

# Att möta det levda

## Möjligheter och hinder för förståelse av levd religion i en studiebesöksorienterad religionskunskapsundervisning

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### Abstract

*Facing the Lived. Opportunities and barriers for understanding lived religion in field visit-oriented RE-teaching*

The general aim of this study is to develop knowledge about how field visit-oriented religious teaching can contribute to students' understanding of lived religion, in terms of inner diversity, religious practice and experiential dimensions. Previous research about Religious education (RE) shows that the Swedish non-confessional school subject "Religion" mainly deals with history, dogmas and concepts. Few students are concerned with the subject-matter itself in RE. "Secular" students talk about religion as something old-fashioned that concerns "the others". On the other hand, students who identify themselves religiously do not recognize what is being taught in school about their own tradition, since they miss perspectives concerning religion as part of everyday life, i.e., lived religion. A growing interest in individuals' lived religion has also been identified in the field of religious studies. These circumstances related to field of RE serve as motivational ground for the present doctoral thesis.

This thesis investigates designed RE-teaching in lower secondary school (year nine). The teaching design draws on findings reported in the licentiate thesis (Britton 2014). Three theoretical approaches are used and integrated in a theoretical framework. The approaches applied to define and operationalize students' *understanding of lived religion* are selected parts of Michail Bachtin's (1997) dialogue theory, Robert Jackson's (2002) interpretive approach of Religious education, and Meredith McGuire's (2008) religion sociology theories about lived religion.

The empirical data were produced from selected parts of an enacted teaching design about Buddhism, including a field visit to a Tibetan-Buddhist congregation. The data consist of grade nine students' oral and written utterances from a lesson sequence, including lesson recordings, student journals, lesson exercises, assignments, group discussions and an examination. In addition, follow-up interviews were conducted with students, the teacher and the temple representative. Data were analysed using the integrated theoretical-analytical framework, in order to provide knowledge about what opportunities and obstacles in religious teaching that contribute to students' understandings of lived religion.

Three main results emerged. First, students' personal perspectives and values of religion in general, and of the religious tradition studied (Buddhism) in particular, are important parts of students' understanding of lived religion. From students' responses, some perspectives that interfered with their understanding of lived (Buddhist) religion were identified: student understandings that touch upon the links between individual freedom and religion; the relation between belief and religious practice and experiences; and 'Western Buddhism' in relation to Buddhism outside the West. Second, three didactical tools were constructed, aiming to develop RE teaching to further facilitate students' understanding of lived religion: individual perspective, a diversity model and self-reflection. Didactical questions about representation, safe space and self-reflexivity came up. Third, there is support for arguing that lived religion as a perspective in the Swedish school subject of religion can be a *goal* as well as *means* to create a more inclusive religious education.

**Keywords:** *lived religion, field visit, site visit, Buddhist tradition, representation, inner diversity, self-reflection, interpretive approach, dialog theory, students' understanding, teaching, educational development, religious education.*

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