



Special Interest Group 19
Religious and Spiritual Education
Second Biannual Conference

***New Perspectives on
Religious and Spiritual Education***

Thursday 26th – Saturday 28th August, 2010

University of Malta



Conference theme

Religious and spiritual education is an emerging field of research into learning, development, socialisation and formation in various contexts concerned with religion and spirituality. Although religion and spirituality are implicated in multicultural encounters between people in local and global contexts, empirical research in this field is a relatively recent enterprise and theory formation is still in its infancy. The EARLI SIG 19 Conference 2010 aims to foster the scientific community of researchers in the field and to enhance theory formation. Under the heading, *New perspectives on religious and spiritual education*, the conference will deal with three major issues relevant to the field.

First, the interdisciplinary approach: from being an exclusive theological field of interest, religious and spiritual education has evolved to become an interdisciplinary field in which scholars of various disciplines are involved. This involvement can be traced in part to the interest in religion portrayed by nineteenth and twentieth century cognitive and behavioural science, as well as more recent neuroscience. Similarly, social science and philosophy have increasingly turned their attention to matters of belief and spirituality and their impact on individuals and societies. These trends have spawned theoretical and practical research that bears on religious ideas and practices found commonly across all kinds of human communities. This perspective invites scholars of various disciplines to fill in the hows and whys of religious phenomena. What can be expected from an interdisciplinary approach? What new insights are likely in light of advances in cognitive, behavioural and social science and philosophy?

Second, the balance between explanation and interpretation: traditionally, researchers in the field of religious and spiritual education have taken an interpretative, hermeneutical perspective. More recently, scholars who are more closely associated with social sciences seem to focus more on explanation, while others who are more closely connected to the hermeneutical tradition in theology will focus on interpretation. How can this balance be perceived and practiced? What insights can be gathered from a specific balance? Which balance could enhance theory formation in the field?

Third, the relationship between religious and spiritual education, on the one hand, and similar fields of interest, such as moral, citizenship, and values education, as well as the contemporary imperative around and social inclusion and cohesion. The close relationship with these and other fields has brought forward the proposition that achievements in religion and spirituality are a by-product of a 'whole-person' approach to learning, instead of being a linear and/or marginal focus of learning. This raises questions about the nature of the field of religious and spiritual education and its intersection with wider educational perspectives. What characterises the field of religious and spiritual education? How is the field related to other fields? What can be expected from a comprehensive, 'whole-person' approach?

The three issues can be dealt with by means of empirical (and philosophical) research into topics such as religious ideas and beliefs, diversity, socialisation, religiosity and giftedness, and so on.

Conference aim

The EARLI SIG 19 Conference aims to provide a scholarly venue for high quality research in religious and spiritual education. Scholars in the field are invited to present their current research and discuss their findings with a view to theory formation as well as to enhance educational practices.

A publication of contributions to the conference is expected in an issue in the new book series *Religious and Spiritual Education* (Waxmann Publishers, edited by Theo van der Zee, Kirsi Tirri and Ulrich Riegel).

In line with our mission statement, papers presented at the conference may delve into the following topics

- schools, families and communities as contexts for religious and spiritual learning and instruction
- constraints and affordances for religious and spiritual development in schools, families and communities
- educational and formation goals and practices of schools with respect to values, beliefs and worldviews
- religious and spiritual socialization within families and communities
- new ways of understanding religion and spirituality as educational fields

The programme includes invited speakers, seminars and workshops. The cultural/social programme includes various dinner venues around the island.

Invited speakers

Prof Dr Kirsi Tirri (University of Helsinki, Finland) on the state of the art of empirical research in religious and spiritual education (confirmed).

Prof Dr Fritz Oser (University of Freiburg, Switzerland) on promising new perspectives and methods of research in religious and spiritual education (asked).

Call for Papers and Presentations

The scientific committee welcomes your proposals for collegial papers and workshops. Participants from any research discipline concerned with the spiritual and religious education of children and adolescents are welcome to submit a paper or workshop presentation. The language of the conference is English.

The scientific committee encourages participants to be creative. Those wishing to present a paper or conduct a workshop should send a title and a 300 word description to the conference organizers by sending the attached proposal form by email to adrian.gellel@um.edu.mt by 1st March 2010.

Participants who submit a proposal will receive a notice of the outcome of review process by the 15th March 2010.

Conference fees

The fees include

- 3 nights accommodation at a 3* hotel,
- 3 buffet lunches,
- 1 formal dinner + 2 informal dinners,
- coffee breaks,
- conference registration and material, and
- transport from/to hotel and meeting venue

EARLI members	280 EURO
Student EARLI members	240 EURO
Non EARLI members	350 EURO
Student Non EARLI members	300 EURO

Participants sending their complete registration form AFTER the 15th April 2010 are required to add 50 Euro to the above fees

Scientific Committee

Dr Theo van der Zee (Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands)

Prof Dr Terence Lovat (University of Newcastle, Australia)

Arniika Kuusisto, M.Ed. (University of Helsinki, Finland)

Dr Adrian Gellel (University of Malta, Malta)

ACCOMMODATION

Arrangements for a special conference rate have been made at the Sliema Hotel. Participants who would like to extend their stay in Malta are kindly asked to email Lucienne Bugeja (lucienne.bugeja@fis.com.mt)

ABOUT MALTA

MALTA, Gozo and Comino, the inhabited islands of the Maltese archipelago, lie at almost the exact geographical heart of the Mediterranean Sea. With Sicily some 95 kms to the North, Tripoli 350 kms to the South and Tunis 320 kms to the West, Malta is virtually at the crossroads between continents. The islands' strategic position has, in fact, made them subject to a succession of rulers, who in turn left their influence on the country and language as we know them today. Malta's pre-history dates back to 5000 B.C., whilst its documented past is traceable over a period of 2000 years. Malta became a full member of the EU on 1 May, 2004.

visitmalta.com - what to see, what to do in Malta

aboutmalta.com - all you need to know about the Maltese islands and more.

Malta's Neolithic temples - an excellent site with virtual tours of all Malta's prehistoric temples, the oldest of which date back to 5000 B.C.E.

ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF MALTA

The **University of Malta** traces its origins to the founding of the *Collegium Melitense* in 1592. Situated at Tal-Qroqq, it is the highest teaching institution of the State by which it is mainly financed and is open to all those who have the requisite qualifications. There are nearly 10,000 students including over 750 foreign/exchange students from 80 different countries, following full-time or part-time degree and diploma courses, most of them run on the modular or credit system. Some 2,700 students graduate in various disciplines annually.

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<http://www.mfa.gov.mt/default.aspx?MLEV=53&MDIS=523> You can also send an email to visa.mfa@gov.mt

PLEASE THINK EARLY. IT WILL NOT BE POSSIBLE TO OBTAIN A VISA AT SHORT NOTICE. AT LEAST A MONTH IS REQUIRED TO OBTAIN A VISA.

All queries concerning conference arrangements should be addressed to:

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