

## **How to Assess the Mediation of Religious Truth Claims in RE via Video Analysis?**

### **Methodological Considerations**

#### **1 Introduction**

Is there a “renaissance of religious truth” (Nord & Schlag, 2017) in secular society? The empirical findings of Nilüfer Göle (2017) indicate that young Muslims in Europe live according to religious norms and do not hesitate to exhibit this belief in public. And in the Christian realm, evangelical churches that encourage their members to live strictly according to Christian norms are flourishing (Vermeer & Scheepers, 2017). It looks as if a new sense of religious truth is developing in some sectors of the predominantly secularized European societies. Thus, religious education must address this phenomenon.

Furthermore, even if research such as that of Göle or Vermeer and Scheepers overestimates the societal effect of the so-called renaissance of religious truth, the object of religious education itself puts the question of truth on the instructional agenda. According to Stark and Glock (1968), religion possesses an ideological dimension. Each religion comprises a doctrine which is believed to be absolutely true and that shapes the worldview of that religion. The ideological dimension of a given religion corresponds with the religious convictions of the individual believer. A special feature of religious convictions is that they contain both a cognitive and an affective dimension (von Stosch, 2003). The cognitive dimension relates to the conviction’s content and can be evaluated via rational argumentation. The affective dimension, however, has to do with the relevance of this content for the individual. It is an effect generated via personal experience and acquires its significance from the meaning an individual ascribes to it. It is the affective dimension which qualifies religious convictions as identity markers (Herbert, 2004). They derive their authority from the particular course of an individual’s life and help the individual to manage and maintain their self-esteem. Therefore, the affective dimension of religious convictions is organized according to subjective viability and cannot be evaluated via rational argumentation. In conclusion, the distinctive character of religious convictions is twofold. If someone does confess, they are not only communicating a given content, but are also claiming that this content is definitively true. Consequently, religious education must consider both dimensions (Dressler, 2015, 40–42).

Meanwhile, religious education in Europe takes place in societies which are religiously pluralistic. Religious plurality transforms religious truth into religious

truth claims. From the perspective of a particular religion, the doctrine of this religion is absolutely true. There is no room for doubt – at least if the individual is a true believer. From the perspective of another religion, such truths are actually truth claims because the given doctrine asserts its truthfulness without conforming to the frame of reference of this other religion. What's more, within a secular frame of reference no religious truth is viable. Consequently, in European societies every religious truth is a truth claim, and religious education which acknowledges this societal environment will also handle religious truths as religious truth claims.

However, this awareness does not determine exactly how religious education will deal with truth claims. At the conceptual level, one may distinguish between denominational and integrative religious education. Denominational religious education is based on one particular religious tradition and is therefore able to present the doctrine of this tradition as truth. In Germany, for instance, one goal of Catholic religious education is to familiarize the students with the doctrine of this Christian confession (DBK, 2005, 23–27). In such a context, it is the task of the teacher to confess their personal belief – which, of course, should correspond with the doctrine of the relevant religious tradition. Integrative religious education, instead, is dedicated to objectively informing students about different religious traditions (Alberts, 2010). The doctrines of these religions are part of the curriculum, but their truths will be presented as claims which are asserted by a particular religion. Additionally, the task of the teacher is not to confess, but rather to stimulate discussion about the relevance and the viability of these claims.

At the empirical level, both approaches to religious truth claims are justifiable. Both are relatively easy to identify in classroom interaction. There is, however, also the possibility of finding conceptually unusual constellations. For example, teachers of denominational religious education may choose to objectively inform students about the truth claims of their own religion without directly supporting them (e.g. Englert et al., 2014). Meanwhile, teachers in integrative religious education may explicitly or implicitly favor the doctrine of one particular religious tradition. Finally, teachers of both types of religious education may avoid addressing truth claims entirely.

These considerations raise the question of how exactly teachers deal with such claims in religious education. This article, however, will not answer this question. It will instead address the methodological problem of how to answer this question by focusing on video analysis. Therefore, this article will first discuss the analytical benefits and limitations of video analysis. Then it will describe two methods for assessing the mediation of truth claims in religious education, namely the deductive approach of video rating and the inductive approach of documentary analysis. Finally, it will discuss both approaches in terms of their ability to analyze the mediation of truth claims in religious education.

## 2 Video Analysis as Analytical Method

There are several approaches to analyzing the process of teaching. Indirect approaches reconstruct this process by utilizing available data on it. Relevant techniques include interviews with teachers about their method of teaching, questionnaires in which students evaluate their education, and video-stimulated recollections that reconstruct the implicit rationality of a teaching sequence. Indirect approaches, however, face the issue that they do not assess the process of teaching itself. Direct approaches, meanwhile, analyze data representing this process. The classic method of direct assessment is (non-)participatory observation. This method, however, depends greatly on the ingenuity of the researcher. An alternative method of direct assessment is video analysis.

Video analysis comprises all methods that analyze their object of focus via utilization of videotaped data. The data pool of all video analysis is a series of images forming a moving picture, normally accompanied by audio data which corresponds with the pictures. Use of video analysis as a scientific method to analyze classroom interaction began in the 1970s (Sherin, 2004). Due to the technical standards of the time, such analysis was demanding and was thus predominantly used in case studies. Technical advances in the 1990s led to a substantial increase in the number of video studies on classroom interaction (Stigler, Gallimore & Hiebert, 2000). During this time, large scale studies based on lesson videos were conducted. Today, video analysis is a popular technique in the various sub-disciplines of educational research (e.g. Riegel & Macha, 2013).

There are several benefits of video analysis (Pauli & Reusser, 2006). Videos represent digital data. They are easy to work with because they can be saved both online and offline, played back repeatedly, shared for analytical purposes, structured according to both time and event sampling, and so on. Videos also provide a holistic representation of classroom interaction, containing information on such elements as voices, gestures, spatial relationships, and teaching material, to name a few. Furthermore, the complexity of the information provided by classroom videos allows for the application of complex analytical concepts. Video analysis is not restricted to the visible characteristics of teaching and learning, rather it may also analyze complex concepts like problem solving or choreographies of teaching. Videos display real interaction as it actually occurs in the classroom. Video analysis enables acquisition of comprehensive insight into classroom interaction. Additionally, the analysis of classroom videos may employ both quantitative and qualitative methods. As a result, video analysis is quite adaptable to the specific objectives of a given research project. What is more, videos facilitate the development of new analytical instruments. Since videos can be replayed an unlimited number of times, researchers may watch a video clip repeatedly in order to test and validate new sets of indicators used to describe complex phenomena of teaching or learning (e.g. Riegel, 2013). Also, videos represent objective classroom interaction and they

can be analyzed according to different theoretical frameworks. Finally, classroom videos can be used in teacher training (Blomberg et al., 2013). Students can obtain a realistic impression of the teaching process via analysis of videotaped classroom interaction.

The limitations of video analysis are as follows (Petko et al., 2003). Video analysis is still an elaborate method. Teachers and students must be convinced to take part in the research, a camera script has to be written, equipment must be installed, and so on. Furthermore, videos themselves are always an artifact. The recording is affected by the position of the camera, the angle from which the video it is shot, and the camera's settings. Some voices may end up being recorded while others are not picked up by the hardware. Videos do not fully capture the atmosphere inside the classroom. Therefore, when conducting video analysis one must always be aware that this is a study of some representation of classroom interaction but is not real, complete interaction. Furthermore, the presence of the camera may interfere with the interaction inside the classroom. Both the teacher and the students may not act as they normally would because they are aware of the camera. Finally, video documentation is accompanied by very sensitive privacy issues. Every empirical research effort must guarantee the confidentiality of the participants' identities. In classroom videos the teacher and many students are clearly visible and could potentially be easily tracked down. In consequence, video analysis requires that a strict privacy policy be maintained.

Taking these benefits and limitations into account, video analysis proves to be a powerful tool to analyze classroom interaction. However, few studies use this method in analyzing moral education (Schweitzer, Ruopp & Wagensommer, 2012) or the mediation of truth claims in religious education (Englert, Hennecke & Kämmerling, 2014). And among them, only the study of Englert et al. uses an elaborate technique like video rating to assess this mediation. Therefore, in the following we will describe two specific research strategies for studying the mediation of truth claims in religious education. We will provide examples of both strategies using a sample of 29 videotaped lessons in 10<sup>th</sup> grade religious education at German Realschule. These 29 lessons represent three sequences on Jesus Christ, which were developed and taught by three teachers at three different schools. The recordings took place in 2013.

### **3 Video Rating as Method of Assessing Mediation of Truth Claims**

Video rating is a deductive approach. Like all such approaches, video rating requires a conceptual model of the object under scrutiny as well as an operationalization of this model (Seidel, 2005). Here, this operationalization consists of a rating manual comprehensively describing the process of analysis. Therefore, this manual

comprises a) the various dimensions which make up the issue under scrutiny, b) the categories that qualify the particular dimensions, c) the indicators which make up the categories, and d) the turns according to which the rating will be conducted. Often, these manuals also provide commentary regarding how to deal with particular constellations found in classroom interaction to enhance the reliability of ratings. Normally, two or three independent raters will conduct the rating according to the manual. Given satisfactory inter-rater reliability (Hallgren, 2012), the results of the video rating can be uploaded to statistical software for further analysis.

To analyze the mediation of truth claims we used an instrument developed by Ulrich Riegel (2013). This instrument evaluates the mediation of truth claims according to three dimensions. The first dimension assesses the extent to which religious truth claims are expressed in the lesson. The second dimension captures how the teacher presents her individual conviction with regard to these truth claims. The third dimension deals with religious tolerance, namely the extent to which the teacher accepts student comments which do not correspond with the relevant truth claims. In summary, the three dimensions of the instrument conceptualize the situation of denominational religious education. This framework addresses the situation of religious education in Germany, particularly in a sequence on Jesus Christ.

In the rating manual, each dimension is comprehensively described and categorized according to a four-point scale. For instance, the description of the first dimension reads:

“The teacher refers to the truth claim which is associated with the theme of the lesson explicitly or offers material which confronts the students with such truth claims. These truth claims are present if the theme raises the question of whether or not one agrees with them.”

Regarding the dimension dealing with how truth claims are addressed, the categorization reads as follows:

- 0: Truth claims are not addressed explicitly by the teacher and classroom discourse does not deal with such claims.
- 1: Truth claims are not addressed explicitly by the teacher, but classroom discourse incidentally deals with such claims.
- 2: The teacher addresses truth claims explicitly, but the associated classroom interaction(s) do(es) not represent an important part of the lesson (important = the lesson design is incomplete if the particular part is left out).
- 4: The teacher addresses truth claims explicitly and the associated classroom interactions make up an important part of the lesson (important = the lesson design is incomplete if this part is left out).

Additionally, this description included the comment that the rating is applicable only for lessons which feature a theme associated with truth claims. A descriptive

lesson on the liturgy of the Eucharist, for instance, does not raise the question of whether or not to believe in it. The manual also informs raters that the turn of the rating comprises the entire lesson.

In our study, two students of religious education rated the videotaped lessons of our sample independently. A prior training session ensured that the students had developed a comprehensive understanding of the manual's content. The inter-rater-reliability ranges from sufficient ( $K = .65$ ) to very good ( $K = .80$ ) (see table 1).

Tab. 1: Rating Teachers' Mediation of Truth Claims

	m	sd	K
introducing truth claims	2.43	1.17	.80
taking a clear position	1.76	.99	.65
showing tolerance	3.11	1.31	.71

Legend:  $N = 29$ ;  $K =$  Cohen's Kappa; 1 = never happens in the lesson; 4 = happens frequently in the lesson

The results of this rating are quite interesting. First, the teachers very often acknowledge the students' opinions ( $m = 3.11$ ). This is very much in line with the pedagogical claim in the German discourse on religious education that this educational approach must respect the individual's beliefs. The mean of bringing up truth claims is moderate ( $m = 2.43$ ), indicating that the teachers do not take advantage of every opportunity to bring up the truth claims associated with the subject of Jesus Christ, but neither do they avoid this issue. Finally, the mean of taking a clear individual position is rather low ( $m = 1.76$ ). This indicates that most of the relevant sequences in the curriculum occur without the teacher providing clear indication of their opinions or beliefs.

#### 4 The Documentary Method to Assess Mediation of Truth Claims

The documentary method is an empirical tool for uncovering the hidden structure of social interaction. This potential makes the documentary method a powerful method for analyzing videotaped educational sequences. Normally, teachers in the classroom orient themselves according to educational goals, educational attitudes, and educational programs, but most of these goals, attitudes and programs cannot be recognized in the process of teaching itself. They must be reconstructed via an inductive analysis of classroom interaction. The documentary method is one tool to do so.

The current form of the documentary method became popular in the context of group discussions led by the German researcher Ralf Bohnsack (1983; 1989). It is based on Karl Mannheim's work on the sociology of knowledge (1964), which combines a hermeneutic-constructivist understanding of reality with approaches that

try to understand meaning in an objective way. Mannheim distinguished between two forms of meaning: immanent and non-immanent. The immanent type refers to literal meaning, which is also called “theoretical knowledge”. The non-immanent type refers to the idea that social actors share experiences without explicitly being aware of them. It forms a structure “by which action is orientated mostly independent from subjective meaning and has insofar a particular objectivity opposed to it” (Bohnsack, 2010, 101). This shared knowledge refers neither to the pragmatic level of the actual situation nor to the specific intentions of individuals, rather comprises information about the – often tacit – structure which enables social groups to understand each other without consciously communicating.

To describe social reality based on this twofold understanding of meaning, the documentary method is conducted according to five steps of interpretation (Bohnsack, 2010). Steps 1) and 2) clarify the immanent meaning of the interaction under scrutiny (in our example: the teacher’s classroom interactions). Step 1) is called *formulating interpretation*. The researcher reconstructs the interactive process by identifying key topics and themes of this interaction and exploring their interplay in the interaction. In step 2) the researcher identifies those parts of the interaction which are of special relevance to the research question at hand and produces a *thick description* according to Geertz (1973, 3–30) via sequential analysis. In this step, the researcher tries to keep as close to the actual, overt data as possible. Steps 3) through 5), meanwhile, are meant to uncover the non-immanent meaning of the interaction under scrutiny. Step 3), called *reflecting interpretation*, addresses the inner logic of the analyzed interaction. The researcher provides detailed analysis of how the individual teachers act and speak, and which frames of reference they imply by doing so. This inner logic, that is, the fundamental way things are addressed in interaction, reveals the implicit norms and stereotypes which structure the individual’s social interaction. While the analysis of step 3) still focuses on the interaction of a particular individual, in step 4) the researcher compares the interaction of several individuals in order to discover similarities and disparities between their interactive styles. Accordingly, this step is called *comparative interpretation*. By identifying common patterns of interaction and similar frames of reference, comparative interpretation generates particular clusters of non-immanent meaning. Finally, in step 5) these clusters of non-immanent meaning are generalized via highlighting of their typical features. In this step, the researcher departs from the materiality of their data set by drawing abstract conclusions of a more general character. Consequently, step 5) requires a fairly large data set and is not strictly compulsory in as part of the documentary method.

We applied the documentary method to our lesson videos to identify characteristic modes by which teachers mediate truth claims. In doing so we followed the itinerary described above. First, we produced a rough description of all 29 videos in the sample, describing the basic parts of the lesson plan, the topics of these parts, and the relevant time markers in the video. This interpretation transformed

the 45-minute video stream into short notes about the lessons. Next, we focused on those sequences in which truth claims were explicitly addressed. Returning to the video itself, we analyzed the relevant scenes via sequential analysis. Producing thick descriptions according to Geertz (1983), we identified relevant dynamics of how the teacher mediated a truth claim. The following example depicts the part of a lesson in which the meaning of the concept of Jesus Christ was presented to the class.

T2 expounds “Jesus Christ is already a statement of faith. Jesus refers to a historical person and with Christ we produce a declaration of belief. But where is this confession coming from? To answer this we will read a text”. While T2 is talking, the students are busy distributing the text in the classroom. T2 projects the text onto a screen in front of the room. The text is read aloud by one student. After this reading, the teacher writes down some questions on the blackboard concerning the content of the text; while the teacher is doing this, the students take notes on their handouts. A short time later some of the students raise their hands and reply to the individual questions. For each answer, T2 gives feedback regarding whether or not it is correct. If the student’s answer is incorrect, T2 requests that someone else offers a response. The correct answers are recorded on the board by the teacher. During this exercise, the atmosphere in the classroom is otherwise dominated by silence. At the end of this part of the lesson, T2 concludes that the class has now been informed that *Messiah* or *Jesus Christ* are confessional terms. She explains that “we believe in Jesus as a savior and peacemaker and if we behave like Jesus we can also be saviors and peacemakers for each other”.

In the third step, we applied reflecting interpretation to the thick descriptions. This analytical step transforms the thick descriptions into generalizing texts. For example, all instances of direct quotation have been replaced by technical terms concerning the classroom context. Moreover, to explain *how* social reality occurs, the level of conversation is described according to text forms, e.g. those utterances under evaluation may *explain*, *elaborate*, *narrate*, *wonder*, etc. Such a reflecting analysis of T2’s video scene may sound like this:

T2 informs the students about the theological concept of Christ by reading a text and reconstructing its meaning. They start the process of elaboration by posing a rhetorical question on the meaning of this concept. The elaboration of the text’s meaning is structured by a question-and-answer-conversation. In this conversation, T2 performs as an expert who is capable of evaluating the students’ answers. The students’ role in this conversation is passive: They react to the questions according to the feedback of the teacher. There is no critical account of the text’s information provided by the students – and T2 does not encourage the students to assess the text critically. The setup of this elaboration allows the students to take in the text’s meaning and therefore learn about the meaning of the theological concept Christ. The end of this elaboration is marked by an inclusive statement by T2 about the relevance of the concept of Christ. By using the inclusive *we*, T2 implies that the students identify themselves with the community of

Christian believers. T2's performance does not offer any chance for a critical account of this consequence by the students.

Fourth, in the comparative interpretation we identified similar patterns of interaction in the various texts generated during reflecting analysis. We also looked for characteristic differences between these texts. This analysis led to identification of two distinct styles of dealing with truth claims, which we labelled *affirmative style* and *discursive style*. Moreover, we could identify typical features of both styles. The affirmative style, for instance, is characterized by three features. (i) The teacher presents the truth claim in class as objective information and does not provide the option of discussing the truth claim. (ii) If there are critical accounts by the students, the teacher subsumes such statements under the truth claim in such a way that the student's statement ultimately appears to back up the truth claim. (iii) The teacher uses inclusive language. In doing so, the teacher implies that everyone shares this particular point of view. According to these features, the affirmative style is about familiarizing the students with truth claims rather than activating the student's critical thinking abilities. The discursive style, however, is about assessing the relevance of truth claims. Here, the teacher stimulates discussions about the specific relevance of the claims which emerge from the lesson's topic. Moreover, the teacher is sensitive to the questions and perspectives of the students. Step 5 of the documentary method was not applied due to our rather small sample size. However, we are positive that through further analysis, both styles could be confirmed as robust approaches to mediating truth claims in religious education.

## 5 Discussion

This article describes the use of video analysis to explore the analytic potential of two methods for analyzing the mediation of truth claims in religious education. We conducted video rating and documentary analysis on 29 videotaped lessons about Jesus Christ. The two methods produced two different results. Video rating showed that the three teachers in our sample occasionally address truth claims associated with Jesus Christ during their lessons. While doing so, the teachers are very tolerant with regard to the students' points of view, whereas they rarely express their own perspective on these claims. Thus, the findings of video analysis portray the *configuration* by which truth claims are predominantly mediated in religious education. Documentary analysis, in contrast, was able to identify two specific modes of this mediation. There is an affirmative mode, by which truth claims are transmitted rather than examined. And there is a discursive mode, which enables the students to discuss the relevance of these claims. Hence, the findings of documentary method portray the *style* by which truth claims are mediated in religious education. Of course, both findings are based on our rather small sample.

The focus of our article, however, is on the methodology. Our findings prove that both methods work well. In the following sections, we will discuss the benefits and limitations of these methods.

First of all, video analysis proved to be a suitable method to access the process of teaching. Here, the researcher is able to analyze classroom interaction directly. The videos were easy to work with due to the technical advantages of modern computers and software. Moreover, the specific nature of the data enables application of complex methods in the analysis. For instance, a particular requirement of documentary analysis, which is based on sequential analysis, is the ability to repeatedly access the data. Furthermore, video data is free from any theoretical bias. This was advantageous in that we could employ two very different methods: video rating, which uses a conceptually well-defined instrument, as well as the documentary method, which is not based upon such a strict frame of reference. Finally, video analysis facilitates the development of new instruments. For instance, one could use the results of documentary analysis to construct a rating manual to identify affirmative and/or discursive interaction.

What are the limitations of video analysis? Regarding the quality and the perspective of the videos, we encountered only minor obstacles. For example, the frame of the videos did not cover the entire classroom, and therefore some students could not be seen on the video. However, such obstacles did not really affect our video rating or documentary analyses. This may change with the research question. Our research question addressed the teacher's behavior, and in all of our videos the teacher was always visible and audible. If our research question had been about group work, a change in the technical conditions of the videos would have been necessary. In this case, we would have used a mobile zone-of-interaction camera to zoom in and focus on the interaction occurring in such working groups. We also experienced no problems resulting from the invasive character of videotaping. This, of course, may be a consequence of our particular sample, which consisted of entire sequences rather than single lessons. In this setup, the teachers and the students are able to acclimate to the camera, which is a stable one that has been installed in the rear of the classroom. However, even in the first lessons of the sequences, the students did not pay attention to the camera after the start of the lesson. A real problem for us was recruiting participants for the sample. Many schools did not allow videotaping at all, for reasons of privacy. And many teachers did not want to be videotaped either. This made the sampling itself complex and demanding.

Video rating turned out to be an effective method. Its application to assess the mediation of truth claims highlights the highly inferential character of video rating, as the issue under scrutiny is not directly visible in the data (Clausen, Reusser & Klieme, 2003). This type of rating requires that the raters to receive some prior training. In our study, two students who had previously attended a seminar on video analysis performed the rating. It was only after they had completed rating nine videos that these students achieved a satisfactory joint understanding of the

manual. The rating itself was carried out using the easy to operate software “videograph” (<http://www.dervideograph.de>). Thus, even highly-inferential video rating is possible at reasonable cost. There are, however, also two notable obstacles. First, the application of video rating requires the availability of a relevant manual. This is a crucial issue within religious education because the use of video analysis as an analytical method within this discipline is still in its early stages. Unlike in the educational sciences, there are hardly any validated manuals available. And developing a new manual is a demanding and time consuming process. Second, the manual we used meets the conditions of denominational religious education. This raises the question of whether it can also be applied to integrative religious education according to the religious-science-approach (Alverts, 2010). In this context, taking a clear individual position with regard to truth claims is a goal of religious education. Perhaps a relevant rating manual would thus consist of alternative dimensions of evaluation.

The striking benefit of documentary analysis is that this method does not require a transcription of the videotaped data. On the one hand, this saves time and money. On the other hand, the first two steps of documentary analysis focus directly on videotaped data and there is no loss of information through the process of transcription. Hence, a great deal of interpretation is based on the video itself. Documentary analysis keeps as close to the original data as possible. This, of course, brings about some challenges as well. The thick descriptions of step 2) reconstruct the particular dynamics of the classroom interaction from the video. The challenging task of this analytical step is to identify these dynamics of the interaction within a complex mix of spoken words and other sounds, actions and re-actions, etc., which are performed by various individuals, often in overlapping sequences. Moreover, the reduction of this complexity is the crucial analytical step in documentary analysis, because from step 3) on the researcher focuses exclusively on these descriptions. However, a detailed manual or procedure to guide the researcher through step 2) is not yet available. In our study, this interpretation turned out to be an iterative, circular process entailing the generation of tentative texts based on the relevant sequence on video. To ensure intersubjective plausibility, we found it helpful to discuss the drafts of thick descriptions with the research team.

Comparing both methods, we could not conclude which one is better able to assess the mediation of truth claims. Both methods feature benefits as well as limitations. Furthermore, the two methods assess different aspects of the mediation of truth claims. While video rating was able to detect whether and to what extent teachers address truth claims in their lessons, documentary analysis offered insight into the processes by which this mediation takes place. Of course, development of a relevant rating manual would provide video rating with the potential to assess the process of mediation as well. However, such analysis will still fail to examine the deeper structure of this mediation. In light of this, we would ideally opt for a mixed-methods approach within video analysis, whereby we employ both methods

to acquire deeper insight into the dynamics of classroom interaction in religious education.

Although the focus of this article is on the video analysis method, we would ultimately also like to point out some consequences of the results with respect to the moral dimension of religious education. First, the mediation of truth claims is nearly always accompanied by deep respect for the student's individual point of view. Indoctrination is not part of the agenda of the teachers – at least, those of our sample. This corresponds with the results of Englert et al. (2014), who were unable to find any indicators for the indoctrination of religious truth claims in religious education. Second, classroom interaction might feature such indoctrination purely as a result of the instructional style. According to our findings, the affirmative style is characterized by an indoctrinating character, while the discursive style satisfies the criteria of democratic education. Hence, teacher training should enable students studying religious education to reflect on their choice of instructional style.

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