

Article

“Sharing Worldviews: Learning in Encounter for Common Values in Diversity” in School and Teacher Education—Contexts in Germany and Europe

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Abstract: Challenges and tensions that arise in a pluralistic society with differing worldviews among its citizens must be addressed from the outset in school education. To enable social cohesion within a heterogeneous society, students must learn to harmonize their own worldviews with other interpretations of the world in a spirit of “reciprocal inclusivity” (Reinhold Bernhardt). This article argues that this task particularly falls within the responsibility of subjects in schools that address the existential “problems of constitutive rationality” (Jürgen Baumert), specifically religious education, ethics, and philosophy. In Germany and Austria, multiple subjects within denominational religious education, as well as ethics and philosophy, are offered in schools. When these subjects collaborate on projects, students learn to engage in dialogue with the various religious and secular, individual, and collective interpretations, perspectives, and worldviews they encounter. Since 2002/03, and in teacher training since 2011, such a didactically guided *Sharing Worldviews* approach has been implemented in school projects in Southern Germany through a four-phase concept. This concept can be flexibly applied to the local conditions of the school, contributes to internationalisation and digitalisation, and does not require additional teaching hours. By incorporating secular worldviews, *Sharing Worldviews* goes beyond interreligious learning and has also been realised digitally in other European countries. The following article begins by considering the educational requirements in a heterogeneous society (1), describes the prerequisites needed to positively influence students’ attitudes (2), outlines common foundational concepts for interreligious and inter-worldview dialogue (3), and recommends “Mutual Hospitality” as the basis for such dialogue in schools (4). The article then explains how “Mutual Hospitality” can be practically implemented in a four-phase concept of *Sharing Worldviews* both in schools and in teacher training (5 and 6) by tracing the origins of this concept (7). The *Sharing Worldviews* concept has been both internationalised and digitalised in schools and teacher education (8), aligns with the educational principles of the OECD (9), and demonstrates significant benefits in empirical studies (10).



Citation: Boehme, Katja. 2024. “Sharing Worldviews: Learning in Encounter for Common Values in Diversity” in School and Teacher Education—Contexts in Germany and Europe. *Religions* 15: 1077. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel15091077>

Academic Editors: James Nelson, Janet Orchard and Karlo Meyer

Received: 21 June 2024

Revised: 29 August 2024

Accepted: 31 August 2024

Published: 5 September 2024

Keywords: social cohesion; Sharing Worldviews; interreligious learning; inter-worldview learning; dialogical learning; dialogue; mutual hospitality; communication skills; worldview education; inter-religious encounter learning; ethics education; philosophy didactics; religious education



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1. Introduction

The various tensions between different national and international political as well as social forces, which sometimes erupt into violent conflicts, do not stop at the classroom doors. On the contrary, these tensions often continue and manifest themselves in the forms of radicalisation and discrimination. Recently, the European Union stated that “combating all forms of hatred [...] is a European task that arises from the democratic foundation of the EU.” (European Economic and Social Committee 2024, 1.1). In particular, in the field of education, it is necessary to take action against “hatred, which is mainly directed against belonging to a certain race, religion, or ethnicity” (European Economic and Social Committee 2024, 1.7).

The peaceful handling of diversity and plurality poses a challenge for education in all Western societies. As the plurality and heterogeneity of values and worldviews, whether religious or secular, have increased, education, particularly in the context of “shared worldviews”, has gained importance. Including the growing group of over 35% of the Western population (for example, in Germany) that does not identify with any religious community further enhances the role of religious education in “sharing worldviews” by fostering understanding between people with different worldviews.

For “success in education means not only learning languages, mathematics, or history, but also the development of identity, agency, and meaningfulness. [...] It is about compassion, about opening hearts. And it is about courage, the ability to mobilize our cognitive, social, and emotional resources. These will also be our best tools against the greatest threats of our time: ignorance—the closed mind, hatred—the closed heart, and fear—the enemy of agency” (OECD 2019: Foreword to the German edition).

For school education, this means that understanding must not be limited to inter-religious learning or “religious education for all”, as in Hamburg (Bauer 2024). Instead, schools must facilitate encounters and dialogue between religious and secular or atheistic worldviews. Children and young people need to acquire competencies that enable them to live in peaceful coexistence with different collective or individual world interpretations in a pluralistic society (Polak 2017, p. 42). Religious education that focuses on didactically guided encounter learning fosters abilities like perspective taking and ambiguity tolerance and contributes to social cohesion and the development of democracy (Boehme and Petermann 2022b).

In its learning compass “Future and Skills 2030”, the OECD demands that “Students need support in developing not only knowledge and skills but also attitudes and values, which can guide them towards ethical and responsible actions” (OECD 2019, p. 5). However, if value education is to become an explicit educational goal, the question that must be asked is whether this can be achieved in schools at all.

The following sections therefore initially deal with the critical question of the extent to which the habitus (i.e., the internalised, often unconscious patterns of thought, evaluation, and behaviour that a person develops in their social environment) of children and adolescents can be positively influenced.

2. The Need for a Change in Habitus

According to the well-known French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, a change in the habitus of students is almost impossible once they reach school age. Children are already so strongly influenced by their families and social environments when they enter the education system that a change in habitus, especially in dealing with the unfamiliar, is hardly possible (Boehme 2023, p. 293). Despite this critical statement by Pierre Bourdieu, three key factors can be extracted from his work, which, if integrated and implemented in a didactic concept, can provoke a change in students’ habitus. These three factors are 1. irritation, 2. bodily experience, and 3. spatial experience. These factors, which can positively influence the habitus of adolescents, will be briefly presented (Boehme 2023, pp. 296–304).

2.1. Irritations as Triggers for Behavioural Change

Irritations arise in situations where the early-acquired habitus in one’s specific social field must prove itself in a different social field, where it encounters discrepancy and dissonance. Such irritations can provoke learning processes, especially when the previously acquired dispositions or embodied routines are no longer sufficient to handle a situation, requiring new, possibly unfamiliar actions (Alkemeyer 2009, p. 126).

2.2. Bodily Experience as a Condition for Behavioural Change

Irritations alone cannot unfold their habitus-changing effectiveness through theoretical reflection; they must be accompanied by physical realization. Immanuel Kant already

noted that attitudes and basic ethical attitudes are less likely to change through preaching than through tangible bodily practices. Irritations with the potential for habitus change must therefore be physically and existentially experienced and trained in order to make attitudinal changes possible (Alkemeyer 2009, p. 131).

2.3. Spatial Experience as a Constitutive Element for Habitus Change

Spatial experience forms the third constitutive element for habitus change. Adolescents develop their identities within spaces and in relation to specific places. When social goods or people are assigned places—whether these assignments are religiously or secularly motivated—a space is created through this (dis)order (Löw 2017, p. 224). Religions are characterised by the fact that, like “all space constructions, they rely directly or indirectly on localizations” (Löw 2017, p. 201) and usually refer to specific, geographically determinable places in their culture of memory. In interreligious learning processes, this essential distinction between a geographically locatable place and a space constituted by (dis)order can make religious or ideological claims to domination over places conscious, with examples like Hagia Sophia or the Temple Mount in Jerusalem being illustrative. The obvious conflict potential here makes the inclusion of a spatial sociological concept in interreligious and multicultural learning processes particularly urgent. Conflicts are therefore not simply avoided but are instead perceived as opportunities for irritation, reflection, and discussion within didactic settings. Lastly, spatial experiences and considerations (e.g., in sacred spaces) offer students the opportunity to reflect on truth claims. Moreover, by designing and using spaces differently, students can become aware of the relativity of established orders (Löw 2017, p. 201).

As has been shown, irritations, bodily experiences, and spatial experiences can be particularly stimulated through encounters (Boehme 2023, pp. 296–304). Therefore, it is worthwhile to formulate a didactic approach based on a type of encounter learning that aims to encourage a change in students’ habitus that relates to their sense of respectful coexistence.

3. Plurality of Worldviews and Interpretations of the World as a Task for Schools

Modern schools themselves already provide stimuli for perspective taking and ambiguity tolerance, according to the educational scientist Jürgen Baumert, who is best known as the leader of the first PISA study in Germany. Baumert argues that modern schools expose children and young people to a variety of ways in which the world can be interpreted. He identifies four modes of interpreting the world. One mode is the normative–evaluative view of politics and law. Another mode is the natural sciences, which cognitively and instrumentally model the world. The aesthetic–expressive encounter and shaping of the world through art is also a distinct mode of interpretation. Religion and philosophy, which address questions about the origin and future of humanity, form an essential mode of world engagement. None of these four modes can be replaced or substituted by another (Baumert 2003, p. 216). Considering the mode of world interpretation known as “constitutive rationality”, which Baumert attributes to religious and philosophical approaches (Baumert 2003, p. 113), this access to the world consists of a variety of worldviews and interpretations stemming from the diversity of religions and denominations, as well as from various philosophical approaches.

This diversity of different worldviews of religions is reflected in Germany’s education system. In Germany (similar to Austria), the legal status of religious education makes it possible to offer religious education not only as a single subject but across multiple subjects and modes of denominational affiliations. Article 7, Paragraph 3 of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany stipulates that the content of religious education is determined not by the state (alone) but by religious communities (with exceptions in Bremen, Berlin, Brandenburg). When the Basic Law was adopted in 1949, it primarily considered the Catholic Church, the Protestant Church, and the Jewish community and their subjects of denominational religious educations at school. Soon, for students who

did not wish to participate in religious education, an alternative subject addressing ethical and philosophical content was offered. Today, due to migration and influx, many other religious communities in Germany can also offer their own religious education in schools. In some federal states in Germany, such as Hesse, as many as 12 religious communities have the opportunity to conduct religious education in schools. Along with the alternative subject ethics (offered under different names and content across the federal states), these numerous religious education subjects provide children and young people the chance to see their traditional worldviews reflected in school. This also gives students with migration backgrounds the opportunity to feel at home in the school system through the religious education of their religious denomination. Thus, by considering their (religious) worldview through their religious subject, students can find their place in school, which significantly contributes to integration.

Religion and philosophy are thus indispensable for general education. They are also crucial because they address worldviews and claims to absoluteness through their educational mandate. These subjects bear a special responsibility, as they help students develop a dialogic habitus and respectful behaviour towards other worldviews and interpretations.

The fundamental integration potential of religious and philosophy subjects can be further enhanced when these subjects bring their different worldviews into cooperative encounters—ideally facilitated by the students themselves. Expanding on Baumert’s claim, the task of modern schools should not only be to present various worldviews to students. Today, schools are also expected to bring these diverse worldviews into respectful dialogue to achieve peaceful coexistence in a pluralistic society. Such dialogue should originate from the subjects of religious education, ethics, and philosophy.

For the implementation of this cooperation, the number of different subjects in religious education and ethics or philosophy education offered at a school is not predetermined; it can be two, three, or more. However, what is feasible through the cooperation of school subjects in Germany and Austria (Krobath and Ritzer 2014; Garcia Sobreira-Majer and Abuzahra 2014; Garcia Sobreira-Majer 2015; Garcia Sobreira-Majer et al. 2023; Lehmann 2024) is not an opportunity available in all countries. In countries where only a single denomination’s religious education is available (such as Greece or Turkey), digital media now enable students with different worldviews and from various subjects to engage and converse. The Erasmus+ project *Sharing Worldviews: Learning in Encounter for Common Values in Diversity* (2021–2024; Supplementary Materials, <http://www.sharing-worldviews.com>, accessed on 1 September 2024) has demonstrated that this is possible not only in the cooperation of schools but also in the collaboration of universities through digital video conferencing, which will be discussed further below.

3.1. Foundational Concepts for Interreligious and Inter-Worldview Dialogue

Various foundational concepts are available for interreligious or philosophical dialogue on which religious pedagogical settings can build: First, Dialogical Philosophy, particularly known through Jewish thinkers like Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Emanuel Lévinas, offers a criterion catalogue for the essential aspects that should characterise dialogical encounters in schools. It emphasises the importance of maintaining mutuality (turn taking) and equality in conversations, practicing an appreciative and empathetic attitude, focusing on the interpersonal and content-related aspects of communication, and strengthening community. The “between” of the encounter is also a significant aspect of the dialogue. This concept of dialogue, in line with a subject-oriented pedagogy, recognises conversation partners as free and self-responsible individuals (Casper 2017). A further inspiration for a “Hermeneutics of the Other” has been provided by the Protestant religious scholar Theo Sundermeier, which serves as the foundation for the concepts of witness learning by the German professors of religion education Karlo Meyer (Meyer 1999, pp. 307–9) and Clauß Peter Sajak (Sajak 2005, pp. 237–43). A third, Comparative Theology, is widely received among religious educators as a foundation for interreligious didactics. It is based on clear principles and methods that provide a helpful framework for academic dialogue

(von Stosch 2015). And a fourth, the Theme-Centred Interaction (TCI) approach, founded by Ruth Cohn, is another method utilised by religious educators Martina Kraml and Zekirija Sejdini (University of Innsbruck) in their interreligious educational processes in schools and universities (Kraml and Sejdini 2018). TCI is a group dynamic concept particularly beneficial for group leaders. Its advantage lies in considering the contexts of encounters and viewing conflicts as positive opportunities for learning processes (cf. Boehme 2023, pp. 239–96).

3.2. Theological Attitudes towards Religion

All these concepts exemplify a respectful encounter with the “other” on equal footing. None of these concepts lean towards exclusivism, a theological stance that assumes possession of the sole truth and excludes others. Nor do they represent a pronounced pluralism, which subsumes all others by assuming that everyone believes the same, is heading towards the same goal, and originates from the same root.

According to the Protestant systematic theologian Reinhold Bernhardt, interreligious encounters should be characterised by reciprocal inclusivism (Bernhardt 2005, 2019). Reciprocal inclusivism grants the “other” the right to be as equally convinced of their truth as one is of their own. In a world where secular interpretations of the world are also widely represented, this attitude of reciprocal inclusivism should be extended to non-religious worldviews as well (Boehme 2023, p. 226).

However, it is critical to note that none of these four mentioned concepts fulfil all the necessary criteria for effecting a change in habitus. While many can lead to irritation, they do not sufficiently provide for bodily and spatial experiences.

4. The Foundational Concept of “Mutual Hospitality”

The foundational concept of encounters that meets Bourdieu’s requirements for irritation, bodily experience, and spatial experience is as old as humanity itself: the concept of hospitality. Over the past decade, hospitality has regained attention for a hermeneutic of encounters. In light of contemporary migration movements, hospitality is discussed in political philosophy as a societal concept for achieving dignified coexistence with strangers in a globalised world (Derrida 2007; Liebsch 2008; Liebsch et al. 2016; Böttigheimer and Bruckmann 2009; Friese 2014; Eckholt 2016; von Däniken and Kamm 2018; Link-Wieczorek 2018; Arenz et al. 2023). In pedagogy, the metaphor and model of hospitality are increasingly used as a foundation for intercultural, interdenominational, and interreligious learning (Baur 2007, 2009; Baur and Oesselmann 2017; Schmid and Verburg 2010; Boehme 2023). “Hospitality” will be presented here as the basis of a didactics of encounters.

The term “hospitality” derives from the early Latin meanings of “hospes” and “hostis”, which capture the ambivalence of hospitality as a concept that can welcome the guest either as a friend or foe. Hospitality (hospitality) and hostility (hostility) are thus semantically linked. Where hostility is not contained and hatred does not give way to the more or less ritualised behaviours of hospitality, societal coexistence is jeopardised (Friese 2018, p. 64).

This ambivalence of hospitality, situated between hostility and hospitality, poses a constant and unavoidable challenge for school-based learning encounters, best expressed by the internationally comprehensible English term “hospitality”. “Hospitality” is also suitable as a foundational concept for encounters and dialogue in a migration society because it is an ethically mandated behaviour towards strangers across all cultures and religions, grounded in a long philosophical, religious, and political tradition.

Furthermore, the advantage of an encounter concept based on “hospitality” within a culturally, religiously, and ideologically diverse student body lies in its universal recognition as an ethical obligation, while simultaneously adhering to various culturally specific rituals and rules. Thus, hospitality can be described as an inclusive concept that can be implemented in diverse, heterogeneous forms.

Moreover, it meets the criteria Bourdieu identified as constitutive for a positive change in habitus:

- *Irritation*

Even the culturally influenced rituals of hospitality (e.g., removing one's shoes or unwrapping flowers before presenting them) can cause irritation, which can serve as conversation starters and solidify the sustainability of the encounter;

- *Bodily Experience*

As a "mode of human sociability, bonding, cooperation, and connectedness" (Friese 2018, p. 64), the paradigm of hospitality is excellently suited for providing bodily experiences for students within the framework of encounter-based learning;

- *Spatial Experience*

The rules and rituals of hospitality also gauge respect for the (personal) spaces of the host and the guest's freedom. Besides being temporally limited, rules and rituals are defined by spatial boundaries; the guest is not given access to all spaces but only to specific ones. It is typically the host's responsibility to place the guest.

Additionally, hospitality can mediate between a post-liberal particularistic approach, which assumes the untranslatability of religions, and a pluralistic approach, which seeks to reduce all differences to a common ground (Boehme 2023, p. 315). Hospitality necessitates pragmatic translation work, offering valuable impulses for dialogue between different worldviews, as illustrated by the Catholic theologian Marianne Moyaert using Paul Ricoeur's short study "Sur la traduction" (Ricoeur 2016). Ricoeur points out the analogies between translation activities and interreligious dialogue, which he calls "linguistic hospitality" (Ricoeur 2016, p. 11). Ricoeur extends this concept beyond the translation of natural languages to suggest that translation is also a paradigm for hermeneutics. "Thus, linguistic hospitality is synonymous with hermeneutic hospitality," (Moyaert 2008, p. 339) and serves as a metaphor for the hermeneutic endeavour to explain religious phenomena to outsiders. A translation must navigate the tension between the familiar and the foreign, and between identity and openness. Similarly, in interreligious dialogue, these tensions must be endured (Moyaert 2008, p. 339). What should also be considered is that a complete understanding of one's religious tradition is not possible even for the believer; there remains an unsayable, mysterious element that cannot be articulated, as it resists translatability (Moyaert 2008, p. 361).

Nevertheless, hospitality as a model of encounter between different cultures or worldviews, whether religious or secular, remains an asymmetrical model of encounter. Guest and host do not meet on equal footing but are unequal in various parameters. For a "Shared Religious Education", hospitality is only a suitable foundational concept if it is based on reciprocity. In this didactic sense, the model that should follow an encounter on equal footing must be "Mutual Hospitality". Each participant should take on both the role of guest and host, thereby neutralising the mutual asymmetry.

Competencies of "Mutual Hospitality"

In such a model of mutual hospitality, participants can acquire competencies of respectful behaviour and, as a prerequisite first step, also develop competencies for a respectful habitus. Thus, mutual hospitality fosters a range of social competencies.

"Mutual Hospitality" empowers pupils and students by encouraging them to do the following:

- Learn and train in the rules and rituals of encounter and dialogue;
- Get into the habit of respectful interaction;
- Be unprejudiced during their encounters and even after the fact;
- Renounce the dispute about truth, because it is not customary to make dogmatic statements in a hospitality setting;
- Express narrative identity through individual and collective narratives;
- View grievances or critical incidents from encounters as a learning occasion;
- Generate spatial experiences; respect each other's private space;

- Allow for reflective distance from oneself and from others;
- Practise social skills;
- Learn to embrace and acknowledge different perspectives;
- Recognise the mutuality of ethical obligations (the “Golden Rule”).

All of these skills are essential for a democratic education and for social cohesion. But how can “Mutual Hospitality” be practised in schools or as part of teacher education?

5. The Didactic Four-Phase Concept of Learning in Encounter

As a didactic concept for “Mutual Hospitality”, a four-phase concept (germ: Inter-religiöses Begegnungslernen; [Boehme 2019b, 2023](#)) has proven to be successful from the beginning of primary school onwards and in international teacher education. The cooperation must be planned among the coordinators of religious education or philosophy and ethics that are available either locally or digitally. There may be more or less than these schools/universities and study subjects. Other subjects are also welcome. The four phases are differentiated as follows:

Phase 1—The participating teachers (or lecturers) agree on a specific topic which they will prepare for their courses. Under the guidance of their teachers (or lecturers), students acquire knowledge about the topic and prepare a presentation of the topic from a subject-specific perspective;

Phase 2—Presentation: The participating students meet on a day of encounter held either at a participating school/university or online in digital and international video conference rooms. In small mixed groups, students present the common topic to each other from their own perspective and from the perspective of their subject of study;

Phase 3—Sharing: After each specific presentation (where station work has proven effective), the presenting students invite their small group to share various perspectives and personal views on the topic;

Phase 4—Retrospective Reflection: Students reflect on the increase in their knowledge of other perspectives and the dialogue’s quality. This phase occurs in their own classroom as a *safe space* during their school/university course but can also already take place during the study day in small mixed groups.

The concept also thrives as a result of its spiral approach. It requires only one study day of encounter for the four phases of preparation, presentation, discussion, and reflection *once* in the school or academic year. If only one study day is required per school year or per academic year, pupils and students become more capable of living in religiously and ideologically diversified societies. This happens under the condition that all students participate in this four-phase concept with a study day of encounter every year throughout their school years (from the end of primary school onwards). As a result of this concept, students can learn at school (or at university) to recognise and appreciate their different perspectives and worldviews.

6. Sharing Worldviews: Learning in Encounter

A visit to stations prepared by the students of a particular subject—possibly within their own classroom—can make hospitality tangible through the arrangement of these stations or spaces. If such a procedure ([Figure 1](#)) is chosen, which is particularly suitable for primary schools, special attention must be paid to focusing on a limited topic.

In both versions ([Figures 1 and 2](#)), the ritualised process (presentation followed by immediate discussion in small mixed groups) with the temporal and spatial limitation of station work contributes to providing students with a *safe space* for encounter, where they can interact without fear of discrimination.

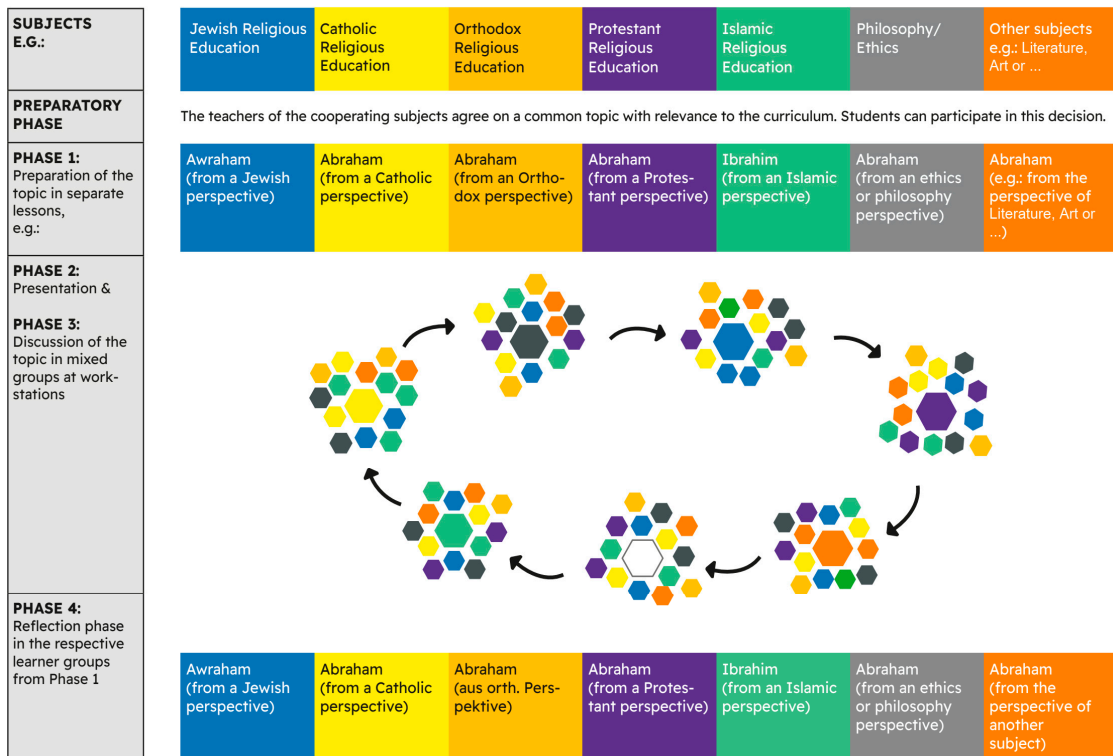


Figure 1. *Sharing Wordviews* in four phases with presentation phase and discussion phase as station work in mixed groups of students. Each subject prepares a station from its own worldview on the topic (cf. Boehme 2023, p. 381; www.sharing-worldviews.com/en/node/2, accessed on 29 August 2024).

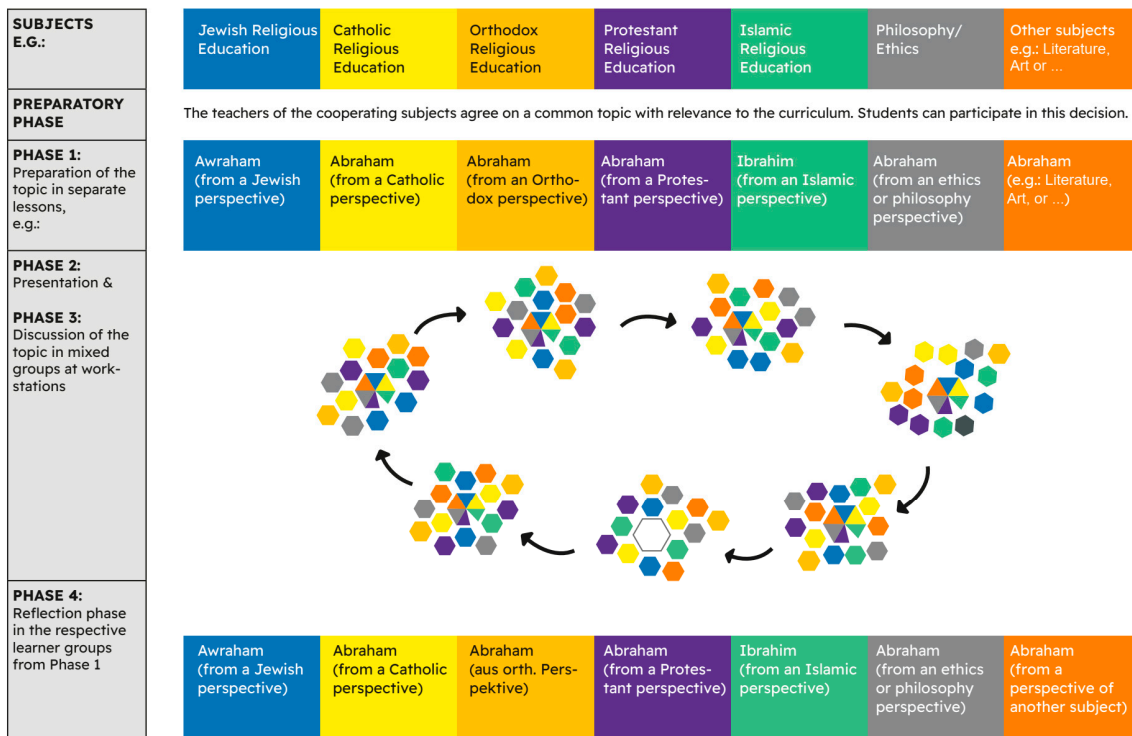


Figure 2. *Sharing Wordviews* in four phases with presentation phase and discussion phase as station work in mixed groups of students. Each subject contributes its own view of a subtopic to each station (cf. Boehme 2023, p. 382; www.sharing-worldviews.com/en/node/2, accessed on 1 September 2024).

With this process, each student is required at least once to present the prepared topic from the perspective of their school subject (or study subject) at their “own” station and introduce the other students to the “own”. By having each student take on both the role of host and guest, they methodically practice “Mutual Hospitality”, a concept fundamental also to Comparative Theology (von Stosch 2012, p. 204). While an inner attitude of friendliness towards foreign students cannot be methodically imposed, the paradigm of hospitality demands a respectful, regulated behaviour that can be practised. Moreover, the reciprocity of the host and guest roles allows students to meet each other on an equal footing, regardless of whether they come from a religious or philosophical education subject. Thus, mutuality in the sense of the Golden Rule helps reduce potential discrimination, as each participant takes on both roles during the encounters.

The four-phase concept is therefore student-centred, as the learners are at the core and shape their spaces and stations themselves during the encounter phases (Phase 2 and Phase 3), as well as control their own learning process. During these phases, the teacher’s (or lecturers) role is limited to that of a moderator, ensuring a safe space. Since students come from various subjects of religious or philosophical education, or from subjects that have joined the cooperation, they are not required to “out” themselves. They only need to identify themselves as students of their school or study subject. This concept also avoids “role-taking” or “othering”. Students are not functionalised as experts for a particular belief. They merely present a topic from the worldview of their school subject or study subject, with the opportunity to express personal critical reflections on this worldview (Boehme 2023, pp. 379–91).

In Germany and Austria, the diversity of religious education subjects (Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, Orthodox, Alevi, and others) along with their alternative subjects (ethics or philosophy) reflects the plurality of worldviews in a pluralistic society. This diversity, which manifests in multiple religious education subjects in most federal states, offers the opportunity to bring children and young people into respectful dialogue between the different worldviews already in school. But how can such a subject-cooperative encounter concept be implemented in European countries where only one subject of religious education is offered? To answer this question, it is advisable to look at the genesis of the concept.

7. Testing the Concept of Learning in Encounter in Schools and Teacher Education

This concept, which was initially only planned in theory by the Protestant Church and the Catholic Church in Berlin (Boehme 2023, pp. 331–74), was realised and scientifically monitored for the first time in 2002/03 at the Staudinger Gesamtschule in Freiburg (Germany). It was further developed in other school projects (an overview in Boehme 2023, pp. 472–74). In 2011 (and in 2013 as additional qualification), this model developed for schools was adapted for training student teachers at the University of Education Heidelberg in cooperation with the University of Education, Karlsruhe, and the University of Jewish Studies, Heidelberg. In addition to gaining the support of a network of universities, the concept was also backed by various departments in teacher education, including those for Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic religious education, as well as each university’s faculty of philosophy and ethics. By working comparatively on a common topic, students became implicitly and explicitly aware of their different worldviews and perspectives. In addition, participants also developed a deeper sense of empathy and the ability to embrace different perspectives. A greater tolerance of ambiguity and improved communication skills were also acquired by students through their learning by co-agency, which included sharing their worldviews in small mixed groups (Boehme and Brodhäcker 2013, 2015; Garcia Sobreira-Majer and Abuzahra 2014; Garcia Sobreira-Majer 2015).

8. Digitalisation and the Internationalisation of the Concept

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic forced the digital expansion of the concept. Students from three German universities met digitally in video conference rooms to discuss their

relevant subjects of study and their personal perspectives on the topic “Narrative traditions and Narrativity” (Boehme and Petermann 2022a).

The experience was so positive that “Learning in Encounter” was organised internationally for the first time in the 2021 summer semester. The three aforementioned German universities, the Heidelberg University of Education, the Karlsruhe University of Education, and the Heidelberg University of Jewish Studies, were joined by the University of Teacher Education Vienna/Krems in Austria and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece. Students of philosophy and Jewish, Islamic, Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox religious education came together via video conference to discuss the topic “Show me your ‘holy’ places...”. The foundation was being laid for an Erasmus+ project.

Two other universities from Turkey joined the project: the University of Ankara and Eskişehir Osmangazi University.

8.1. The Goal of the Erasmus+ Project

The transnational project *Sharing Worldviews: Learning in Encounter for Common Values in Diversity* “wants to encourage the respectful encounter between diverse religious or secular, collective or individual worldviews” and aims “to prepare future generations for peaceful coexistence” (cf. www.sharing-worldviews.com, accessed on 1 September 2024).

Spaces for such encounters are offered on site at one’s own university or school, as well as via video conferencing tools, which offer safe spaces to interact transnationally, share global experiences, benefit from the opportunity of *internationalisation@home*, gain communication skills, and adopt an attitude of appreciation and respect.

8.2. The Results of the Educational Programme “Sharing Worldviews” via a Common Platform

The platform www.sharing-worldviews.com was created during the Erasmus+ project (2021–2024) in order to make the transnational exchange between the partners of the Erasmus+ project sustainable and to give other schools and universities the opportunity to use *Sharing Worldviews* as a concept for learning and understanding. Similar to the goal of the European School Education Platform (ESEP), which started at the end of 2022, it aims to offer opportunities for transnational and transcultural networking. The *Sharing Worldviews* platform aims to contribute to offering young people opportunities to learn about encounters in digital spaces with transnational networking from an early age. Its focus is on promoting understanding and respect between pupils and students from different worldviews, whether these are religious, cultural, or national differences. In this way, *Sharing Worldviews* contributes to aligning school learning with the current educational requirements of digitality, internationality, and plurality. The transnational meeting spaces, made possible by digital video conferencing rooms, allow users to meet peers from other nations, cultures, and religions and to realise *internationalisation@home*.

In order to promote this in schools and universities, the platform www.sharing-worldviews.com offers guidance for teachers as well as teaching materials, which will be expanded in the future. There is also guidance for lecturers and exemplary material to aid in the cooperation between different subject coordinators and faculties within teacher training universities. Evaluation tools can also be accessed. As a special offer, the platform provides an additional qualification for student teachers and teaching staff. The additional qualification enables them to apply the *Sharing Worldviews* concept in schools.

9. The Concept of *Sharing Worldviews* and the “Seven Principles of Learning of the OECD”

The concept *Sharing Worldviews: Learning in Encounter for Common Values in Diversity* fulfils the requirements of the “Seven Principles of Learning” according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), especially if it is realised transnationally (Dumont et al. 2012). The following passage references these seven principles and demonstrates how the *Sharing Worldviews* concept aligns with each principle:

1. *Learners are at the centre*

The concept of *Sharing Worldviews* not only allows but requires pupils or students to construct their learning through engagement and active exploration. This is because the pupils or students must familiarise themselves with the topic in order to be able to present and discuss it;

2. *The social nature of learning is realised*

Neuroscience confirms that we learn through social interaction. “Learning in Encounter”, as described in the four-phase concept, offers social interactions in a variety of ways;

3. *Emotions are integral to learning*

Sharing Worldviews deals with emotions and grievances because learning results from the dynamic interplay of emotion, motivation, and cognition, which are inextricably interwoven;

4. *Individual differences are recognised*

Sharing Worldviews uses and reflects on individual and patterned differences in ways that are sustainable both for the individual learners and for the work of the group as a whole;

5. *Stretching all students*

Sharing Worldviews is sensitive to individual differences and needs. All students are challenged according to their level, and they can reach above their existing level and capacity;

6. *Assessment for learning*

The four phases and their learning environments are very clear about what is expected, what learners are doing, and why. By offering a *safe space*, the concept can thereby promote self-regulated learners;

7. *Building horizontal connections*

A key feature of learning is that complex knowledge structures are built up by organising more basic pieces of knowledge in a hierarchical way. With its spiral approach, the concept of *Sharing Worldviews* is well constructed and can build horizontal connections. Such structures provide an understanding that can be transferred to new situations, and thus equip participants with a critical skill in the 21st century.

Sharing Worldviews is closely associated with the concept of *student agency*, which gives opportunities “to students to learn to navigate by themselves through unfamiliar contexts and find their direction in a meaningful and responsible way, instead of simply receiving fixed instructions or directions from their teachers” (OECD 2019, p. 24). In addition, all three different types of skills of the “OECD Future of Education and Skills 2030” project are taken into account in the *Sharing Worldviews* concept:

- Cognitive and metacognitive skills, which include critical thinking, creative thinking, learning to learn, and self-regulation;
- Social and emotional skills, which include empathy, self-efficacy, responsibility, and collaboration;
- Practical and physical skills, which include using new information and communication technology devices (OECD 2019, p. 89).

This illustrates that *Sharing Worldviews* aligns not only with the “Nature of Learning” as outlined by the OECD in 2012, but also with the skills of the “OECD Learning Compass 2030”.

10. Evaluations: Assessing the Added Value of *Sharing Worldviews*

All iterations of the subject-cooperative worldview encounter learning were evaluated quantitatively and partially qualitatively, though only some of the results have been published to date. Quantitative evaluations of university projects from the summer semesters of 2011, 2014, and 2017 (Boehme and Brodhäcker 2013, 2015; Ratzke 2021) as well as a school project in 2019 (Boehme and Horst 2021) have been published. Additionally, the concept was evaluated in the Erasmus+ project (Mitropoulou et al. 2023; Boehme et al. 2025).

The initial results of the quantitative evaluations of the university projects from the summer semesters of 2011 and 2014, which involved approximately 100 (2011) and 60 (2014) students from the University of Education Heidelberg, University of Jewish Studies, and University of Education Karlsruhe. The projects included five subjects (Jewish Religious Studies, Catholic Theology, Protestant Theology, Islamic Theology, and Philosophy/Ethics), which demonstrate the multifaceted added value of subject-cooperative worldview encounter learning for teacher education (cf. Boehme 2019a, pp. 298–302).

Similar results were found in the evaluations of school projects, such as the 2019 project at *Bammental Gymnasium*. This high school implemented the four-phase concept of encounter learning in the 7th grade (13 years old), conducted it internationally and digitally with video conference tools in the 10th grade (16 years old), and realised it through course stays in one of the Erasmus partner schools on site (e.g., in Thessaloniki) in the 12th grade (18 years old).

Added Value through Learning Growth in One's Own Subject:

Regardless of semester and age, students in the 2011 and 2014 projects reported significant learning gains regarding their own religion in the four phases of the concept (for the project in 2011 cf. Boehme and Brodhäcker 2013; for the project in 2014 cf. Boehme and Brodhäcker 2015). This included students whose subjects did not require religious affiliation, such as ethics students at the University of Education Heidelberg and university students from various disciplines participating from the University of Jewish Studies. This suggests that encounters with individuals of different beliefs or worldviews stimulate insights into one's own religion or worldview (Boehme and Brodhäcker 2015, p. 144).

This finding also applies to school students. A notably high number of students from all participating subjects at Bammental Highschool (67% of 134 students) reported learning more about their own subject through interactions with students of other subjects (Boehme and Horst 2021, p. 286).

Added Value through Interest in Other Religions

Students from the 2011 and 2014 cohorts expressed a strong interest in gaining more knowledge about Judaism (in 2011: 32%) and Islam (in 2011: 35%), while one-third expressed a moderate interest in learning more about Catholic and Protestant Christianity, irrespective of their semester.

In the Bammental survey, a very high percentage of students (92%) stated that they gained more subject knowledge about other religions and cultures during the worldview encounter day. This gain in competencies can be attributed to the student-centred setting of the encounter concept, which not only requires students to prepare content independently but also to present and discuss these topics among themselves (Boehme and Horst 2021, p. 286).

Added Value through Enrichment in Dialogue

Two-thirds of all students (2011: 66.6%) agreed that participating in the discussion groups enriched their experience of diversity. This sentiment was particularly strong among university students from the University of Jewish Studies (84%), who appreciated the enrichment through encounters with students from the University of Education.

Similarly, 81% of school students reported finding the diversity of others enriching. Over half of these students (42%) agreed strongly, while 38.9% agreed moderately (Boehme and Horst 2021, p. 289).

Added Value through Increased Awareness of One's Own (Religious) Position

Three-quarters of students (in 2011: 72.4%; in 2014: 85.4%) reported becoming more aware of their own religious or philosophical stance through encounters with students from other religious or ethical education subjects. In 2011, 31.6% agreed strongly, and 40.8% agreed moderately (Boehme and Brodhäcker 2013, 2015).

Similarly, 44% of 15-year-old students at Bammental Highschool indicated that *Sharing Worldviews* contributed to their self-awareness via interactions with students from Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic religious studies and ethics classes (Boehme and Horst 2021, p. 286).

Pragmatic and Pedagogical Added Value

Almost all students from the 2011 and 2014 cohorts had positive experiences with the cooperative event and supported the inclusion of worldview encounter learning in religious and ethics teacher education (2011: 87.2%; 2014: 93.3%) and its implementation in schools (2011: 76.9%; 2014: 86.5%).

From the students' perspective, this assessment is confirmed. Almost all (94%) students reported experiencing the worldview encounter day as appreciative, with over 60% strongly agreeing. This suggests that students were encouraged to behave respectfully and appreciatively, and this was reciprocated by their peers (Boehme and Horst 2021, p. 288).

The evaluation of the Erasmus+ project similarly confirms these findings (Mitropoulou et al. 2023; Boehme et al. 2025). Initially, a pre-assessment university students' *Sharing Worldviews* Competence Scale questionnaire was developed to measure the "Worldviews" competences and expectations which was given to a Control group of 230 university students (80.4% female, 19.6% male, age 18–53) so as to test the reliability and internal consistency of the items (Javeau 2000, pp. 58–59). The same tool was applied as a post-assessment evaluation tool to the intervention group of 41 university students (85.4% female, 14.6% male, age 20–49) that participated in one of the study days of encounter.

The post-assessment questionnaire includes the items assessed through a 5-point Likert Scale, categorised into five dimensions of competences: 1. *Openness & Spiritual Awareness*; 2. *Behavioural Flexibility*; 3. *Cooperation & Inclusion*; 4. *Communication*; 5. *Metacognitive Competences*.

In Dimension 1. *Openness & Spiritual Awareness*, the responses showed that the intervention group retained a higher mean and statistically significantly more positive positioning in almost all cases (Mann–Witney U test: $U = 3750$, $p = 0.015$). Also, in Dimension 2. *Behavioural Flexibility*, the analysis showed a higher mean and the positive positioning of the intervention group compared with the control group in most of the statements, but these did not reveal any statistically significant differences.

However, statistically significant differences were found for the other three dimensions. The group of students who took part in the four-phase concept of *Sharing Worldviews* had statistically significantly more positive stances in Dimension 3. *Cooperation & Inclusion* ($U = 3903$, $p = 0.034$), 4. *Communication* ($U = 3980.5$, $p = 0.040$), and 5. *Metacognitive Competences* ($U = 3758.5$, $p = 0.012$). These results show the benefits of the concept of "Sharing Worldviews" for transnational education (Boehme et al. 2025).

11. Conclusions

As has been demonstrated, the *Sharing Worldviews* concept responds to the current demands on promoting tolerance and the acceptance of diversity and democracy education. It can contribute to children and young people acquiring the skills deemed necessary by the OECD for future education, both in schools and universities, and in both physical encounters at schools on site and national or international digital video conferencing communication.

Therefore, in the future, it will be essential to utilise the platforms established by the European Union, such as eTwinning (since 2005) for schools and ESEP (since 2022), for universities and teacher education to promote *Sharing Worldviews* and similar projects focused on international, interreligious, and inter-worldview encounters, understanding, peaceful coexistence, and social cohesion.

Supplementary Materials: “Sharing Worldviews” explained simply: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XO63s7UdG7U>. Supporting information can be downloaded at <http://www.sharing-worldviews.com>.

Funding: Erasmus+ project “Sharing Worldviews: Learning in Encounter for Common Values” (2021–2024).

Institutional Review Board Statement: The mentioned studies did not require ethical approval.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article. Further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

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