

Name and position today and a short background

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Biography

Hubertus (Bert) Roebben, professor of religious education at the Institute of Catholic Theology of Technische Universität Dortmund (Germany). Degrees in Theology (PhD), Religious Studies (MA), Education (BA) and Canon Law (BA) from Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (Belgium). Taught previously at the universities of Leuven (Belgium, 1995-2000) and Tilburg (the Netherlands, 1995-2007). Was visiting professor at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh (USA, 1997), Stellenbosch University (South Africa, 2005) and Boston University (USA, 2010). Was expert for the Council of Europe in Ukraine, Georgia and the Russian Federation (2005-2008).

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Your special contributions to the theory and research

My research is focusing on the crossroads of theology, pedagogy and youth research, culminating in the research on religious education, I conceive this discipline as the ongoing hermeneutic of religious practices of children, youth and young adults in church and society, as far as these are articulated in educational processes inside and outside the school. Three steps are important in this hermeneutical enterprise: a phenomenological analysis of 'religiosity in youth cultures' (youth research), a normative reflection on the education of values, norms and meaning (pedagogy), and a confrontation with the wisdom traditions of religions and worldviews, especially of Christianity (theology). Based on empirical data, gathered by others or generated by our own research, I want to obtain insight in what religion does with young people and what young people do with religion. Secondly, I want to examine how this phenomenon is created, transferred, reflected and communicated inside and outside schools. And finally I want to explore with theological imagination the playground of Christian faith within these complex learning environments – and see how this exploration affirms or challenges juvenile religiosity and the diversity of religions and worldviews today.

Since 1989, out of this dynamic source of intra-disciplinary research have been growing several publications. In 1995 my doctoral dissertation *Een tijd van opvoeden. Moraalpedagogiek in christelijk perspectief* (A Time to Educate. Moral Education in Christian Perspective) was published, which I consider to be a foundation for educational theory. In 2007 my *Godsdienstpedagogiek van de hoop. Grondlijnen voor religieuze vorming* was published (second edition in 2008), which I consider to be a handbook for religious education. It was translated and published in English in 2009 as 'Seeking Sense in the City. European Perspectives on Religious Education' (Münster/Hamburg/Berlin, LIT-Verlag). In the mean time I wrote several essays on religiosity and youth and young adult ministry. In the framework of the Tilburg Summer Academy these insights were confronted with the daily reality of youth workers in the church and also theologically deepened. In 2003 my *Bewogenheid in beweging. De spiritualiteit van een christelijke school* (Inspiration on the move. The spirituality of a Christian school) and in 2009, my *De speelruimte van het geloof. Getuigenis van een theoloog* (The playground of faith. A theologian's witness) appeared, as a theological recapitulation of the accumulated knowledge on moral and religious education and on youth and young adult ministry.

In the near future I want to apply myself even more on the development of those three domains. Concerning youth research, I will concentrate on my position as chair of the *International Association for the Study of Youth Ministry* (www.iasym.org). Concerning the field of religious education, I want to finalize three projects: a handbook on didactics, a German translation of my handbook on religious education and the edition of a series of essays of experts in the field of integrative religious education, which fits into my work of the Inter-FIRE research group at Dortmund University. In

relation to the third issue, I want to articulate more specifically practical theology as a permanent source of reflection in my work as a professor of religious education and youth ministry. In the long run, I hope to consolidate and crystallize my *practical-theological* knowledge in the field of religious education and youth work in new writings on *fundamental* theology – understood as spiritual theology. This development can also be considered as part of the idea behind the German ROTH-consortium (*Religionsunterricht als Ort der Theologie*), which encompasses a group of researchers who reflect on ‘lived theology’ in the midst of learning processes in schools.

Research and interest fields

1. Religious education in a multicultural society
2. Religious education as ‘locus theologicus’
3. Inclusive religious education
4. Youth ministry and youth theology

Current projects (short summary)

1. Inclusive religious education: “Big stories, small stories. Empirical studies on the personal and spiritual competence of young people in diversity-sensible school cultures”
2. Religious education as theological discipline: cooperation within the ROTH-consortium (*Religionsunterricht als Ort der Theologie*)
- 3- Interdisciplinary research on church and society: “Creating vital communities in the Flemish Catholic church” (www.ik-ks.org)

Bibliography

Books – selection of English books

- B. Roebben & M. Warren (eds.), *Religious Education as Practical Theology. Essays in Honour of Professor Herman Lombaerts* (ANL 40), Leuven/Paris/Sterling (VA), Peeters, 2001, 343 p.
- B. Roebben & L. van der Tuin (eds.), *Practical Theology and the Interpretation of Crossing Boundaries. Essays in Honour of Professor M.P.J. van Knippenberg* (Theologie Band 52), Münster/Hamburg/London, Lit-Verlag, 2003, 317 p.
- B. Roebben, *Seeking Sense in the City. European Perspectives on Religious Education*, Münster/Hamburg/London, Lit-Verlag, 2009. <http://www.lit-verlag.de/isbn/3-643-10321-5>

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