# Current Research in the Field of Religiosity and Education

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It is obvious that educational systems are expanding incredibly rapidly, reaching a growing number of social and age groups. Moreover, their organisational structures are undergoing diversification and expanding beyond the borders of traditional educational systems. In the 21st century education plays a key role in strengthening social cohesion and helping to solve some global troubles. These new challenges seem to be about mediating basic values, norms and behaviour patterns rather than teaching more knowledge. These demands have expanded the function of formal education by developing not only the cultural capital, but the social capital as well. These expectations could enhance and moreover overwrite the traditional function of religions in the educational system.

The concept of education has certain dimensions. Education is described as the process that prepares young people for their social roles through transmitting culture. According to the Durkheimian concept during this process individuals – affected by several social and contextual constraints – become real members of the society. But we should not neglect formal education and instruction, development of knowledge and skills and all elements of the highly sophisticated, institutionalised and hierarchically structured education systems, which deliver a significant message about the cultural conception of a given society. Consequently, the concept of education can be interpreted both as the general acquirement of culture in a spontaneous way and in a structured and institutionalised way and with the planned and purposeful teaching-learning process. In this special issue, we use the term 'religious education' in a broad sense on the basis of the wider concept of education. Our interpretation is based on recent research results and theoretical considerations. Briefly, when we mention the "shift in the institutional location of religion" (Berger, 1999, p. 10), we should take facts of the expansion in the institutional location of religious education into consideration. Considering the consequences of changes in youth religiosity in Europe – which can be characterized by the pluralism of ideological and religious supply, individualisation, disappointment in institutional traditions and the process of ideological hybridisation – we can conclude that religious education can be described as a complex of "non-intentional religious

meaning making process, religious relationships and religious practices" (Miedema 2006, p. 113). With the help of the embracing concept we can comprehend the operation and function of religiosity in emerging youth cohorts more accurately.

To clarify the aspects of the complex processes, Miedema constructed a three-course model to analyse working mechanisms of religious education in the public, social and individual domains. Similarly, we are also convinced that the dimensions of religious education do not exist separately, not only have the borders sometimes disappeared from between them but special interrelatedness works among them.

The official and non-official documents of the common European public domain have been analyzed by Schreiner, and some contradictions were pointed out. While religiosity was predicted to fade away and to count a private matter, it proved to be an undeniably social fact in Europe which acquires strengthening importance to interpret social processes. We are witnesses of deprivatisation of religion (Casanova, 1994). *We can get an inside view of data about citizens' religious identification from the three Central European countries with largely common history, and the latest census and recent research showed some differences and several similar phenomena* (Hanesova, Pusztai, Rosta-Hámori). But country level data do not speak about local and regional milieus, where the rate of religious affiliation and the density of religious social network can be very different from the average. If we also take online networks into account, we argue that public domain in religious education can not be interpreted on country level, but more and more on social network level.

We have aimed to identify fields and agents of religious education, the social milieu of individuals, that is not deliberately organized, and can grow out of "experience, parental guidance, learning from peers" and any contextual effects within different groups and place of residence (Rogers, 2004, p. 260). We have aimed to highlight fields of informal religious education in a wide society and in several social networks, consequently we have compared regional levels of religiosity and characteristics of social strata who reported themselves to belonging to churches. It is obvious that religious identities, actions and reflections are part of the transmitted local culture, and there are significant regional differences in religious identities, actions, and reflections. Another question is to what extent the religious identity can be transmitted by the parental generation. Rosta and Hámori attempt to separate the impact of the main socialisation factors (denominational schools and family context) and they have revealed very robust family effects and only a marginal, though slowly increasing impact of denominational schools.

To investigate individual experiences in formal education we focus on processes based on educational organisations with intentional and proposed actions, which support students in their development, and declare contribution to their religious advancement. Schreiner investigated the *working practices of religious education in the European Union*, and the key characteristics of religious education were presented in comparative perspective in his paper. The institutional background of formal religious education

usually aims not only to evolve the religious personality, but to ensure the right of religious communities to transmit their tried and tested values and norms, so forms of religious education in schools depend on confessional landscape, image of religion in society and relationship between state and religion. Hanesova aims to present formal patterns of religious education in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, which is realized on the one hand in denominational kindergartens, primary schools, secondary schools, and higher education, but also to work an elective religious education in the state-maintained schools. Not only is it a long standing tradition but also a new endeavour that faith-based schools have a mission to reduce the former schooling disadvantages of religious people, first and foremost in post-communist countries where religious people suffered from political discrimination. Pusztai, Török and Révay pointed out how church-run schools and church-related higher education make an effort to contribute to the regeneration of intellectuals from lower strata and students from disadvantaged regions. It can be stated that religious education is an investment that would generate profit for wider society. The question is whether church-run education is able to accept the social commitment and could become public in the sense of deprivatisation theory of Casanova. Future research should assess it.

## References

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