Hella Elina, University of Helsinki, Finland, elina.hella@helsinki.fi
Jørgensen Camilla Stabel, Soer-Troendelag University College, Norway, Camilla.jorgensen@alt.hist.no
Kallioniemi Arto, University of Helsinki, Finland, arto.j.kallioniemi@helsinki.fi
Kitchen Rick, University of New Mexico, USA, kitchen@unm.edu
Klaassen Cees, Radboud University, Netherlands, c.klaassen@paw.ru.nl
Lovat Terence, University of Newcastle, Australia, terry.lovat@newcastle.edu.au;
<http://www.newcastle.edu.au/faculty/educ-arts/staff/lovatterence.html>
Maiello Carmine, University of Freiburg, Switzerland, carmine.maiello@unifr.ch
<http://perso.unifr.ch/carmine.maiello/>
Oser Fritz, University of Freiburg, Switzerland, fritz.oser@unifr.ch
Pneumatikos Dimitris, University of Western Macedonia, dpnevmat@eled-fl.auth.gr
Räsänen Antti, University of Helsinki, Finland, antti.rasanen@helsinki.fi
Tirri Kirsi, University of Helsinki, Finland, kirsi.tirri@helsinki.fi
<http://www.helsinki.fi/~ktirri>
Ubani Martin, University of Helsinki, Finland, martin.ubani@helsinki.fi
van der Zee Theo, Radboud University, Netherlands, t.v.d.zee@theo.ru.nl
Wright Andrew, King's College, London, UK, Andrew.Wright@kcl.ac.uk.
<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/education/hpages/awright.html>