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International Knowledge Transfer in Religious Education and the Debate on Powerful Knowledge

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Introduction

The project on International Knowledge Transfer (IKT) in Religious Education (RE) is a scholarly project that contributes to the idea that religious education should become an integrated field of research on an international level. It deals with different types of knowledge and asks: What exactly is meant by "knowledge" in religious education? And to what degree is knowledge in religious education transferable or even universal? IKT is not specifically a project on what knowledge is taught in the classroom of RE but more on the need for international cooperation in the field of religious education and for transfer of knowledge. The point of departure of this chapter is that there are several aspects in the IKT project that can be related to the debate of the concept of Powerful

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Knowledge (PK) with a special emphasis on Religious Education (RE) as a school subject in most European countries. A first aspect is that "knowledge" is central to both projects and maybe some overlapping concerns of how the term is used can be identified. A second aspect is that the central questions of the IKT project "What kinds of knowledge are transferred?" and "Is there knowledge in RE that can be applied internationally?" are also relevant for the debate on PK for RE. If knowledge is "powerful", transfer and international reputation could be productive. A third aspect is that both projects stimulate the discussion about the place and value of knowledge in teaching and learning in school.

For both projects the context of RE matters. It is shaped by the fact that, on the one hand, education and religious education are strongly rooted in different cultural or national contexts (cf. Schreiner 2018a); on the other hand, trends of internationalization and globalization are obvious and influence the domains of education, religious education and their relation to research. In both domains, international projects and networks prove the surplus of a development towards more internationalization as is also confirmed by this book.[1]

The two mentioned projects are therefore influenced by developments that go beyond national concerns and manifest a European and international dimension. This includes a trend of marginalization of RE as a school subject irrespective of the national or local approach of RE (cf. Schweitzer, 2021; Schreiner, 2020), developments of a re-nationalization (example of Brexit; Bergmann, 2017; Brøgger et al., 2022) which question international cooperation, an irritation concerning content and aims of RE—closely connected to the trend of marginalization—and finally an increasing global governance in education and a lack of recognition of RE in studies, projects and statements of international organizations. In this situation where RE is contested—for different reasons—the aim of high-quality teaching is introduced as a request and a sustaining marker for the future development of RE (cf. Ofsted, 2021; Schweitzer, 2020). This aim needs a solid academic basis and a more integrated field of research than it exists today. Also, the question on how teaching of religions can and should be designed and developed is important here. A

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[1] Examples of international initiatives are introduced in Schreiner (2012, pp. 69–76).

leading perspective of this chapter is to argue for religious education as a task of the school and for "religions friendly concepts of education" based on a comprehensive concept of education including the existential perspective.[2]

Firstly, some contexts of RE for both projects are introduced. Then the project on International Knowledge Transfer in Religious Education is briefly presented. I will elaborate the discussion on Powerful Knowledge in Religious Education, and finally, the two initiatives are discussed with a focus on common concerns and challenges.

Contexts

This part introduces contemporary contexts or perspectives that influence the situation and discussion on Religious Education as a school subject in Europe. It is based on the concluding chapter of the book on IKT (Schreiner & Schweitzer, 2021b, p. 264f.) and mentions issues that need further research. The analysis argues that these points are relevant for both the IKT initiative and the discussion on PK in RE.

The *first context* refers to the observation that religious education is in a crisis or indeed in a situation of marginalization (cf. Schweitzer, 2021; Schreiner, 2020). This goes along with a controversial discussion concerning RE's purpose and place in school and in school education (cf. Schreiner 2018a; Schweitzer 2018). While some countries have decided not to teach religion in public schools (cf. France or Slovak Republic), others follow different approaches ranging from confessional approaches with involvement of religious communities to religious studies approaches exclusively organized by the state (cf. Jackson et al., 2007; Schreiner, 2018b). Indicators of a marginalization are the place of RE in the curriculum, a lack of qualified teachers in many contexts (cf. for England: Commission, 2018), uncertainty about the aims of RE and the general dynamics of education, dominated by trends of economization and functionalization of RE which also affect and influence RE. It is remarkable that the trend of marginalization does not correlate with a specific

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[2] This perspective is supported by different contributions in G. Biesta and P. Hannam (eds.) (2021).

existing approach but can be observed in different contexts (such as Sweden, England and Germany, cf. Schreiner, 2020).

A *second perspective* is related to developments which question international cooperation as well as long established political cooperation in general. Some of the international relationships and institutions have come under pressure not least due to a revival of the "national" and increasing tensions on a European and international level. Extremism and right-wing populism are two of the related phenomena which also matter for shaping context and content of education. A double challenge exists: (re-)nationalizing trends confront transnational cooperation in education policy (Brøgger et al., 2022). Additionally, the dynamic of the global COVID-19 pandemic profoundly changed the situation of international cooperation and exchange. Since 2020 face-to-face meetings could not take place for a long time, and conferences and exchanges via ZOOM or other video tools bring along a limited potential of encounter. The impact of COVID-19 on teaching and schooling in general and its effects on cooperation are not yet evaluated properly.[3]

A *third aspect* refers to the content and aims of RE. Where are common content-related challenges for RE irrespective of its context shaped approaches? Here we refer more on the extrinsic expectations of RE's contribution to societal problems nationally and internationally. No doubt that for a long-time education for peace and democracy and democratic citizenship belong to the expectation of a profound contribution of RE, coming now under pressure after the brutal war that Russia started in February 2022 against the Ukraine. This war is labelled by many politicians as a historical turning point for a peaceful living together and cooperation in Europe and worldwide. Although this horrifying situation has its roots in disrespecting international law, violating principles of human rights, disregarding the integrity of national territories, the urgent need of dialogue and cooperation should not be relativized as well as

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[3] A comparative study about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on education is published by UNESCO and IAE (2022) edited by Karin Meinck, Julian Fraillon and Rolf Strietholt that brings together findings from selected countries in different continents.

initiatives of peace education including the message of many religions of peace and reconciliation should be communicated and supported.

Other national and global challenges exist and influence the question of possible content of education and RE: The issues of climate change (cf. Leganger-Krogstad, 2021; Schluß, 2021) and the dynamic development of digitalisation (cf. EKD, 2022) are two current fields that need more attention in education and in RE. In addition, the increasing transnational situation of life worlds and their consequences for education and schooling must be considered (cf. Heidrich et al., 2021). All these items include challenges and potential of further development when it comes to PK in RE and to IKT. Concerning the understanding that "knowledge is 'powerful' because it frees those who have access to it and enables them to envisage alternative and new possibilities" (Young & Muller, 2013, p. 245), questions can be raised what exactly "powerful" means in this current situation, and what type of knowledge is "powerful" (cf. Alderson, 2020; Gericke et al., 2018; Nordgren, 2017, 2021).[4] Is it the "power" of destructive forces that damage dialogue and cooperation, or is there another type of "powerful" that can resist and contradict those forces of devastation that acts against any human dignity, and right? The meaning of "powerful" must be more specific in this context.

A *final point* should take account of the increasing global governance in education and of the lack of recognition of RE in studies and statements from international organisations. Here again the activities of international networks and associations in religious education should play a stronger role in future following a twin-track approach: by promoting common initiatives to strengthen religious education as an academic discipline (cf. Miedema, 2020, 2021a, b) and by re-confirming RE as an important school subject that contributes substantially to aims of general education based on mutual transfer and sharing of valid knowledge (cf. Böhme et al., 2021; Francis et al., 2021).

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[4] Interestingly, the book edited by Mark Chater with the title *Reforming RE. Power and Knowledge in a Worldviews Curriculum* (2020) that brings together contributions referring to the proposed new curriculum in England "Religion and Worldviews" (cf. Commission 2018), does not refer to "powerful knowledge" explicitly but speaks of a "knowledge-rich" curriculum.

The Project on International Knowledge Transfer in Religious Education

Starting Point

A joint initiative of the Comenius Institute in Münster and the Department of Religious Education, University of Tübingen, brought together scholars from seven countries for two consultations on issues of IKT in RE in Berlin in 2018 and 2019 (cf. Schweitzer, 2019). During these consultations, the plan for drafting and publishing a manifesto on international knowledge transfer in religious education was developed. The manifesto is a first outcome of the project. It outlines the challenge that compared to other fields of knowledge such as the natural sciences or medical research, the field of religious education has not reached the point at which one could speak of an integrated international field of research. A leading question is, "Can religious education be viewed, at least in part, as a research discipline producing results which are of international importance for both, theoretical and empirical insights and also in terms of their applicability in practices in religious education?" (Manifesto in Schweitzer & Schreiner 2021, pp. 267–271, quote p. 268). It is mentioned that although in many countries a strong tendency exists towards developing religious education as a field of research of its own right (cf. Schweitzer & Boschki, 2018), it certainly is not the rule that research results on religious education are considered of interest beyond the given country. This could also be related to the discussion of PK in RE. Is this a national bounded discourse or are scholars in different countries involved, and what does that mean for developing this concept further? A second outcome of the project is a publication that brings together contributions of the second consultation describing processes of IKT in the practice of RE and in RE teacher education as well as research projects of IKT in academic religious education (Schweitzer & Schreiner, 2021).

Questions and Clarifications

It was clear from the beginning of the project that the manifesto and the chapters of the mentioned book should not be received as final products but as creative contributions and as an invitation for further discussion and discourse to identify common ground as well as controversial issues of IKT. The manifesto has been distributed and published in several leading journals in different countries and a special issue of the journal *Zeitschrift für Pädagogik und Theologie* was dedicated to the ongoing discussion (ZPT, 2021).

Throughout the manifesto and the chapters of the book, a need for clarification and agreement is expressed along the following questions:

- What exactly is meant by "knowledge" in religious education, and what kinds of knowledge are transferred?
- What "transfer" means, and what makes such transfer possible?
- Is there knowledge in religious education that can be applied internationally and by whom?
- How can the national and the international context be productively connected with each other?
- Which concept or understanding of "international" should be used when it comes to transfer of knowledge? (cf. Schweitzer, & Schreiner, 2021, p. 269).

The process aims not to figure out ready-made answers to these questions but to initiate an ongoing dialogue and exchange among scholars about the questions.

Where Is the Project Now?

The editors of the book have drawn some conclusions, open questions, and concerns from the chapters with a focus on the three main terms of the project, "international", "knowledge", and "transfer".

The following conditions and questions were identified concerning "international":

- The lasting influence of the nation state in education.
- The need for balance between different audiences and contexts of cooperation. "The closer religious education wants to be to the various forms of educational practice, the more it needs to be aware of national or even regional and local audiences. The more religious education wants to follow the lead of other academic disciplines and to enjoy the benefits of worldwide cooperation, the more it needs to address international audiences." (Schreiner & Schweitzer, 2021b, p. 260)
- How can an adequate balance between publications in English and publications in other languages be achieved?
- Is internationalization a promising future for religious education as an academic discipline?
- How much effort should be invested in transforming religious education into a fully international endeavour?

Concerning the understanding of the term "knowledge", the complexity of the body of knowledge which is constitutive of religious education was underlined.

Among the range of questions, the following two seem of special importance:

- What further research is needed to collect, delineate and integrate the knowledge which exists in religious education? What role, for example, should the analysis of journals and textbooks play in this context? What other sources should be taken into consideration?
- Can there be a cumulative progression in the knowledge production of religious education?

In the introductory chapter of the book, a systematic overview on types of knowledge in religious education is presented as far as it is related to the school subject of RE. This includes:

- *Philosophy of science/of the discipline* with foundational questions about the nature of the discipline.
- *General knowledge concerning religion* (subject matter, imported from other disciplines) that includes theology, religious studies, psychology of religion, sociology of religion, cultural studies, philosophy of education/educational research, political science, and so on.
- *Knowledge concerning research methods, methodologies and approaches.*
- *Knowledge generated by academic religious education* (historical, theoretical, empirical, comparative, evaluative) that includes the history of the school subject and of the academic discipline; theories concerning the aims, processes, and outcomes of RE; quantitative and qualitative results of respective studies, for example, on international, interdenominational and interreligious character of RE as well as RE in relation to "competing" or alternative subjects (ethics, citizenship education, etc.).
- *Knowledge generated in practice* with a focus on teachers as researchers
- *Knowledge concerning the training of religious educators* including models of teacher education, theories of teaching/learning/development and curricula for teacher education.
- *Professional knowledge of teachers* of RE concerning the subject area, subject-related didactics, orientative knowledge concerning RE, knowledge of pedagogy and psychology as well as knowledge concerning professional identity, roles and responsibilities.
- *Knowledge to be acquired by the pupils/students* as documented in the curriculum and description of competences. (cf. Schweitzer & Schreiner, 2021, p. 26)

Considering these different types of knowledge, identified for religious education, it can be observed that the list includes both references to rather general questions like teaching and learning and topics which are closely related to national or even regional rulings and presuppositions. It demonstrates also that knowledge to be acquired by students that can be labelled "powerful knowledge" is just one area where knowledge matters for RE in the project on IKT. As it will be argued later in this chapter, connections and relations to PK can be identified and discussed.

The types of knowledge preferable for transfer were identified as follows:

- *transferable knowledge* produced not by "methodological nationalism" (Ulrich Beck) but taking account of the radical metamorphosis towards a more cosmopolitan society and related research to that development.
- *valid knowledge* produced by academic research organized beyond national boundaries.
- *common cumulative knowledge* not as a problem-solver but for analysing (common) problems. (cf. Schreiner & Schweitzer, 2021a, p. 26)

Knowledge Transfer

The focus in the text of the manifesto concerning "transfer" is "to share knowledge rather than just trying to transfer it in the sense of handing on packages of fixed knowledge" (Schreiner & Schweitzer, 2021b, p. 263). This understanding of sharing must include the joint production of knowledge in research projects which are not limited to researchers in one country. And again this seems to be a common challenge for PK in RE and for IKT.

A current example from which one can learn is the READY project (Religious Education and Diversity, cf. Schreiner, 2018b, 2021) in which encounters and exchange of teacher students and teacher educators in religious education from different European countries provided a space for dealing with the increasing diversity in the RE classroom from the perspective of varied RE approaches in the participating countries. Although READY was not designed as a research project, the issue of knowledge transfer through national and multi-national meetings came up constantly and a contested issue was about the kind of knowledge about religions and worldviews may be a candidate to form a theoretical and practical basis for RE. It can be stated that a kind of overlapping consensus about these issues could be reached between the different approaches to RE. As one expert stressed, the "European lens" has become an image for "enabling us to recognize the dominant characteristics of our own Religious Educations" (Pearce, 2018, p. 86). The guiding vision

of such programmes seems to create elements of an integrated (European) space of knowledge and research, based on academic cooperation throughout the Union and beyond.

Also, the idea of improved international partnerships in religious education research is mentioned. "Such partnerships make sense concerning knowledge gained in academic research as well as concerning the experiential knowledge to be found with practitioners in the field." (Schreiner & Schweitzer, 2021b, p. 263)

In addition to international-comparative research, recent research in the history of (religious) education has focused on transnational phenomena including the bilateral or multilateral exchange of ideas, at the level of individuals or groups (cf. Möller & Wischmeyer, 2013; Käbisch & Wischmeyer, 2018). Unlike international approaches, the transnational perspective is not intended to limit itself to the level of one or several nations which has led to the (re-)discovery of many exchanges and connections at various levels of exchange and cooperation between individuals or groups. The importance of both international and transnational perspectives for religious education has been successfully demonstrated.

In sum, internationalization has come to play a major role in the discipline of religious education which is why the question of international knowledge transfer deserves more attention. If international cooperation should mean more than getting together and giving each other new inspirations (which, most likely, will remain an important aspect of internationalization) and if cooperation in research and theory-building should be the more far-reaching aim, a few additional questions must be addressed. One of these questions refers to the question of validity upon which the possibility of international cooperation and knowledge transfer can be seen to hinge.

Some Aspects on Powerful Knowledge and RE

A first observation is that the concept of "Powerful Knowledge" (PK) is rarely related to Religious Education and no surprise therefore not mentioned in the project of IKT in RE, at least not explicitly. One reason for

that could be the emphasis on natural sciences and less on Humanities to which the study of religion belongs. PK is related to maths, science, history, geography and English but not to other subjects like RE. This has to do with the different "knowledge structure" as Johan Muller and Michael Young stress: "they (Humanities) were not in the first instance marked out by hierarchical structures of concepts in the same way as were the sciences" (Muller & Young, 2019, p. 3). Nevertheless, some common concerns and perspectives can be identified. The first point is that both projects IKT and PK in RE engage with a concept of knowledge qualified by certainty, reliability, objectivity and even truth. And the request of high-quality teaching can be easily related to the discussion on which knowledge should be "used" for RE. The conviction that value and relevance of academic knowledge stem "from the disciplines" is appreciated in both projects. Two questions should be handled in the following paragraph: What exactly is Powerful Knowledge, and is it transferable? And, What makes knowledge powerful?

Michael Young, the main promoter of PK, differentiates knowledge from opinions and experience, states that not all knowledge is the same and that to produce new specialized knowledge requires specialist institutions like universities and research institutes (cf. Young & Muller, 2013, p. 230f.). PK is systematic and specialized. It highlights the importance of the disciplinary knowledge in educational science in general and in subject didactics in particular. PK refers to the aspects of knowledge towards which teaching should be oriented (cf. Gericke et al., 2018, p. 428). It means the knowledge pursued and taught by specialized disciplinary groups. In a recent article, Muller and Young (2019) summarize different "senses" of "powerful" as an essence of the debate so far, receptive of contributions from academic colleagues:

- *Power and academic disciplines.* "Disciplinary power is referred in two ways. First, the justification for disciplines as a community of self-governing peers is made on the basis that they produce specialized discourses that regulate and ensure reliability, revisability, and emergence. (…) Disciplinary meaning is meaning that is generative, in that it establishes an indirect relation of meaning between the concept and an aspect of the world." (Muller & Young, 2019, p. 14)

- *Power and the school curriculum.* Here the "undeniable" epistemic relation between the substantive domain of a subject and the subject itself is mentioned. Also the need of sequenced content and topic progression is highlighted as characteristics of teaching a subject.
- *Power as a generative capacity: the capacity to generate new ideas.* When teachers are successful mediators of the transformative capacity of PK in their subject, "the pupils become empowered in a range of ways: in the quality of their discernment and judgement; in their appreciation of the range and reach of the substantive and conceptual fields of the subject; and in their appreciation that the substantive detail they have learnt is only part of what the hinterland of the subject has to offer." (Muller & Young, 2019, p. 15)

At this point, it seems helpful to discuss the position of "knowledge" in learning and teaching. A critique on PK states that knowledge is not an end in itself, but a means to a larger purpose of education (cf. White, 2019, p. 433; White, 2018). And Priscilla Alderson states, "Knowledge alone is powerless. Its authority is ascribed, not intrinsic." (Alderson, 2020, p. 101). So the question is not what should students know, but "about how we can help our children and students to engage with, and thus come into, the world" (Biesta, 2013, p. 5).

It is a marker of RE that it is mainly based on a comprehensive understanding of education, where knowledge plays a crucial role but also other elements of competence such as attitudes, skills and volition. Practical know-how, personal development and learning to become a citizen of a democratic society needs more than powerful knowledge, although it does not contradict these aims (hopefully). Religious orientation or religious literacy means more than just receiving knowledge, and even general education should not be reduced on the pursuit of theoretical knowledge as a priority. Gert Biesta and Patricia Hannam (2021) states concerning knowledge in RE: "religious education is not only about what we want children and young people to know, but also about what we hope they will be able to do with what they know" (ibid., p. 148). This position takes the "subject-ness" of the student seriously and mentions the dimension of "subjectivication" as a central perspective and ambition for education beside qualification and socialization (cf. Biesta, 2021).

This includes looking beyond religion as an object of study and taking the existential dimension of religion seriously.[5] In the German context, general aims of RE include the provision of "religious orientation" that supports identity formation and the ability for plurality. This perspective cannot be reduced to the transmission of subject-specific knowledge (cf. Kirchenamt, 2014).

Jim Hordern (2021) sees PK as an inadequate basis for social justice and emphasize also that knowledge is never "for its own sake" but always in pursuit of something "at stake" (Hordern, 2021, p. 1). He is in line with increasing critique from sociologists, curriculum theorists and philosophers of education that the approach is "epistemologically unsound" and "misunderstands the nature and value of experience" (Hordern, 2021, p. 2).

In his paper, he argues "that PK can be usefully reconsidered in the light of the idea of normative practice (…) This provides for a fuller understanding of processes and accountabilities which are not discussed in the PK thesis, and a more incisive grasp on the relation between knowledge, knowing and experience" (Hordern, 2017, p. 3).

John White (2019) hesitates if "powerful" is the right term to characterize knowledge taught in school subjects, not least because of its popularity among politicians who use the term for their own purposes. He discusses the different "senses" used by Young who relates PK to academic disciplines, school subjects and also the "power as a generative capacity" that means a power to generate new ideas. White proposes the use of "specialized knowledge" because the definition of "power" and "powerful" is not clear and too vague for him. A motif for his position is also the fact that PK has tended to be associated only with a small range of subjects like maths, science and history/geography. Other subjects such as music or religious education are not even mentioned.

An element that can create a link between PK and IKT is the character of specialized knowledge according to Young. He states, "specialized knowledge is produced by social conditions and contexts but cannot be reduced to them. (…) However, the value of the knowledge is *independent* (italics in the original) of these originary contexts and their agents.

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[5] This is elaborated in Biesta and Hannam (2021).

If it is not, if knowledge remains 'contextual', then specialization and therefore the reliability and (and in the sense we have used the term up to now) the 'power' of the knowledge will in a determinable sense remain limited" (Young & Muller, 2013, p. 237). It is here that a distinction between human and social sciences and natural sciences is made in the sense that the first-mentioned sciences are more "contextual" than the natural sciences. Exactly this tension between the relation of the contextual and generative knowledge that is valid beyond a specific context is also a crucial issue in the discourse of IKT.

A step forward in this discussion is the use of Bernstein's concept of a hierarchical knowledge structure (cf. Hordern, 2017). The basis is that different knowledge structures and their underlying theory differ in terms of their degree of verticality. Bernstein distinguishes between two distinct knowledge structures named vertical (that is specialized and systemically principled) and horizontal (that is "local, context-dependent", "everyday" and "common sense", cf. Hordern, 2017, p. 192). These forms are not reducible to one another. Vertical means specialized and horizontal refers to internal relations—theories and relations between sets of concepts—accrue not by one subsuming the other, but by the addition of parallel theories.

Young took the idea of verticality as a descriptor of knowledge for the curriculum.

So far, a possible relation between Religious Education and Powerful knowledge has not been discussed properly. An exemption is Richard Kueh's contribution as a manifesto for the future of RE (Kueh, 2018). He explores various attempts to promote educational clarity and security "in a given uncertain situation of RE" (in England). Kueh reflects on elements of marginalization and vulnerability and brings together arguments how to improve the situation. "If there is any hope of finding a workable model for RE, then practitioners and theoreticians must recognize the urgent need to gain momentum behind an agreed understanding of the knowledge it confers" (Kueh, 2018, p. 53). His chapter explore concepts of "deep" and "powerful" knowledge. We focus here on his arguments concerning "powerful" knowledge. Kueh's hope is that this concept can support the initiative to clarify "the intrinsic knowledge-basis for RE" (57) and to shape a "knowledge-based curriculum" (ibid.).

Richard Kueh relates the PK discussion to RE by dealing explicitly with the "knowledge problem" of RE. For him to find "a workable model for RE", the need is "to gain momentum behind an agreed understanding of the knowledge that it (RE) confers" (Kueh, 2018, p. 53). Consequently, he prefers "a knowledge-based curriculum that focuses upon the intrinsic value of that knowledge" (ibid., p. 56).

Other motifs of curricular expression that he is not in favour are the demands of the economy (an instrumental curriculum) or the individual's well-being and personal flourishing (an enrichment curriculum). The preferred knowledge-based curriculum is related to Michael Young's idea that "there is a core body of knowledge that students should know and that is supremely central to the identity and purposes of schools" (Kueh, 2018, p. 62). Michael Young's concept is helpful for RE, according to Kueh, because "it gives academic legitimacy to a subject discipline that navigates beliefs, practices, truth claims, self-understandings, cultures, traditions and narratives" (Kueh, 2018, p. 63). Kueh elaborates five principles as implicitly valuable for RE:

1. PK in RE brings *substantive knowledge* into the realm of *disciplinary knowledge* through concepts.
2. PK in RE is rooted in the way "the world is." It has the capacity to change or transform and is defined "by the global and historical patterns of religion and belief". (Kueh, 2018, p. 65)
3. PK in RE "confronts the questions of truth, evidence and proof and how these, in turn, come to bear on meaning". (p. 65)
4. PK in RE requires critical engagement with the concepts of identity and culture as they relate to human meaning.
5. PK recognizes that learners are citizens on an inherently diverse world. (cf. Kueh, 2018, p. 65f.)

In sum, he mentions: "For Religious Education, powerful knowledge constitutes the concepts that unlock a greater understanding of the world; of the religions of the people who inhabit it; of human cultures and societies; of beliefs and values; of language and text; and of interpretation and thought" (Kueh, 2018, p. 67).

Although Kueh's analysis includes an either/or perspective on the mentioned motifs of an RE curriculum, qualification (not only as demands from economy) and individual's well-being are also legitimate educational perspectives where RE should contribute to (cf. Biesta, 2021) his view is partly convincing that solid knowledge should be central to RE. Surprisingly his concluding points are not necessarily linked to any content named "powerful", and it is still not clear why PK can bring such a change for the question on content in RE.

A preliminary conclusion at this point is that the relation between PK and RE should be further discussed and developed.

Common Concerns and Challenges

The presentation of both the project on International Knowledge Transfer in RE and the discourse on Powerful Knowledge in RE lay ground to finally introduce common concerns, and also challenges that need further reflection and development. The following points should not be seen as a final list but as food for thought for further exchange and dialogue.

- The first point is that in both projects the question of the validity of knowledge in religious education is taken up and discussed. For IKT this is mentioned as a presupposition of international transfer and cooperation and reflects the fact that more and more empirical research activities take place on basics and issues of RE in a comparative and cumulative organized way internationally (cf. Schweitzer & Boschki, 2018; Schweitzer et al., 2019). Special attention is given to the relationship between universal and contextual elements or dimensions of knowledge in religious education and their epistemological implications. This development is supported by the fact that in many contexts religious education has been established as an academic discipline of its own, working with an interdisciplinary perspective. The question, "How can the national and the international context be productively connected to each other?" is a continuing challenge for activities of knowledge transfer. It also raises the question if a concept such as "Powerful Knowledge" that derives in a specific context is transferable

and useful beyond this specific context. For Muller and Young, there is no doubt about that, because "potentially, everyone can have this power (of knowledge), it is infinitely transferable" (Muller & Young, 2019, p. 3). It could be developed further by initiatives of fleshing out curricula by international cooperation (cf. Schweitzer, 2021, p. 156f.).

- A second point is the value of "knowledge" as such for education. In both concepts, knowledge is not seen as an end in itself but is linked to the debate about the general purpose of education and of religious education. A critique of PK is that other dimensions of education are not equally valued by the concept of PK. We should not be satisfied with knowledge alone when it comes to education. As Alderson expressed, "All students need education that combines social usefulness with personal relevance, with access to the knowledge, values and skills that will help them through their personal and working lives" (Alderson, 2019, p. 104). The concept of "competence", especially promoted internationally through PISA, refers to the cognitive abilities and skills available to or learnable by individuals in order to solve specific problems, as well as the motivational, volitional and social readiness so that the problem solutions can be used successfully and responsibly in variable situations. So the shift is from what should student know to what should students be able to do.

- Often knowledge is overestimated as an aim of education, and the intention, purpose and use of knowledge is not clear. Other views in education philosophy that overcome an exclusive focus on knowledge should be included. Tobin Hart (2007) has developed a map of the depths of knowing and learning on the journey "from information to transformation" (as the title of his book suggests) that can enhance the debate. He proposes a process moving through six interrelated layers. "As the surface layer, *information* is given the rightful place as currency for the educational exchange. Information can then open up into *knowledge*, where direct experience often brings together the bits of information into the whole of mastery and skill. Knowledge opens the possibility of intentionally cultivating *intelligence*, which can cut, shape, and create information and knowledge through the dialectic of the intuitive and analytic. Further down lies *understanding*, which takes us beyond the power of intelligence to look through the eye of

the heart, a way of knowing that serves character and community. Experience then has the possibility for cultivating *wisdom*, which blends insight into what is true with and ethic of what is right. Ultimately, the depths lead to the possibility of *transformation*." (Hart, 2007, p. 2)

- School subjects and the academic disciplines have different aims. Transfer and sharing are needed that respects the different systems and dynamics. The role of school subjects is not to produce new knowledge, which could be said to be the main purpose of the academic disciplines. Content knowledge needs to be adapted into educational processes that are connected to the life world of the students as well as to the teachers understanding and perspective. "Knowledge" is used differently in IKT and in PK. While IKT has its focus on the transfer of valid knowledge that is based on research based on a broad list of different types of knowledge, all relevant for RE, PK's concern is about one segment of this list, the knowledge that lay ground for curricula development and teaching in the classroom. It has become obvious that those who discuss PK critically refer to the fact that school education and the aim of school subjects include more than transferring knowledge, incorporating educational goals relating to, for example, values (equality, democracy and so on) and skills (critical thinking, action competence). Gert Biesta suggests that education always needs to orient itself to three "domains of purpose", to which he refers as qualification, socialization and subjectification (cf. Biesta, 2021). Being aware of the need of a meaningful balance between all three, especially the third domain, is relevant for RE, that is to "encourage students to take up their subject-ness, that is, to become subjects of their own life, rather than objects of what other people or forces may want them to be" (Biesta & Hannam, 2021, p. 3). It could mean that in the domain of qualification, RE "has an important role to play in providing pupils and students with knowledge and understanding about religion, religions and the religious, and with the skills to use such knowledge and understanding wisely" (Biesta, 2021, pp. 12–13).

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