

Epilogue: Religion and Controversies in Schools – A Global Field of Research

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Abstract: This contribution outlines a global research program focused on the theme addressed in this special issue of *Religionspädagogische Beiträge*: “Religion and Controversies in Schools.” The research program’s productivity is illustrated by an exemplary case study, the Democratic Republic of Congo. In this context, the role of religious factors in how teachers manage censorship, risks, and threats while teaching controversial issues is proposed as a potential future research topic. Thus, the paper connects this special issue’s theme with the intersection of religion and democratic societies, particularly highlighting the relationship between religious education and citizenship education.

Keywords: International knowledge transfer; Controversial Issues; Democratic Republic of Congo; Teachers’ Management of Risks and Threats

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Beitrag skizziert ein globales Forschungsprogramm, das sich mit dem Thema dieser Sonderausgabe der *Religionspädagogischen Beiträge* beschäftigt: „Religion und Kontroversen in Schulen.“ Die Produktivität dieses Forschungsprogramms wird anhand einer exemplarischen Fallstudie veranschaulicht, der Demokratischen Republik Kongo. In diesem Kontext wird als potenzielles zukünftiges Forschungsthema die Rolle religiöser Faktoren beim Umgang von Lehrkräften mit Risiken und Bedrohungen wie Zensur beim Unterrichten von Kontroversen präsentiert. Damit verbindet der Artikel das Thema dieser Sonderausgabe mit der Schnittstelle zwischen Religion und demokratischen Gesellschaften und hebt insbesondere die Beziehung zwischen religiöser und politischer Bildung hervor.

Schlagwörter: Internationaler Wissenstransfer; Kontroverse Themen; Demokratische Republik Kongo; Management von Risiken und Bedrohungen durch Lehrkräfte

I. Introduction

Researchers such as Jean Piaget and Jürgen Habermas define “decentration” as the process of transcending an egocentric perspective and systematically expanding it, enabling a more complex and shared understanding of reality. In line with the scientific objective of formulating and testing general propositions about reality, research inherently requires self-reflection on one’s own positionality and a conscious effort to move beyond it. As noted in the introduction to this special issue, the aim of research is to evolve into a systematically consolidated discourse and an advanced integrative field of study at the international level (e. g., Schweitzer & Schreiner, 2020). Achieving this ambitious goal demands sophisticated methodologies and research topics that lend themselves to meaningful exploration across diverse national contexts. The methodology of international comparative research, combined with the

topic of ‘Religion and Controversies in Schools’ offers significant potential to advance this agenda of academic internationalization. The following sections will demonstrate this through a case study. The article first discusses the relevance of *Controversial Issues* and *Religious Education* as interconnected global fields of research. It then illustrates this perspective through a case study of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), highlighting how conflict and faith-based schooling influence the handling of controversial topics in classrooms. Finally, it proposes a future research agenda focused on the role of religious factors in shaping teachers’ management of risks and threats when addressing controversial issues.

2. ‘Controversial issues’ and ‘Religious Education in Schools’ – Two Global Fields of Research

‘Controversial issues’ and ‘Religious Education in Schools’ are two research topics that lend themselves well to international comparative studies for two main reasons. First, Ho, McAvoy, Hess and Gib (2017, pp. 321–325) emphasize that studying the teaching of controversial issues constitutes an international endeavour, a global field of research: In their overview article in *The Wiley Handbook of Social Studies Research*, which builds on several comprehensive research reviews, they refer to “numerous studies conducted in Asia, Africa, and other regions” (Ho et al., 2017, p. 321). A key argument of their contribution is that controversial issues present a challenge “in every society.” These issues can also be framed as “‘taboo’ topics”, “closed areas”, or “problematic areas of culture” (Ho et al., 2017, p. 321). While this international perspective has been considered in our special issue, our primary focus has been on Western liberal democracies with a *relatively* low degree of polarization on a global scale (Germany, Norway, the UK, Switzerland). This approach risks overlooking “important variations across settings” (Ho et al., 2017, p. 321). One notable exception is Israel, a militarized and divided democracy in the Middle East, which Shahar Gindi (2024) describes as a context “marked by significant political turbulence” and “tensions between Jews and Arabs”. This may share characteristics with other “divided societies” discussed in the literature, such as “Cyprus, Chile, and Northern Ireland” (Ho et al., 2017, p. 321). Exploring more disparate contexts enables researchers “to be more reflexive and to interrogate previously unexamined beliefs and assumptions” (Ho et al., 2017, p. 321).

Second, ‘Religious Education in Schools’ is a cross-national field, as illustrated by the Vienna research project “Religious Education at Schools in Europe” (REL-EDU) and *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Religious Education in the Global South* (Matemba & Collet, 2022). For example, a recent UNESCO (2022, p. 35) report highlights the global relevance of religion in education, noting that “faith-based schools can be found in 124 out of 196 countries”. Scheunpflug & Wenz (2021) emphasize that faith-based schools play a vital role in education across diverse countries, providing a significant share of schooling through state-church partnerships while facing multiple challenges, particularly related to funding and governance dynamics (further insights about Christian schools in (sub-Saharan) African countries, which are crucial in this paper: Njobati, 2021; Plötz, 2024; Scheunpflug et al., 2021; Wenz, 2020). Ahme & Simojoki (2024, p. 127) draw attention to the “overwhelming influence of Christian churches as providers of education” on a global scale.

In conclusion, the potential of comparative research in both research fields – ‘Controversial issues’ and ‘Religious Education in Schools’ – is indeed evident.¹ However, it is far from being fully realized, both in terms of the individual topics as well as their interconnections. For instance, Ahme & Simojoki (2024, p. 127) in accordance with Simojoki (2024) state that particularly the exploration of religious education in the Global South represents a “significant gap in research”. Here, it is important to keep in mind, that

¹ Although the research presented here also pertains to fields such as peace education, citizenship education, education for life, and multicultural education, the epilogue deliberately focuses on the two strands outlined above: ‘Controversial issues’ and ‘Religious Education in Schools’.

Global South is an abstract concept with an essentialising and dichotomising tendency, but also without better alternatives (Henningsen, 2022).

To address the research gap, we aim to broaden our perspective now by focusing on the DRC as a *short* case study to demonstrate the mentioned potential of seeing 'Religion and Controversies in Schools' as a global field of research. Therefore, the special issue's editors initiate a dialogue with Cyril Brandt and Jacques Tati Mwakupemba. Cyril Brandt has conducted extensive empirical research on actors within education systems in the Global South, focusing in detail on the DRC. In the DRC, his research encompasses the political economy of education policy (e. g., teacher salaries and decentralization), education in emergencies, violence against teachers in conflict-affected contexts and the challenges of teaching in militarized, divided societies (Brandt, 2021; Brandt, Kithumbu, Kuliumbwa & Marchais, 2022b). Jacques Taty Mwakupemba is a PhD candidate in Philosophy at the Université Catholique du Congo, served as assistant lecturer for Advanced Epistemology and assistant in Logic at the Université de Kwango, works as a secondary school teacher and is the coordinator of the Federation of Teachers and Social Educators (FENECO/UNTC), a teachers' union.

3. The Democratic Republic of Congo as a Case Study

The DRC is particularly suitable for a case study because it broadens our sample in a contrastive sense. It should be noted that the following analysis does not rely on a single empirical study; rather, it synthesizes insights from over twelve years of qualitative and political economy research by Cyril Brandt, as well as the extensive lived experience of Jacques Tati Mwakupemba as a teacher, unionist, and activist in the DRC. Therefore, the term 'case study' is used in a broad sense, and a more fitting description might be a 'contextual synthesis based on long-term engagement and practice'. So far, the special issue has focused on how controversial issues can be addressed in established liberal democracies, in countries with established conflict resolution institutions and robust legal frameworks (e. g., Scandinavian countries). But there are divided and/or militarized contexts with higher levels of *conflict intensity*: With the DRC, we are looking at a case that – like other countries around the world (e. g., Chad; Colombia; Cyprus; Northern Ireland; Ukraine; Syria; Yemen) – has been affected by acute emergencies and a protracted crisis. Depending on the level of conflict intensity, educational challenges vary, for example, in the field of teacher education (Hollombe, Yablon & Iluz, 2024). Research has shown that in conflict-affected settings, discussing historical injustices, ethnic tensions, or political violence carries unique risks (Paulson et al., 2020). Emphasizing the role of conflict and crises in shaping educational experiences does not imply that the Global South should be equated with war or institutional dysfunction – many states in the Global North also experience deep societal divisions that shape classroom debates. In fact, research over the past two decades has moved beyond concepts of fragility and dysfunction, shifting its focus to the actual governance, political settlements, and negotiated relationships between state and non-state actors that shape education systems in conflict-affected settings and protracted crises (e. g., Titeca & De Herdt, 2011). In contexts of armed violence, such as eastern DRC, controversial discussions in classrooms can have severe consequences, from social exclusion to physical threats. The ongoing conflict in eastern DRC, particularly the resurgence of the M23 rebellion backed by Rwanda, has led to mass displacement, increased insecurity, and heightened ethnocultural tensions, all of which deeply impact educational spaces and most likely restrict open classroom discussions even further. In what follows, we will briefly focus on the case study of Congo where both perspectives play a role: addressing controversial issues at predominantly faith-based schools and education in emergencies.

4. Controversial issues and faith-based schools in the DRC

Teaching in Congolese schools predominantly relies on teacher-centered approaches and rote memorization, partly influenced by the historical role of the Catholic Church in shaping education, where early teaching methods emphasized memorization, similar to religious instruction (Ndaywel è Nziem, 1998). The national curriculum is outdated, with subjects like Civic Education and Philosophy constrained by rigid program structures that fail to foster critical discussions (Sheria Nfundiko, Kuppens & Langer, 2025). Open dialogue is rare. Moreover, many teachers themselves reported being ill-prepared to handle controversial issues, as the Teacher Training Centers where they were trained also operate as hierarchical spaces, leaving little room for open debate or critical pedagogies (Sheria Nfundiko et al., 2025). Additionally, the uncontrolled expansion of schools has not been matched by adequate funding. While funding has increased gradually, the predominant share is committed to paying teacher salaries. As a result, many schools, especially those outside urban areas, are poorly equipped, classrooms are overcrowded, and teachers often lack proper training. While Western donors have pushed for positive discipline and student-centered pedagogies or after-school sensitizing activities through school committees, the reality of resource-poor settings and large class sizes forces many teachers to adopt authoritative teaching styles to maintain control. The context varies significantly between conflict-affected and more stable regions. In Eastern DRC, for instance, teachers often face greater pressure to address students' questions about ongoing violence and the roles of various actors involved, adding another layer of complexity to their already challenging roles.

Faith-based organizations (FBOs) have been integral to the DRC's education system since colonial times. Titeca & De Herdt (2011) describe the "real governance of education" as a hybrid, continuously negotiated system between public institutions and FBOs, encompassing both formal and informal processes intertwined with broader political dynamics. This partnership was formalized in 1977 through a post-independence agreement between the state and FBOs, which has since expanded to include over one hundred faith-based networks. FBOs today manage approximately 80 % of public schools in the DRC, while the state oversees teacher salaries, curriculum development, national exams, and other structural elements. While the national curriculum is officially under state sovereignty, the convention with FBOs allows them substantial leeway in practice. Especially in subjects like Religious Education and Education for Life, FBOs often design their own courses, thereby strongly shaping the educational content within their schools. It is important to note that practices differ significantly between the vast number and significant differences between religious networks and denominations. Variations exist in the organization of timetables, the content of religious courses, and the ways in which values are integrated into broader subjects such as Education for Life. Moreover, the extent to which controversial issues are addressed, as well as the profiles and training of teachers responsible for these courses, can vary widely across schools and regions. Schools often serve as sites for proselytization, and churches or mosques act as hubs for engaging families and disseminating critical information, such as the start dates for the school year. Parents, who have shouldered the majority of educational costs since the collapse of state funding in the 1990s, have also co-funded religious activities through school fees (Verhaghe, 2017). Meanwhile, religious actors often act as intermediaries, informally securing operational licenses for schools from the national Ministry of Education (Brandt, 2017). Since the 1970s, and especially the 1990s, in the DRC, the Catholic Church has been a key player in Congolese politics, often siding with popular opposition movements against the ruling powers. Its involvement during the National Sovereign Conference of 1992 and the protests surrounding electoral processes from 2015 to 2018 illustrate its political influence (Congo Research Group & Ebuteli, 2022). However, the Church faces criticism for its internal democratic deficits and its limited scope of advocacy, which has largely focused on electoral issues. In Eastern DRC, faith-based actors have played a vital role in peacebuilding efforts. For example, Diocesan Commissions for Justice and Peace (*Commissions Diocésaines Justice et*

Paix) have mediated disputes, promoted reconciliation, and fostered social cohesion in intercommunal conflicts (Cicura, 2023).

Despite the prominence of FBOs in education and the Church's socio-political advocacy, there has been surprisingly little research on how faith-based schools influence educational content and pedagogical practices. A common perception expressed by teachers in interviews is that Catholic schools provide more discipline and quality, though no robust data exists to substantiate this claim. It is, however, likely that the presence of religious figures – also in other denominations and religions than Catholic – in school leadership and governance indeed reinforces discipline. As recognized authorities, their influence is amplified by the infrequent visits of state officials to schools, making their presence a significant factor in maintaining order and authority (Fansaka et al., 2019).

On top of these already challenging structural factors, teachers in several Congolese provinces are confronted with the presence and legacy of armed conflict. Research about these aspects sits within the field of *Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises* that has grown substantially over the past 25 years, with research focusing on contexts such as Nepal, Myanmar, and Uganda (Sayed & Novelli, 2016; Mendenhall, Marchais, Sayed & Boothby, 2024), highlighting the ways in which education can both mitigate and exacerbate societal divisions. In settings where armed conflict remains an ongoing reality, this issue is particularly relevant. Although conflicts in the DRC cannot at all be simplistically reduced to ethnic divisions, ethnicity often serves as a significant fault line, shaping the experiences of discrimination, marginalization, and violence for both teachers and students. In these environments, controversial issues are not only politically sensitive but can also carry life-threatening consequences. In settings affected by ongoing armed violence, risks can escalate, with teachers and students facing direct threats to their safety (GCPEA, 2024). Engaging with historical narratives of war, or discussing identity-based violence, can reopen intergenerational trauma and intensify existing divisions. While this contribution emphasizes conflicts and ethnic inequalities, it is important to recognize that controversial issues in the DRC also include topics such as reproductive health, sexuality, disease, and gender-based violence. These subjects likewise pose significant challenges for teachers and are shaped by broader social, religious, and political sensitivities.

Recent studies highlight how teachers in Eastern DRC manage the risks of teaching – teaching in general and addressing the legacy and presence of armed violence – in zones of ongoing armed conflict (Marchais et al., 2022; Sheria Nfundiko et al., 2025). Teachers tend to frame schools as neutral spaces, free from political and ethnic divisions. Most teachers avoid discussing armed conflict, fearing it could escalate tensions or inadvertently encourage student recruitment into armed groups. Very few dare to explicitly sensitize students to the consequences of violence and promote peaceful conflict resolution. An informal norm stipulates that “ethnic groups do not exist in school” (Marchais et al., 2022, p. 196) making ethnic tensions an unspoken issue despite widespread discrimination in schools and the education administration. In general, a teacher's approach to conflict is shaped by personal identity factors such as experience with violence, age, ethnicity, and the dominant ethnic group at their school. Secondary school teachers are more likely to explicitly address the armed violence in the region, as they consider it more age-appropriate for older students to engage with such topics. A frequent means of local in-classroom conflict resolution is the recourse to religious references and moral concepts to address justice and equality in the classroom (Marchais et al., 2022). The importance of such references is reinforced by the lack of professional development for teachers in conflict resolution. Without structured guidance, teachers must decide individually whether and how to address controversial issues in the classroom.

In conclusion, the case of the DRC illustrates how the broader political and social context – whether a country is a democracy, a divided society, post-conflict, or experiencing ongoing violence – shapes how

controversial topics are addressed in schools and how it influences the potential consequences of engaging with them, ranging from social tensions to physical threats. At the same time, the combination of authoritative pedagogical styles and faith-based schooling, which emphasizes normative values like neutrality and unity over open debate, likely leads to the muting of controversial issues rather than their critical engagement. The case also highlights the necessity of engaging teachers in reflective practice, empowering them to consciously choose from a range of approaches and equipping them with the pedagogical skills to either address or deliberately avoid controversial topics (Brandt, Marchais, Matabishi & Hajal, 2022a). When teachers perceive their decision to avoid a sensitive issue as a conscious, informed choice rather than a consequence of inadequate training, they may feel more in control and experience less stress in navigating their complex teaching environments. Finally, this case study also highlights the need for further research into how religious factors influence the ways teachers manage risks and threats when addressing controversial issues, particularly in faith-based schools within conflict-affected settings. The significance of this question can, in conclusion, be explored more broadly, moving beyond the DRC case study.

5. A future research topic: Religious factors shaping teachers' management of risks and threats

In international research on controversial issues, a key question mentioned is what prevents teachers from addressing these topics. A fundamental avoidance of controversies is regarded as problematic because of pedagogical reasons (e. g., Ho et al., 2017). In addition to the aforementioned “Emotional Histories”, which, as seen in Northern Ireland, can also be shaped by religious conflict lines, Ho et al. (2017, pp. 323–327) highlight two additional factors: first, they refer to “Political, Institutional, and Curricular Contexts,” (1) and second, to “Teachers’ Identities, Beliefs, and Sense of Purpose.” (2) Both aspects highlight the significance of the research topic ‘Teachers’ Management of Risks and Threats’, particularly emphasizing the need to consider the role of religious beliefs and communities in this context.

Unsurprisingly, a climate of censorship and the perception of being subject to (subtle) external pressures – such as public criticism or actual sanctions – lead to an increased avoidance of controversies (Ho et al., 2017, p. 323). This observation is further supported by recent studies conducted in various contexts, including the USA/Canada (Waddington, Maxwell, MacLean, McDonough & Tavassoli, 2024) or Ethiopia (Weigele & Brandt, 2022). However, these findings only indicate trends, as social contexts remain complex even in authoritarian dictatorships, where teachers’ identities and beliefs can outweigh societal contextual factors. Even in totalitarian settings, teachers sometimes exhibit contradictory practices or openly criticize the status quo (e. g., for Germany: Grammes, Schluß & Vogler, 2006; Klafki, 1990). Furthermore, as demonstrated by the cited case studies, subject-related learning inherently contains a contradictory element to state indoctrination (Tenorth, 2008), which manifests for teachers in the classroom at various moments – such as through critical inquiries from students, unplanned controversies within the class, or challenges faced by teachers in justifying the regime’s positions.

Religion can correlate with these contextual factors in several ways: When the authoritarian state ideology, as seen in Francoist National Catholicism in Spain (1939–1975), is religiously influenced and religious communities institutionally support the state, religion can serve as an obstacle to discussing controversies in the classroom. Even in countries like Singapore, where the maintenance of religious harmony is enshrined in law, this can lead teachers to avoid religious controversies due to concerns about violating these laws (Ho, Alviar-Martin, Sim & Yap, 2011). In contrast, in secular authoritarian states, religious ideas and communities can strengthen opposition and create spaces for counter-perspectives within learning processes. Tendentially, this can also manifest in liberal democracies, which – as previously mentioned – cannot be viewed in isolation from censorship (e. g., Ho et al., 2017,

p. 323). In Germany, for example, religious education teachers rarely express concerns about being criticized or even sanctioned by stakeholders such as parents, political parties, or religious communities within the school environment (Herbst, 2024, p. 16). This may be, among other things, related to the fact that religious education in public schools is not exclusively managed by the state but is also organized by religious communities, which are involved in the curriculum or teachers' education and view themselves as an institutional support structure for teaching controversies (Herbst & Herdramm, 2025).

Previous studies, such as those by Cassar, Oosterheert & Meijer (2023), demonstrate that certain personal and professional beliefs, as well as the teachers' task perception, significantly influence their decision to address or to suppress a specific – particularly unexpected – controversial issue. Facilitating factors include the teacher's willingness to enable active democratic participation among students. This involves initiating relevant and holistic educational processes and promoting students' independent judgment. In contrast, certain attitudes, such as a high degree of authoritarianism, appear to hinder the engagement with controversies (Hanke, Herbst & Herdramm, 2025). Some researchers, like Gindi, Gilat & Sagee (2021), also view pronounced religiosity among teachers as an obstructive factor in addressing controversies. Ho et al. (2017, p. 326) mention another study from the US (James, 2014) suggesting that at least a certain form of dogmatic, closed-minded, anti-pluralistic, and fundamentalist religiosity negatively affects teachers' openness to discussing controversies: "A small group of preservice teachers who self-identified as fundamentalist Christians believed that controversial issues discussions privileged liberal agendas and threatened their faith; consequently, they felt that they had no place in the curriculum." Conversely, Hanke et al. (2025) suggest a plausible assumption: They argue that an open form of *quest* religiosity could foster teachers' willingness to address controversies. This concept, rooted in the work of social psychologist C. Daniel Batson, refers to a meaning-seeking religiosity that embraces doubt. Examining and substantiating this idea in greater detail would be a valuable topic for future research.

In this context, it is particularly important to examine the extent to which teachers' religiosity could motivate them to overcome their concerns about risks and threats. The fact that religious views can assume this motivating role, at least in extreme cases, is illustrated by the well-known fate of the RE teacher Georg Maus, who – during a classroom discussion in 1944 at the time of National Socialism – related the Christian commandment of loving one's enemies to the British. He was subsequently denounced, arrested due to undermining military strength, and died in 1945 (Hermle, 2018).

The exploration of the topic 'Religious Factors Shaping Teachers' Management of Risks and Threats in Teaching Controversial Issues' appears to be highly relevant today – in liberal democracies, too. This is not only due to the subtle censorship mechanisms and power structures that have always been present, but also in light of current authoritarian tendencies worldwide (e. g., Weigele & Brandt, 2022). Recent case examples from Germany, such as that of leftist climate activist Lisa Poettinger, who is barred from pursuing teacher training in Bavaria, illustrate that these questions are already pertinent. Therefore, it is of cross-contextual significance to investigate what triggers concerns and fears about teaching controversial issues and how teachers cope with these emotions.

6. Conclusion

In this article, we advocate for the long-term establishment of this special issue's topic as a global field of research, as it directly relates to the global dimension of the individual themes of 'Controversial Issues' and 'Religious Education in Schools.' We have used the DRC as an illustrative case study that has allowed us to underline the importance of a future research topic: how teachers navigate risks and threats in their work, and the influence of religious factors on this process. Future research can explore how broader political and social contexts – such as whether a country is a divided post-conflict society or experiencing ongoing violence – influence if and how teachers engage with controversial topics.

Building on this foundation, we propose that the thematic development of a global field of research be pursued more systematically. This aligns with recent calls for expanding research questions internationally within religious education (Schweitzer & Schreiner, 2020) and emerging initiatives, which aim to foster historical-comparative studies on religious education in the Global North *and* South (Schröder, 2023). Such efforts seek to move beyond Eurocentric perspectives and incorporate diverse global contexts.

The overarching theme of this special issue connects broadly to the intersection of religion and democratic civil societies, particularly exploring the relationship between religious education and citizenship education (e. g., Unser, 2021; Ubani, Tremblay, Unser & Garvis, 2025). Central questions arise about how religion positions itself – whether affirmatively or critically – in relation to democracy, as well as how democracy itself is conceptualized: static or transformative (Grümme, 2019, p. 27). For instance, does religion act as a prophetic voice that exposes injustices and advocates for change? A specific line of inquiry could examine whether faith-based schools perceive themselves as active contributors to democratic civil societies and as spaces for critical citizenship education (e. g., Könemann & Spiekermann, 2019; Oldenski, 1997). For example, in the U.S. context, Brett Bertucio (2023, p. 534) draws on studies such as Glenn (2016) to assert that there is “good empirical evidence” that “religious, particularly Catholic schools, produce more civic-minded students than their public counterparts.” While such aspirations may not *always and everywhere* align with reality (MacMullen, 2018), there are recurring examples at both local levels (e. g., López & Francisco, 2025) and within global networks where faith-based schools advocate for peace, justice, and environmental stewardship: One notable initiative is the global Protestant project “schools500reformation”, which fosters collaboration among more than 500 schools across six continents (e. g., Affolderbach & Plötz, 2016). Similar frameworks could be applied to schools affiliated with other religions. The project explored contemporary grievances students wish to address through protest, while also examining what should be renewed in pursuit of a better world, church, and school (Herbst, 2022, pp. 498–500). A key goal was fostering intercultural exchange and shifting perspectives. In this context, it became evident how religion can contribute to what Eva Illouz (2023) describes as “fraternity”: a universal perspective rooted in recognizing all people as creations of God deserving equal dignity. This idea holds particular relevance in the DRC, where students involved in the “schools500reformation” project critique pastors who spread hate or tribalism among Christians, highlighting the contrast with Jesus Christ’s universal message (Simojoki, 2017, p. 231). Projects like this one also demonstrate actionable outcomes from these religious perspectives through concrete partnerships – for example between Institut Majengo in eastern Congo and Matthias-Claudius-Schule in the German city Bochum –, which facilitate global exchange within religious education settings. These collaborations include opportunities like sharing didactic teaching materials via online platforms, enabling knowledge transfer across diverse cultural contexts while reinforcing values of solidarity and mutual learning (Fink, 2016).

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