Boundaries of Religious Freedom:
Regulating Religion in Diverse Societies 4

Jenny Berglund
Yafa Shanneik
Brian Bocking *Editors*

Religious Education in a Global-Local World

Boundaries of Religious Freedom: Regulating Religion in Diverse Societies

Volume 4

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Processes of globalization have resulted in increasingly culturally and religiously diverse societies. In addition, religion is occupying a more prominent place in the public sphere at the turn of the 21st Century, despite predictions of religious decline. The rise in religious diversity, and in the salience of religious identity, is posing both challenges and opportunities pertaining to issues of governance. Indeed, a series of tensions have arisen between state and religious actors regarding a variety of matters including burial rites, religious education and gender equality. Many of these debates have focused on the need for, and limits of, religious freedom especially in situations where certain religious practices risk impinging upon the freedom of others. Moreover, different responses to religious pluralism are often informed by the relationship between religion and state in each society. Due to the changing nature of societies, most have needed to define, or redefine, the boundaries of religious freedom reflected in laws, policies and the design and use of public spaces. These boundaries, however, continue to be contested, debated and reviewed, at local, national and global levels of governance.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Jenny Berglund, Yafa Shanneik, and Brian Bocking

Modern states energetically promote free—and compulsory—education for all as the key to future prosperity. This means that, beyond a small private education sector, the overwhelming majority of children who will be educated in the twenty-first century, from any faith background including the whole range of "secular" worldviews, will receive their education through a state-funded system. Meanwhile inexorable processes of globalization—including the globalization of religious knowledge, as well as migration—ensure that modern societies, despite fostering uniform values in some areas of life, are increasingly diverse in matters of religion. The proliferating twenty-first century emphasis on individual human rights, combined with the extremely high status of religious rights within that discourse, means that so-called "public" education, including religious education (RE) in its diverse empirical forms, increasingly finds itself in intricate and contentious negotiation with so-called "private" religion.

Those already involved in religious education, whether teaching in the classroom, intending to do so, or training future teachers, will be to a greater or lesser extent aware of this complex negotiation and its effects on their profession in their own "local" context.

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The chapters in this volume vividly illustrate that even analyzing the local context requires intimate knowledge of the specific historical, political and religious factors involved. Yet RE, like education in general, can in the twenty-first century no longer be understood only in local terms; international flows and events make the local "glocal" (see Bråten [this volume]). By juxtaposing analyses of RE in different countries in this book we seek to highlight, not least by the act of comparison itself, both the common and the unique issues arising in different cultural contexts and the various approaches to RE—whether passively inherited, energetically proposed or actually (but seldom unproblematically) adopted—which attempt to address these issues.

1.1 Models of Religious Education

In each country, religious education has been and will continue to be shaped by a multiplicity of factors including the structure of the country's educational system, its "church–state" relations, its history, its politics, its migration patterns and so forth. The country's "religious disposition" as a cumulation of the above factors at a particular point in time is thus of importance. It is widely recognized that the dominance of one particular religious tradition in a country often impacts heavily on both church–state relations and the educational system of that country, even where "religious freedom" is guaranteed in law (Schreiner 2002: 87). In debates about RE in very different national contexts, two models of "religious education" are most often discussed: (1) the confessional (and thus inevitably denominational) approach offering instruction *in* religion; and (2) the non-confessional "religious studies" or "study of religions" approach fostering knowledge *about* religions (plural). However, as the contributors to this publication clearly show, these two models can only represent extremes; most systems of religious education in the real world cannot be placed neatly in either one or the other of these categories, and moreover the situation is constantly changing.

As a slightly more nuanced way of problematizing religious education we might ask whether it provides education *into*, education *about*, or education *from* religion. Education *into* religion introduces the pupil to a specific religious tradition; the purpose is to promote the pupil's personal, moral, and spiritual development as well as to build religious identity, as these elements are understood within a particular tradition. Many "confessional" approaches emphasize such learning *into* religion, which means learning how to live in accordance with specific religious tenets, beliefs, and practices. Education *about* religion promotes a more or less academic and detached examination of the tenets, beliefs, and practices of more than one religious tradition and deals with questions that are generally broached within the academic disciplines known as Study of Religions, or History and Sociology of Religions. Education *from* religion takes the personal experience of the pupil as its principal point of departure. The idea is to enhance the pupil's capacity to reflect upon important questions of life and provide her with the opportunity to develop her

own responses to major moral and religious problems—i.e., to learn *from* different religious traditions and outlooks of life (Hull 2002). Gravel [this volume] highlights the very complex position of the professional teacher in this context.[1]

Even in countries with a great deal of common history and similar developments, different ways of organizing these various types of religious education can be distinguished. The understanding of "religious education" espoused by whatever body is ultimately responsible for determining the content, developing the curricula, selecting the materials, and training the teachers is crucial—at least where there is a single body involved. As several of our authors make clear, the curriculum actually delivered in the classroom is in fact the product of a complex negotiation among different parties including schools, individual teachers, scholars, governments, their bureaucracies and religious bodies, any one of whom may at certain times prevail over the others. Hence, one important distinction centers upon the relationship between academic and religious authorities (Willaime 2007) and the question of who "own[s]…religion in the classroom—religious tradition, society or teachers?" (Schreiner 2001). In Ireland the answer is very clear, if unexpected (see Shanneik, and Hyland and Bocking [this volume]).

Yet another distinction concerns whether religious education of any type is a voluntary or compulsory element of the student's curriculum, and if it is taught as "integrative" (with students from different religious backgrounds taught together about religion) or "separative" (in which students from different religious backgrounds go to different classrooms where, of course, they learn not only one religion but also that religion's view of the others) (Alberts 2008; Jackson 2007; Willaime 2007).

1.2 Religious Education and Social Cohesion

There are also differences between how countries understand social cohesion and how this perception shapes strategies for religious education. In Britain, for example, social cohesion is expected to flow from citizenship education, whereas in the Netherlands the focus is on maintaining academic standards so as to promote socio-economic integration.[2] Although Sweden and Denmark are neighboring countries and both "Nordic welfare states,"[3] they have different conceptions of how religious education should foster social cohesion. In Sweden, social cohesion is thought best achieved by a non-confessional form of RE, beginning in primary school, that is open to students of all persuasions learning and discussing together, whereas Denmark has a form of RE in primary school that is centered on instilling Christian values and tied to being "Danish" (Jensen 2015).

[1] For further discussion on these perspectives see, for example Teece (2010) and Wright (2004).

[2] See also Niehaus (2011: 20), who notes that this has been important in the Netherlands, since many Muslim schools attract children from academically weak backgrounds.

[3] See Mårtensson (2014) for discussions on Islam in the Nordic Welfare states.

Many of the case studies analyzed in this volume highlight the connection between the emergence of publicly funded religious education and the value placed on equal rights, which demands that all religions—and all children—be treated in a similar manner. In some countries this has resulted in opportunities for religious minorities, as well as the long-existing religious majorities, to obtain state funding for their own religious schools, to introduce their own RE curriculum into wider public education and to train their own teachers of RE (Berglund 2015). Securing equal rights for religious minorities in this way is, however, only one side of the coin. The other is the tendency to use the public funding of minority education as a coercive means of achieving social cohesion—i.e., as a means by which to mold the conduct and thinking of the minority population so that it coheres with the conduct and thinking of the majority population (Berglund 2015; Rissanen 2014; Tinker 2009).

1.3 Differences in Education and Training of Teachers

Schools are powerful socializing agents, for the most part representing and reproducing the dominant conceptions of the wider society. It is thus worth noting that by following the requirements of a national curriculum, where such exists, religious education teachers can become indirect agents of state policies toward religion (Skeie 2006). This, of course, does not mean that teachers exert no local, personal influence in the classroom; clearly, through their choice of content and mode of presentation, teachers can either indirectly uphold or indirectly question such policies. In the end, however, a RE teacher's influence is highly dependent upon both her knowledge of religion and her didactical competence, both of which, in the course of a typical career, are acquired through teacher education programs and can easily become decades "out of date" unless there is ongoing professional development (in effect, re-education). Since teachers are normally themselves the product of the local education system, intervening in any major way in the "cycle" of education > teacher training > teaching dominated by professionals with careers spanning 30–40 years is likely to be a lengthy and hard-won process. Within this cycle, the universities and other tertiary institutions training RE teachers carry a very significant responsibility in delivering appropriate and effective teacher education based on recent and relevant research in religions as well as pedagogy. After all, a prospective teacher's 4–5 years as a college student may be the only formative period of his or her life spent outside of the schoolroom.

Research on non-confessional teaching *about* religion indicates that minority religions are often depicted, even by trained RE teachers, in a stereotypical way, without calling attention to the interpretative nuances and variations that exist in practice (Berglund 2014; Halstead 2009; Thobani 2010). Much criticism, for example, has been directed toward the manner in which Islam is portrayed in textbooks for non-confessional RE (as well as in courses on history, literature, etc.) (Douglass 2009; Otterbeck 2005; Thobani 2010). Fujiwara [this volume] raises an even more

fundamental question about textbook representations of "religion" in this context. Again, adequate teacher education is clearly of utmost importance in this regard, raising the question: who trains RE teachers? (and who trains *their* teachers?—see Kjeldsen [this volume]).

In the UK and Sweden, courses on different religions are included in training programs for teachers who will be teaching *about* religion from a non-confessional perspective. But in some countries, including the USA, France and Japan, where teaching *about* religion is embedded only incidentally in subjects such as History and Geography, teacher training programs generally contain no course on religions and trainee teachers may never encounter an academic specialist in the study of religions. In France, serving teachers can take professional development courses on religious issues, but no study of religions is required in their initial training (van den Kerchove 2009) even if additional elective courses are offered at some teacher education institutions.[4]

In the USA the situation is similar, with nothing required in initial training and only professional development courses provided by programs such as Harvard Divinity School's Religious Literacy Project.[5] Restricting "teaching *about* religions" to optional in-service education courses severely limits the number of teachers with sufficient academic training in a subject that contributes significantly to our understanding of the constantly changing nature of religions and their role in social and political developments, minority–majority tensions, and even art, media and culture, in today's globalized society.

Even though the publicly funded educational systems of Britain, Sweden, the USA and France all take a "non-confessional" approach to the topic of religion in education, international exchange between researchers in this field appears to be quite limited. Bruce Grelle, Professor and Director of the Religion and Public Education Project at California State University, notes that empirical research on non-confessional RE in Europe has been largely ignored in American discussions on religion and public education (Grelle 2006). We hope that this volume, by attempting a more global than simply Europe-focused approach, will stimulate further exchanges with scholars from many regions, including North America, and will contribute to greater mutual understanding among educationalists at every level interested in promoting effective and appropriate religious education worldwide.

With regard to the training of teachers, both the European *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching About Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools*,[6] and *Signposts—Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-religious World Views in Intercultural Education*[7] and the American Academy of Religions'

[4] See for example IESR (Institute Européen des Sciences Religion): http://www.iesr.ephe.sorbonne.fr/index5539.html [accessed 2 Oct 2015].

[5] Retrieved from http://hds.harvard.edu/faculty-research/programs-and-centers/religious-literacy-project [accessed 28 Feb 2015].

[6] Retrieved from http://www.osce.org/odihr/29154 [accessed 28 Feb 2015].

[7] Retrieved from https://book.coe.int/eur/en/human-rights-education-intercultural-education/6101-signposts-policy-and-practice-for-teaching-about-religions-and-non-religious-world-views-in-intercultural-education.html [accessed 28 Feb 2015].

(AAR's) *Guidelines for Teaching About Religion in K-12 Public Schools*[8] include recommendations for teacher education programs and emphasize the necessity of teachers with academic knowledge *about* religions (see Jackson [this volume]). As is stated in the AAR guidelines:

> If religion is left out of pre-service and in-service teacher education, it is likely either that religion will be left out of the classroom because teachers feel uncomfortable with content they feel unqualified to teach or, if included, that the treatment of religion by unprepared teachers may fall short of constitutional guidelines in approach or accuracy in regard to content (AAR Guidelines for Teaching About Religion 2010:18).

This volume presents and discusses research about policy, strategy, challenges and practices in religious education from a dozen very different countries. The volume thus provides an overview and introduction to questions of concern for the twenty-first century. Religions are today discussed and debated widely in the public space and so is the issue of religious education. Most of the chapters in this book refer to publicly funded religious education in some form and they demonstrate that attempts to design and maintain viable state-funded forms of RE to meet the educational needs, and at the same time respect the rights, of large numbers of children from increasingly diverse faith backgrounds pose significant challenges in diverse socio-historical contexts.

1.4 In This Book: Authors, Topics and Regions

Many, though not all, of the chapters in this book originated as papers presented at the "RE21 Religious Education in a Global–Local World" international conference hosted by the Study of Religions Department at University College Cork, Ireland, in August 2013. In acknowledgment of the Irish roots of this conference and also the fact that the contemporary Irish education system is little known and even less studied outside Ireland, the volume offers two chapters which introduce and critically analyze religion, education and religious education in contemporary Ireland.

In the first chapter of this book, **Robert Jackson** begins by showing how there are very diverse understandings of the term "religious education" across Europe and that many different arguments revolve around the study of religions in schools. Jackson then moves on to describe the work of European organizations and their role in fostering particular rationales for studying religions in public education and in developing provisional policy recommendations. He shows, for example, how the Council of Europe has set about debating and resolving issues of religion in schools. Jackson also describes the professionalization of religious education in Europe,

[8] Retrieved from https://www.aarweb.org/about/teaching-about-religion-aar-guidelines-for-k-12-public-schools [accessed 28 Feb 2015]. Note that this organisation is a non-governmental professional body of religion academics so the "guidelines" do not represent state or federal educational policy.

highlighting different organizations that have been involved in this issue and reporting on the core findings of significant international research projects, many of which are referred to in the following chapters.

Oddrun Bråten suggests a methodology for systematic comparison of religious education, mainly between different states, which may prove very helpful as comparative research into RE develops. The methodology is a synthesis of two sets of ideas. The first posits three dimensions in comparative education: supranational, national and subnational processes. The second set of ideas regards levels of curriculum: societal, institutional, instructional and experiential. To illustrate its application, Bråten reflects on some of the topics from the "RE 21" conference in Cork, in light of this methodology.

Denise Cush presents a magisterial and largely first-hand account of the maturation of multifaith religious education in England from the formation of the Shap Working Party for World Religions in Education in 1969 to the present day, reflecting more than 40 years of experience of attempting to construct policy and curricula for "integrative" religious education and to put these into practice in schools. While the UK system has its weaknesses, it is widely regarded as a robust and broadly successful example of an RE regime suitable for the twenty-first century.

Danika Driesen and Abdulkader Tayob employ the concept of "religious literacy" to explore the implementation of South Africa's post-Apartheid "national policy" to promote awareness of religious diversity, in a state primary school founded on Catholic Church ground. They argue that the school in question has successfully incorporated the aims, and met the aspirations, of the national policy within its overall Catholic ethos.

In **Emilie Roy**'s chapter we move into the question of resource-driven developments in a poor country and the challenges of a transition between a system dominated by private funding of religious schools and the imperatives of a state-controlled education system. Roy discusses the international, largely Arab, funding of private Islamic schools (médersas) in Mali during the oil-boom decade of roughly 1973–1983 and later consequences in terms of government control and curricular changes, offering conclusions that should surprise anyone who assumes that "who pays the piper calls the tune."

Countering stereotypes of Islamic religious education (IRE) as a passive "transmission" of a fixed interpretation of Islam, **Jenny Berglund** draws on detailed research to highlight the individual agency of the classroom teacher of Islam in her role as an active "translator" of Islam for pupils in a Swedish context. Berglund argues that we can learn, from the example of teachers in Islamic schools who work actively to tailor their teaching to the specific needs and understandings of their pupils, that skillful teachers in all subjects can exert a powerful influence on what children learn.

Áine Hyland and Brian Bocking present an overview of one of the least-known (certainly among RE professionals elsewhere) and arguably one of the most problematic contemporary education systems in Europe, when considered from the angle of RE. Surveying the situation and prospects for RE in Ireland they also outline some of the key features of the pioneering "Religions and Global Diversity"

undergraduate program at University College Cork, which since 2007 has been teaching future RE teachers (among others) subject knowledge and also cross-cultural awareness.

Vadim Zhdanov examines the new multi-option subject “Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics” introduced in Russia in 2012. Political debates have been polarized between the Orthodox hierarchy and their supporters, who argue for education to have a spiritual basis, and those who appeal to the constitutional requirement that education should be free of all religious ideologies. New research investigating the local promotion by schools and local take-up by students of various religious, ethical and secular options within the subject and interviews with teachers and parents reveal very mixed views on religious education and demonstrate the need for far more research in this hitherto neglected area.

Karna Kjeldsen outlines some of the debates surrounding the subject called, in Danish, *Kristendomskundskab/livsoplysning/medborgerskab* (KLM) (Knowledge of Christianity/Life Philosophy/Citizenship), recently introduced into Danish teacher education for the elementary and lower secondary school, as well as discussing the findings from her study of how KLM was profiled and planned according to national and local curricula and syllabi from the different university colleges. Using Bernstein’s concept of “recontextualizing,” Kjeldsen shows how discourses and knowledge are transformed, negotiated and opened up for power struggles when recontextualized from one context, such as public political debate, to another such as the classroom.

Yafa Shanneik draws on detailed ethnographic research among 7- to 8-year-old children in Ireland, most of whom are spending several hours in the classroom each week being prepared, by the classroom teacher, for their first (Catholic) communion. Shanneik points to the simplistic confessional binary (“us” and “them”) which the children internalize to make sense of cultural or religious differences. Interviews and close observation reveal how children of ethnic or religious minorities experience significant exclusion through the construction within Irish public primary schools of “a shared, homogeneous, collective, white Irish Catholic identity.”

Cathy Byrne examines the nature of religion in relation to questions of interreligious literacy and education. She connects the concept of cultural tolerance to a particular interpretation of religious literacy in the education policy environment, and examines religion-related education governance structures. Byrne is critical of the limitations of an economically focused “opportunity”-based social inclusion agenda in Australian schools and its impact, or lack of impact, on traditional RE provision, comparing Australia’s progress in this regard unfavorably with the UK, which in theory provided the model but has benefited from a lengthy history of open consultation and positive action on RE.

Satoko Fujiwara uses materials from RE textbooks for epistemological reflection on the concept of religion and how it shapes the structure and character of a textbook. She compares the descriptions of Islam in highly acclaimed Western RE textbooks which try accurately to represent Islam with those in non-Western Islamic RE textbooks covering both Islam and Christianity—all used in public education. The differences are obvious and real, and pose challenges for any “common

denominator" understanding of what "religion" means across cultures. Fujiwara asks a very pertinent question: in light of this awareness, what should we now do?

Stephanie Gravel casts a careful and critical eye over the history and implementation of the Ethics and Religious Culture (ERC) program in Quebec, showing how the secularization of the Quebec education system gradually gave birth to a non-denominational "cultural" religious curriculum. In particular, she analyzes the cultural challenges of the program: its place in the Quebec education program, the student's vision, the teacher's (apparently conflicted) role, the concept of being a "cultural mediator" and the professional stance of "impartiality."

We hope that this volume will further spur discussions on RE across the globe in order to overcome the methodological nationalism that has characterized most research on RE in different educational contexts. By juxtaposing debates, policies and experiences of RE in a great variety of contexts, we hope to encourage further discussions of and reflections on equal rights in education, freedom of religion, the protection of minority rights, the different approaches to RE, provisions for teachers' training and other questions which need to be investigated from a global perspective in the twenty-first century.

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Chapter 2
Religious Education in European Organisations, Professional Associations and Research Groups

Robert Jackson

Abstract Although provision for dealing with religion(s) in the educational systems of different European countries continues to vary quite considerably, there is increasing European collaboration on this topic in European organisations, such as the Council of Europe, the European Wergeland Centre and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe; in professional associations, such as the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education; and in research groups, including the European Network for Religious Education through Contextual Approaches, together with various international teams—such as the REDCo team—assembled to undertake particular research projects. Academic journals with a European and wider brief also play their part in fostering European collaboration, discussion and exchange, as does the book series *Religious Diversity and Education in Europe*, published in Germany by Waxmann, and the University of Vienna's series of texts on religious education in Europe. The chapter argues that Europeanisation—part of a broader internationalisation—of debates and research about religious education is to be welcomed, despite the ambiguities of the term 'religious education'. So far its outcomes have been very positive in opening up discussion about the rationale for the study of religions in public education (as with the Council of Europe's work), building networks of communication for exchanging ideas on pedagogy and policy and for collaborative research, fostering new, outward looking, doctoral research, and extending the publication of research on various aspects of religion in education.

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2.1 Introduction

As a preliminary, it is important to recognise that the term 'religious education' is contested, and means different things in different national contexts (and sometimes within them). Thus, there are some very diverse understandings and approaches to religious education across Europe, as well as some emerging patterns of overlap and commonality (Jackson 2007; Kuyk et al. 2007). The term 'religious education' can be used to describe forms of *initiation into* what we might call 'religious understanding', through learning and religious practice. Sometimes the designations 'religious instruction' and 'religious nurture' are used for these processes. However, religious education often refers to the promotion of an inclusive, general public understanding of religion or religions—what we might term 'understanding religion(s)'. Terms such as 'inclusive religious education' (Jackson 2014a, c) or 'integrative religious education' (Alberts 2007) are used in this way. The American Academy of Religion uses the term 'religion education' (as distinct from 'religious education') to refer to an inclusive education about religions (American Academy of Religion 2010). The arguments that the term 'religious education' can *only* mean 'initiation into religious life', and that all other so-called paradigms of religious education are both mutually exclusive and inherently secularist, have been advanced (Gearon 2013). However, both arguments include claims that can be shown to be false, and are internally inconsistent (Jackson 2015a). Rather than seeing 'religious nurture' and 'religious education' as necessarily in conflict, research on 'religious understanding' (e.g. Berglund 2015; Byrne and Kieran 2013) can inform work on 'understanding religions' and vice versa.

2.2 Understanding Religion(s): Intrinsic and Instrumental Aims

The discussion here will concentrate on approaches that aim *to develop an understanding of religion(s)*—including the language, experience and values of religious people. The view is taken that national policies should include educational activity that promotes it, for a range of reasons, both intrinsic to the nature of education, and instrumental to the benefit of individuals and society. The 'intrinsic' aim concerns the nature of human experience. If education is about understanding the full breadth of human experience, then 'understanding religion(s)' needs to be included. In an international context where skills for employability and industrial competitiveness—and, increasingly, concerns about security—can dominate educational policy, this view acts as a counterweight, pressing for the inclusion of studies of religious and related ethical issues, and reflection on these, as intrinsic to education.

There are also important instrumental aims for studying religions. Instrumental arguments tend to emphasise either the *personal* development of students or their *social* development, or a combination of the two (as in Personal, Social, Health and

Economic Education (PSHE) in England, which complements religious education and other curriculum subjects). Arguments emphasising the *personal* development of students often emphasise the potential contribution of the study of religions to students' moral development, or stress the importance of students engaging reflexively with religious material in developing their own views on religion and values (Jackson 1997, 2009a, b). Study of, and reflection on, different religions can help students to clarify their own personal religious position or framework of values or to appreciate the relationship between another's position and their own. Ongoing reflection is a reflexive process in which students, whatever their family or cultural background, interpret and reinterpret their own views in the light of their studies (Jackson 1997, 2004b).

There are also important *social* reasons for studying a variety of religions and beliefs. These can relate to a recognition of the principle of freedom of religion or belief, and increasing tolerance of (and sometimes respect for) others' views and ways of life within society. Consideration of the *limits* of freedom of human action and speech are part of the process of dialogue. Participation in the relevant debates links the social world and the individual, and is potentially a means to effective interreligious and intercultural communication within plural democracies. Arguments emphasising the social development of students (for example through contributing to citizenship education) range from promoting good community relations (e.g. Cole 1972) and intercultural understanding (e.g. Council of Europe 2008a) to increasing awareness of the human rights principle of freedom of religion or belief and increasing tolerance of diversity (e.g. OSCE 2007) to promoting social or community cohesion (e.g. DCSF 2007) and, in recent times, countering religious extremism (e.g. Miller 2013; Jackson 2014c).

When looked at from the point of view of European institutions, such as the Council of Europe, we find a creative tension between national and local cultural assumptions/practices and European human rights standards, which underpin the Council's work on the 'Dimension of Religions and Non-Religious Convictions within Intercultural Education' (Council of Europe 2008a; Jackson 2014a).

In relation to developments concerning religious education within public education that have taken place in Europe, three key areas are selected for discussion. The first is about important European organisations and their role in fostering particular rationales for studying religions in public education and in developing provisional policy recommendations. The second is the professionalisation of religious education and related fields, through the formation of European professional associations and through the establishment of the European Wergeland Centre, a European educational centre, based in Oslo, including religious diversity in its remit to cover human rights, citizenship and intercultural education (http://www.theewc.org/). The third is European research on religious education, with particular reference to a European Commission Framework 6 project—the REDCo (Religion, Education, Dialogue, Conflict) Project—conducted between 2006 and 2009, and to TRES (Teaching Religion in a Multicultural European Society), a European research network that has conducted a study of religion in European schools; the growth of doctoral research in religious education in Europe; and a European book series on 'Religious

Diversity and Education in Europe' in which many publications on research and theory in religious education in different parts of Europe appear, including books from the REDCo Project. A series on religious education in Europe published by the University of Vienna is a further landmark in European collaboration in exploring religious education issues (e.g. Rothgangel et al. 2014a, b).

Issues about the study of religions in public education are being discussed at a European level and more widely internationally as never before. The discussions include specialists in religion and religious bodies, but also politicians, civil servants, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and other groups within civil society as well as educators concerned with fields such as citizenship and intercultural education. This is partly due to the global attention given to religion following the events of September 11, 2001, in the USA, their causes, ongoing consequences and associated incidents that continue to affect people in many parts of the world. In Europe, it also relates to the challenge of transcultural diversities and the climate of racism in some states, much of it directed against Muslims, exacerbated by 9/11 and an increasing number of events involving extremism. Such negative events have helped to push discourse about religions into the public sphere, even in countries like France where religion has been regarded strongly as a private concern. There are also some very positive reasons for studying religions in public education articulated in European discussion. For example, the Delors Report considers that education should include learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be (UNESCO 1996). As argued above in relation to aims, religious education should be concerned with all of these, although policy developed within some key European institutions has particularly focused on the third.

2.3 European Organisations: The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an inter-governmental organisation founded in 1949 and based in Strasbourg, France. It comprises 47 member states currently and its aims include protecting human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law as well as seeking solutions to problems such as discrimination against minorities, xenophobia and intolerance. Recently, it has also given attention to violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism (Council of Europe 2015a, b) The Council's work leads to European conventions and agreements in the light of which member states may amend their own legislation. The key political bodies of the Council are the Parliamentary Assembly (made up of cross-party members of national parliaments from the member states), the Committee of Ministers (the Foreign Ministers of member states, each of whom has a diplomatic representative resident in Strasbourg) and various specialist conferences of Ministers, including one on Education. The powers of the Parliamentary Assembly extend to investigation, recommendation and advice.

At the same time as promoting and encouraging the development of Europe's cultural identity, cultural *diversity* is also valued highly. The Council of Europe recognises that each state has its own history and cultural traditions, its own language

or languages and its own religious traditions. Thus, there is a creative tension between developing a European cultural identity based on shared human rights values and preserving distinctive cultural traditions. Moreover, no state is homogeneous culturally. Some states have long established ethnic and religious minorities with very long histories, sometimes preceding the formation of the state. Many states have substantial ethnic and religious minorities as a result of migration from other countries within Europe and beyond, mainly during the twentieth and current centuries. Diversity within states is complex and connects with global as well as regional, national and local issues.

The Council of Europe connects directly with member states through certain Government Ministers, especially the Foreign Ministers, and through selected Members of Parliament who serve on the Parliamentary Assembly. Each member state also has a diplomat permanently based in Strasbourg who engages in activities in support of Ministers. The statutory institutions of the Council of Europe are the Committee of Ministers, made up of the Foreign Ministers of every member state, the Parliamentary Assembly composed of Members of Parliament from each member state (that is, they are members of the *state* Parliament, not members of the European Parliament), and the Secretary-General, who heads the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent institution within the Council of Europe, mandated to promote awareness of and respect for human rights in the member states.

The Secretariat of the Council of Europe has a number of Directorates General, including the Directorate General of Democracy (DGII), which incorporates the Directorate of Democratic Citizenship and Participation, whose remit includes education. The remit of the Directorate General of Democracy is very broad, but it includes promoting social cohesion, cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, democratic citizenship and participation of all, including that of children, minorities and young people. It has the task of preparing and implementing programmes, policies and standard-setting mechanisms, and of co-operating with key outside partners including civil society organisations and other international institutions.

Thus, the Council of Europe offers a structure that integrates the development of new ideas—from educational projects, for example—and political processes. Project proposals are approved by the Council's political institutions and project findings, and Ministerial Recommendations are considered and eventually approved by them. They are then transmitted to the member states. There is an expectation that member states will consider them seriously in their own policy development at national level.

2.3.1 Intercultural Education and the Challenge of Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe

In 2002 the Council of Europe launched its first project on teaching about religions in schools—'The New Challenge of Intercultural Education: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe'. The rationale for this was concerned with the relationship

of religion to culture. It was argued that, regardless of the truth or falsity of religious claims, religion is a part of life and culture and therefore should be understood by *all* citizens as part of their education. This is essentially a *cultural* argument for the study of religions. However, human rights remain the bedrock of Council of Europe policy.

It was on the basis of the 'cultural argument' that the Council of Europe launched its project on the study of religions as part of intercultural education. There were several outcomes. One was the publication of a reference book for schools, aimed especially at those countries with little or no study of religions in public education (Keast 2007). But, most importantly, the Committee of Ministers agreed to a policy recommendation that *all* member states should include the impartial study of religions within the curricula of their schools (Council of Europe 2008a).

A team was brought together to draft the recommendation on behalf of the Committee of Ministers on the management of religious and 'convictional' diversity in schools, based on the project's approach, and incorporating ideas from the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe 2008b). Although the original 2002 project had been related to religion specifically, the recommendation was broadened to include non-religious convictions alongside religions. The Ministerial Recommendation was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in December 2008, and provides a set of principles that can be used by all member states. The recommendation can be used as a tool in discussing policy in fields including religious education and citizenship education. For reasons of space it is possible here to do no more than indicate the general 'flavour' of the document. For example, its underlying principles include the view that intercultural dialogue and its dimension of religious and non-religious convictions are an essential precondition for the development of tolerance and a culture of 'living together' and for the recognition of different identities on the basis of human rights.

Its objectives include:

- Developing a tolerant attitude and respect for the right to hold a particular belief, recognising the inherent dignity and fundamental freedoms of each human being
- Nurturing sensitivity to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions as an element contributing to the richness of Europe
- Ensuring that teaching about the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions is consistent with the aims of education for democratic citizenship, human rights and respect for equal dignity of all individuals
- Promoting communication and dialogue between people from different cultural, religious and non-religious backgrounds

Its educational preconditions include:

- Sensitivity to the equal dignity of every individual
- Recognition of human rights as values to be applied, beyond religious and cultural diversity
- Communication between individuals and the capacity to put oneself in the place of others in order to establish an environment where mutual trust and understanding is fostered

- Co-operative learning in which peoples of all traditions can be included and participate
- Provision of a safe learning space to encourage expression without fear of being judged or held to ridicule

With regard to teacher training, member states are requested to:

- Provide teachers with the training and means to acquire relevant teaching resources with the aim to develop the skills *for teaching about* religions and non-religious convictions
- Provide training that is objective and open minded
- Develop training in methods of teaching and learning that ensure education in democracy at local, regional, national and international level
- Encourage multiperspectivity in training courses, to take into account different points of view in teaching and learning

Thus, both the 'intercultural' and 'human rights' ethos of the document is clear.[1]

2.3.2 The Council of Europe on the Place of Religion in Education

The Council of Europe has had various projects on topics such as intercultural education, education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. For quite a long period, the Council of Europe took the view that religion was largely a private matter, and that each member state was responsible for its own policies, related to its particular history. General debate about the place of religion in the public sphere began to change that view, against a shifting background of globalisation in which religion was often a factor. The events of 9/11 in the USA were a symbol of the entry of religion into general public discussion, both within and beyond individual states.

As a result of the migration of peoples, and as a consequence of other features of globalisation, European states have become more religiously pluralistic and more alert to religion as a phenomenon of both local and global significance. The issue of social cohesion—of living together in harmony within diverse democratic societies—has been complicated by these factors. However, currently, education about religious diversity, and about non-religious worldviews, is approached in various different ways across Europe. Some states have educational systems in which religious education is understood primarily as the *transmission* of religious beliefs and values from one generation to the next. Some states have no specific provision for teaching about religions in the curriculum of the school. Others include some teaching about religions, or teaching about religions and non-religious worldviews as part of the curriculum for all students.

[1] The Recommendation is printed in full as an appendix to Jackson (2014a).

The Council of Europe aims to encourage member states to develop appropriate teaching about religions in order to increase understanding of religious diversity in Europe and more widely, and to encourage genuine dialogue between people having different religious and non-religious worldviews. This is intended *not* to replace the teaching offered by religious organisations on behalf of parents, but as a general feature of education for *all* students. The Council of Europe particularly relates its work in this field to its long-standing contributions on intercultural education.

2.3.3 Teaching About Non-religious Convictions

Although the project that began in 2002 was about 'Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe', the Committee of Ministers took the view that the remit of their recommendation should be extended to include 'non-religious convictions' as well as religions. There was a recognition that, while many people belong to religious traditions that are sources of inspiration and value, there are many others within European societies whose values are not grounded in religions. This extension reflects international debates and also changing educational policies in some European countries. Overall, the work on religions and non-religious convictions is complementary to the Council of Europe's contributions on human rights education and education for democratic citizenship (Jackson 2013).

2.3.4 Signposts: A Council of Europe Dissemination Document

In 2011, the Council of Europe, in partnership with the European Wergeland Centre, appointed a committee of experts from different parts of Europe to work on a document facilitating the use of the 2008 recommendation by policy makers, schools and teacher trainers across Europe. This document, written by the present author on behalf of the committee of experts from various member states, was published in December 2014 with the title *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education. Signposts* addresses various issues considered problematic by respondents to a questionnaire relating to national responses to the recommendation, completed by members of the Council of Europe Education Committee from the different member states. These include issues of terminology, competence and didactics, creating 'safe space' for dialogue in the classroom, handling media representations of religions, and teaching about non-religious worldviews, as well as various issues associated with human rights, and the relationship of schools to wider communities (Jackson 2014a, b). At the meeting of the Committee of Ministers in Brussels on 19 May 2015, an Action Plan entitled *The Fight Against Violent Extremism and Radicalisation Leading to Terrorism* was published. This has a section on 'building inclusive societies', which gives high priority to the dissemination and use of *Signposts* in teaching about

religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education (Council of Europe 2015b). Currently *Signposts* is being translated into at least 15 European languages.

2.4 European Organisations: The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Independently from the Council of Europe, another major European institution concerned with human rights also considered the place of the study of religions and beliefs in public education. This is the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), based in Vienna. Its 56 participant states include most European countries plus the USA and Canada. It was set up in the 1970s to create a forum for dialogue during the Cold War, now focusing on conflict resolution and human rights. The OSCE uses the concept of 'three dimensional security'. Security is considered not only in politico-military terms but also through an environmental and economic dimension, and a human dimension.

Because of the human dimension to security, OSCE has an Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which is based in Warsaw, and is concerned especially with educational projects. As with the Council of Europe, the ODIHR conducted a project to identify principles on which participant states could develop policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious beliefs in schools across its huge geographical region. The result was the production of the *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (TGPs), named after the city in which the drafting team first worked on the text, and in recognition of the Spanish chairmanship of the OSCE at the time (OSCE 2007).

2.4.1 The *Toledo Guiding Principles*

The *Toledo Guiding Principles* (TGPs) were prepared in order to contribute to an improved understanding of the world's increasing religious (and philosophical) diversity and the growing presence of religion in the public sphere. Their rationale is based on two core principles: first, that there is positive value in teaching that emphasises respect for *everyone's* right to freedom of religion and belief, and second, that teaching *about* religions and beliefs can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes.

The primary purpose of the TGPs is to assist OSCE participating states whenever they choose to promote the study of and knowledge about religions and beliefs in schools, particularly as a tool to enhance religious freedom. The TGPs focus solely on an educational approach that seeks to provide teaching *about* different religions

and beliefs as distinguished from instruction in a specific religion or belief. They also aim to offer criteria that should be considered when and wherever teaching about religions and beliefs takes place (OSCE 2007: 11–12). The TGPs offer guidance on preparing curricula for teaching about religions and beliefs, preferred procedures for assuring fairness in the development of curricula, and standards for how they could be implemented.

The TGPs were developed not by employees of the OSCE, but by an interdisciplinary team including members of the ODIHR Advisory Council of Experts on Freedom of Religion or Belief and invited specialists in education, law and other fields. The members were picked for their particular expertise, and *not* as representatives of particular religion or belief groups. However, they happened to be from a cross-section of religious and philosophical backgrounds. Thus there were Christians, Jews, Muslims and Humanists plus one member of a 'new religious movement'.

In the TGPs, the underlying argument for the inclusion of the study of religions and beliefs in public education has a human rights emphasis. The first premise is that freedom of religion or belief predicates plurality: if freedom of religion or belief is a given for society, then society inevitably will be plural. The next premise is that, if society is to be cohesive, plurality requires tolerance of difference. The conclusion is that tolerance of difference requires *at least* knowledge and understanding of the beliefs and values of others. This would be so whatever the approach specifically taken to religious education or intercultural education in particular countries. In other words, the document supports the inclusion of a just and fair approach to religious difference, whatever the system of religious education or education about religion in particular states.

The TGPs include a substantial chapter on the human rights framework—including legal issues in relation to the state and the rights of parents, children, teachers and minorities, as well as chapters on preparing curricula and teacher education, plus conclusions and recommendations. The *Toledo Guiding Principles* were approved by the Ministerial Council and launched at the 15th OSCE Ministerial Council held in Madrid in November 2007. Various misrepresentations of the *Toledo Guiding Principles* and their development are replied to in Jackson (2015b).

In concluding this section, it should be clear that both the Council of Europe and OSCE documents are intended as tools for those discussing the place of religion in education within European democracies. They are not intended as finished programmes or syllabuses, and are expected to be discussed, adapted and developed in different ways within different systems of education.

2.5 The Professionalisation of Religious Education

A second feature of the European religious education scene is an increasing professionalisation of the subject and related fields, enabling international networking and professional contact, as well as collaborative development and application of ideas.

This has happened especially through the formation of European professional associations—in particular through their conferences, websites and publications—and through the establishment of the European Wergeland Centre, a European educational facility, based in Oslo, including religious diversity in its remit to cover human rights, citizenship and intercultural education. I will mention two European professional associations whose work has a bearing on religious education within public education, and will make some remarks about the European Wergeland Centre.

2.5.1 The European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education (EFTRE)

The European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education brings together various national professional associations in Europe. EFTRE is a non-confessional association which represents the interests of religious education teachers in Europe, aiming to serve and strengthen the work of national religious education teachers' associations. EFTRE aims to contribute to the international co-operation of teachers of religious education in theoretical and practical aspects of their work in order to strengthen the position of the subject in schools in the member countries and across Europe. Member organisations represent teachers in schools, colleges and universities and work together to provide a forum for the exchange of ideas and working methods. EFTRE holds conferences, with delegates attending from across Europe, and arranges seminars and teacher exchanges. EFTRE has an elected Executive, which meets twice a year, a board, which meets annually, and a general assembly, which meets every 3 years. Each member country is entitled to one member of the board and each institution is entitled to send a representative to the general assembly. EFTRE publishes a journal/newsletter twice per year in April/May and November/December (http://www.eftre.net/).

2.5.2 The Co-ordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE)

The Co-ordinating Group for Religion in Education in Europe (CoGREE) brings together a range of European professional religious education (RE) associations in the field, and includes both non-confessional and Christian organisations (www.cogree.com/). Member organisations share some common values (including embracing religious diversity in democratic societies, upholding the principle of freedom of religion or belief, and regarding any education taking no account of religion and spirituality as incomplete). Its members include the European Forum for Teachers of Religious Education in Schools (EFTRE), the Inter-European Commission on Church and School (ICCS), the European Association for World Religions in Education (EAWRE), the International Association for Christian

Education (IV) and the European Forum for Religious Education in Schools (EuFRES). CoGREE holds conferences every 3 years, and engages in various development and publication projects.

2.5.3 The European Wergeland Centre (EWC)

The European Wergeland Centre (EWC) (Henrik Wergeland was a nineteenth century Norwegian poet who stood up for religious freedom) is a European resource centre on education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship, incorporating such cross-cutting topics as religion, history, language and gender. The idea for the centre came from the Council of Europe, where separate proposals for a European centre concentrating on citizenship and another concentrating on religion and education were merged (Jackson 2007). The Norwegian Government took up the opportunity to establish the centre in co-operation with the Council of Europe. The EWC, which caters for all the member states of the Council of Europe, and uses English as its working language, is situated in Oslo and was opened officially in May 2009. The main target groups are teachers, teacher trainers, decision makers and multipliers within education for intercultural understanding, human rights and democratic citizenship.

From the point of view of religious education, the EWC acts as a partner in European research projects and, via its website and through conferences and meetings, assists in the dissemination of research findings to users such as teachers. An important feature of the EWC is its ‘Share & Connect’ database through which teachers, teacher trainers and researchers can form networks and contact one another. Share & Connect provides various opportunities, including the facility to look for experts in particular specialisms throughout Europe and beyond, to explore potential co-operation and partnerships and to connect with peers from theory and practice, for example, forming networks on particular research themes, networks of PhD students, or partnerships between academic specialists and teachers to produce high quality materials (go to www.theewc.org for more information). By providing in-service training, carrying out and supporting research, creating networks, serving as a platform and disseminating information and good practice, the EWC has established itself as a leading professional body.

2.6 European Research in Religious Education

Empirical research has become increasingly important in informing the development of policy and practice in European religious education (Jackson 2004a, b). There are several international and European research networks in the religious education field.

2.6.1 International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV)

The International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV) is an association of over 240 religious education scholars from around 36 countries. It includes scholars from various religious traditions, and secular specialists in religious studies and education, and has met every 2 years since 1978 (mainly alternating venues between Europe and North America). ISREV includes many empirical researchers in RE from around the world, with many from different European countries (http://www.isrev.org/). Recent ISREV conferences have been held in York, England (2014) and Turku, Finland (2012). Recent publications including papers from ISREV conferences include Astley et al. (2007, 2012) and Parker et al. (2012).

2.6.2 European Network for Religious Education Through Contextual Approaches (ENRECA)

The European Network for Religious Education through Contextual Approaches (ENRECA) is a specifically European research network, having a particular interest in the relevance of 'context' to the development of religious education (e.g. Heimbrock et al. 2001). ENRECA was set up in 1999 as a forum for mutual co-operation and reflection on the changing role of religious education in Europe. The issues of 'contextuality', focusing on religious life in particular cultural (and especially local) contexts, and 'religious competence', understood as a student's ability to negotiate about religious meanings, have been central to the group's concerns (Miedema et al. 2004). ENRECA has also published *Researching RE Teachers: RE Teachers as Researchers* (Bakker and Heimbrock 2007) and its latest publication is *Exploring Context in Religious Education Research: Empirical, Methodological and Theoretical Perspectives* (Skeie et al. 2013). ENRECA met in Vienna in May 2015 to explore the concepts of place and space in relation to religious education.

2.6.3 The European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR)

The European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) [http://easr.eu/] is a professional association, which promotes the academic study of religions through the international collaboration of (mainly) European scholars working in the field of the study of religions. The EASR is a regional association within the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), which is active globally. EASR includes a group of religious studies scholars who have a particular interest in education, and these researchers provide an important link between the worlds of

academic religious studies and RE in Europe. For example, the link facilitates contact between academic specialists in particular religions, whose work is at the cutting edge of scholarship and research, and those preparing material on the religions for use by young people in schools. The 2007 EASR conference, held in Bremen, Germany, was focused on education, and was entitled 'Plurality and Representation: Religion in Education, Culture and Society'. A selection of papers relevant to religious education (e.g. Alberts 2008; Jackson 2008; Jensen 2008) is available in a special double issue of the journal *Numen: International Review for the History of Religions* (volume 55, 2/3). Alberts and Jensen were also guest editors of a special issue of the journal *Temenos* (49: 2, 2013) on the theme of religious education in the Nordic countries, which includes various papers presented at the EASR Working Group meeting on 'Religion Education (RE) in Public Schools and the Academic Study of Religions'. This group was established at the 2007 Bremen conference. Since then there have been regular panel sessions on the academic study of religion and RE at all EASR conferences.

2.6.4 International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR)

The International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR) has recently focused on religion and education, and included a Thematic Session, which had three sessions, on 'Religious Diversity and Religions and Beliefs Education', co-convened by Gary D. Bouma (Monash University) and Anna Halafoff (Deakin University) at the International Society for the Sociology of Religion (ISSR) 2013 Conference at the University of Turku, Finland. The papers delivered at this conference were included and recently published in a Special Issue of the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 36 (3) (2015), entitled 'Education about Religions and Beliefs: Promoting Intercultural and Interreligious Understanding in Secular Societies', edited by Anna Halafoff, Elisabeth Arweck and Donald Boisvert.

2.6.5 The International Network for Interreligious and Intercultural Education (IRE)

In 1994, following Nelson Mandela's election as President of South Africa, Professor Wolfram Weisse of the University of Hamburg set up the International Network for Interreligious and Intercultural Education (IRE) with the specific aim of promoting links between Southern African and Northern European research groups working in fields related to religion and education in culturally diverse democratic societies. The first meeting in Hamburg in September 1994 was attended by colleagues from the Institute for Comparative Religion in Southern Africa (ICRSA) based at the University of Cape Town and from the University of Namibia in

Windhoek. European colleagues came from Germany, the UK and the Netherlands. Papers from the meeting were published in Weisse (1996). The group met again in 1996 at the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands (Andree et al. 1997), and the first meeting in South Africa was held at the University of Cape Town in 1998, under the leadership of Professor David Chidester (Chidester et al. 1999). By this time, more colleagues had been added to the group from the various countries, with the addition of members from Norway. I and my colleagues in Warwick University's Religions and Education Research Unit hosted the next meeting at the University of Warwick in 2001, focusing on citizenship and religious education—a theme equally important to South Africans and Europeans (Jackson 2003). In March 2004, Dr. Cornelia Roux hosted the meeting of IRE at the University of Stellenbosch, which concentrated on the contribution of religious education to intercultural education. The papers were published in a special issue of the South African journal *Scriptura*. Papers addressed the theoretical underpinnings and concepts of intercultural education, elaborated new pedagogies and critical approaches to the subject, and reported empirical research (Roux 2005). The most recent meeting of IRE was in 2006 in Leeuwarden in the Netherlands, with a strong European and South African presence, and new colleagues from Malawi, Botswana and Zambia (ter Avest 2011).

There are also important European regional research groups and conferences, notably the Nordic Conference on Religious Education (related publications include Berglund et al. 2015; Gunnarsson 2000; Skeie 2009), which had its 13th meeting at the University of Tartu, Estonia, in June 2015. All of these international, European and regional networks have facilitated the assembly of cross-national teams to conduct research at a European level, including PhD students.

2.6.6 The REDCo Project

There have been a number of collaborative European research projects in RE, and more are planned. However, the first to obtain substantial funding from the European Commission for a major mixed methods study was the REDCo (Religion, Education, Dialogue, Conflict) project, funded by the Framework 6 initiative (http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html). REDCo was a 3-year project (2006–2009) involving universities from eight European countries (University of Warwick, England; Universities of Hamburg and Münster, Germany; VU University, the Netherlands; University of Stavanger, Norway; Russian Christian Academy for Humanities, St. Petersburg, Russia; Tartu University, Estonia; the Sorbonne, Paris, France; and the University of Granada, Spain). The project aimed to establish whether studies of religions in schools could help to promote dialogue and reduce conflict in school and society. The main research focused on young people in the 14–16-year age group, but there were also some studies of teachers, of primary pupils and of the place of religion in different educational systems. The key concepts of the interpretive approach (Jackson 1997, 2011) were used as a stimulus to method and theory.

Core studies included a mapping exercise of religion and education in Europe (Jackson et al. 2007); a qualitative study of teenagers' views on religion in schools (Knauth et al. 2008); a cross-national quantitative survey of young people's views in the eight countries (Valk et al. 2009); studies of classroom interaction (ter Avest et al. 2009); and a study of teachers of RE (van der Want et al. 2009).

Several individual studies were also completed in the different countries. For example, the Warwick team produced action research studies, based in schools and teacher training institutes, applying key concepts from the interpretive approach (Jackson 1997). These were conducted by a 'community of practice' which included teachers, teacher trainers and a provider of in-service training (Ipgrave et al. 2009). An overview of the REDCo Project is Jackson (2012), and a reply to various misrepresentations of the REDCo Project is Jackson (2015b).

2.6.7 Selected Findings from REDCo Qualitative and Quantitative Studies

Each of the REDCo national studies gives a flavour of the particular national situation where it was located and needs to be examined in some detail. However, some broad trends emerged from the data. Qualitative questionnaires and interviews completed by 14–16-year-olds and a quantitative survey, conducted with the same age group in the eight countries participating in the REDCo Project, revealed some general trends that are of relevance to the evaluation and implementation of the policies advocated by the Council of Europe and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE. These might be summarised very briefly as follows:

- Students wish for peaceful coexistence across differences, and believe this to be possible.
- For students, peaceful coexistence depends on knowledge about each other's religions and worldviews and on sharing common interests/doing things together.
- Students who learn about religious diversity in school are *more willing* to have conversations about religions/beliefs with students of other backgrounds than those who do not.
- Students wish to avoid conflict: some religiously committed students feel vulnerable.
- Students want learning to take place in a safe classroom environment where there are agreed procedures for expression and discussion.
- *Most* students would like school to be a place for learning *about* different religions/worldviews, rather than for instruction *into* a particular religion/worldview (respondents tended to support the system of which they had personal experience).

Having made these points, the various REDCo studies suggest that approaches to the study of religious diversity would need to be implemented differently in particular national contexts. For example, in some countries (e.g. England) religious diversity would be covered mainly in a *separate subject* devoted to the study of

religion, while in others (e.g. France) religious diversity would be covered through *several* subjects, with none dedicated specifically to religion. In some countries, religious diversity could be linked to students' discussion of their *personal views* (e.g. Netherlands, Norway, England, Germany), while in others this would be more difficult (e.g. France and Estonia). In some countries (e.g. Estonia, France, Norway) religious diversity would be covered in a non-confessional setting, while in others (e.g. Spain) religious diversity would be taught in a confessional context, and steps would need to be taken to ensure fairness, balance and objectivity in teaching and learning. In some countries, religious diversity would be taught in *both* confessional and non-confessional contexts (e.g. Netherlands, England).[2]

2.6.8 Teaching Religion in a Multicultural European Society (TRES)

Although concerned mainly with higher education, mention should be made of TRES, a European network of academic institutions and other professional organisations engaged in teaching religion. The partner institutions and organisations are confessional or non-confessional and their representatives have a range of professional and religious backgrounds. The participating countries are the 27 EU countries, plus Turkey, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland.

TRES is concerned with how learning and teaching in the religion field, as well as different institutional and social forms of transmission of religion, are shaped by the multi-religious and multicultural nature of societies in Europe. In its first period of research (TRES 1, 2005–8), one of its key themes was 'Multicultural situations and religious education in school'. In 2007, 3500 teachers in 16 European countries participated in a cross-cultural study, 'Teaching Religion in a Multicultural Europe'. The empirical survey researched existing teaching procedures in religion and theology. The results catalogue different approaches, strategies and ways of thinking in relation to teaching religion in a multicultural context (Ziebertz and Riegel 2009). *How Teachers in Europe Teach Religion* includes chapters reporting research from Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden and Switzerland, as well as overview and comparative chapters, and a discussion of the concepts and methods used in the empirical study. Other publications from Hans-Georg Ziebertz and colleagues associated with the project, some dealing with more general issues concerning attitudes, beliefs, values and life perspectives of young people, include Kay and Ziebertz (2006), Ziebertz and Kay (2005, 2006, 2008, 2009), and Ziebertz et al. (2009).

[2] A series of small-scale quantitative follow-up studies (REDCo II) have been completed by the REDCo partners, with the addition of Finland, Ukraine, Mexico and South Africa, with several articles published in the *Religious Education Journal of Australia*, Volume 30, 2014.

2.6.9 The European Values Study

Although not concerned primarily with education in general or religious education in particular, mention should be made of the European Values Study, a large-scale, cross-national and longitudinal survey research programme on basic human values, which includes material on the ideas, beliefs, attitudes and values of people across Europe. Findings are available from 1981, 1990, 1999 and 2008. There are various publications relating to religion (e.g. Bréchon 1999; Davie 2002; Halman and Pettersson 1998; Hornsby-Smith and Procter 1995; Kerkhofs 1995; Pettersson and Riis 1994; Zrinshčak 2004). The *Atlas of European Values* (Halman et al. 2011) provides an enormous amount of information from studies in the programme.

2.6.10 Doctoral Research

There has been a growth in doctoral research in Europe in religious education over the last 10 years or so, much of it directly relevant to the improvement of practice in schools. This is partly due to the growth of collaborative research projects in which PhD students have been able to participate as researchers. For example, several PhDs emerged from the REDCo Project (e.g. Schihalejev 2009, 2010; von der Lippe 2010), and several PhD students have shared their work in conferences organised by ENRECA. Moreover, there has been an internationalisation of some of this research, with international collaboration in publications and with research students being based in universities in countries other than their own. Several Norwegian students have been based at the University of Warwick, for example, with one applying ethnographic methods used in the UK to the study of children from a religious minority in Norway (Østberg 2003), another pioneering a methodology for comparative RE, using Norway and England as examples (Bråten 2010, 2013), and a third analysing and comparing Norwegian policy and practice in RE in relation to issues of national identity (Iversen 2012). A special issue of the American journal *Religion & Education* (40, 1, 2013) features eight articles written by former doctoral students in religions and education at the University of Warwick and the University of Tartu, while Miller et al. (2013) includes 14 chapters reporting research by former Warwick doctoral students in religions and education. Other European hubs for doctoral research in religious education include the universities of Hamburg, Helsinki and Stockholm, and there is increasing contact between research groups, with some academics holding visiting positions in universities in other European countries.

2.6.11 European Book Series

The development of research networks, research projects and doctoral research has also stimulated the publication of research, through books and journal articles. Academic journals such as the *British Journal of Religious Education* (http://www.

tandf.co.uk/journals/bjre) and the *Journal of Beliefs and Values* have become international in outlook, and report a good deal of European research. One particular book series, *Religious Diversity and Education in Europe*, published by Waxmann, was initiated in 2006 and is now a major source of European research findings on RE. At the time of writing (June 2015), 29 volumes have been published, with more on the way.[3] The series publishes significant new research in RE in Europe, including revised versions of recent PhD theses. Much of the REDCo Project's research is published through volumes in the Religious Diversity and Education in Europe series (e.g. Ipgrave et al. 2009; Jackson et al. 2007; Knauth et al. 2008; McKenna et al. 2008; Schihalejev 2010; ter Avest et al. 2009; van der Want et al. 2009; Veinguer et al. 2009).

Peter Schreiner's PhD thesis *Religion im Kontexteiner Europäisierung von Bildung (Religion in the Context of a Europeanisation of Education)* was published in German as volume 22 in the series (Schreiner 2012). Schreiner's research focuses on concepts of religion and education in documents of the Council of Europe and the European Union as the two important political organisations concerned with European integration. His analysis underlines the interrelatedness of religion and education as *explicitly* mentioned in Council of Europe documents and *implicitly* in European Union documents. Schreiner differentiates between three different perspectives on religion: religion as a *private* matter, as *collective* and organised and as a *cultural phenomenon*. Schreiner's study underlines the need for an increased exchange on issues of religion and education between organisations of civil society and the European institutions. The study provides insights and material for a dialogue among the different stakeholders, including religious communities.

2.7 Conclusion

The Europeanisation—part of a broader internationalisation—of debates and research about religious education is to be welcomed, despite the ambiguities of the term 'religious education'. Its outcomes have been very positive, in opening up discussion about the rationale for the study of religions in public education, building networks of communication for exchanging ideas on pedagogy and policy and for collaborative research, fostering new, outward looking doctoral research, and extending the publication of research on RE. These developments are highly relevant to discussions at a national level, which can become over-focused on particular issues. For example, research from REDCo (e.g. Knauth et al. 2008) and elsewhere on comparative RE (e.g. Bråten 2013 and this volume) shows that the relationship between theory, policy and practice in particular countries is highly complex; it is not simply 'top down', and a range of both supra and sub national influences are also part of the picture. This research shows that a particular trend in practice in a particular state is very unlikely to be explained by a single 'top down' influence or factor.

[3] http://www.waxmann.com/index.php?id=reihen&no_cache=1&tx_p2waxmann_pi1%5Boberkategorie%5D=OKA100024&tx_p2waxmann_pi1%5Breihe%5D=REI100189.

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Chapter 3
Comparative Studies in Religious Education: Perspectives Formed Around a Suggested Methodology

Oddrun Marie Hovde Bråten

Abstract In this chapter, I present the methodology from my book *Towards a Methodology for Comparative Studies in RE*: *A Study of England and Norway*. This is a new suggested methodology for systematic comparison of religious education, mainly between different states. Comparative studies in related fields (such as religious studies and comparative education) and pioneering works in comparative religious education inform the methodology. This is a synthesis of two sets of ideas. The first is an idea of three dimensions in comparative education: supranational, national and subnational processes. The second set of ideas regards levels of the curriculum: societal, institutional, instructional and experiential. The book explores the levels by examining how supranational, national and subnational processes affect them. Civil enculturation, social imaginaries and national imaginaries are important analytical concepts. In this chapter, I illustrate the methodology by presenting some findings from the original study and some discussions from later publications. I also reflect on some of the topic from the Religious Education in a Global–Local World conference held in Cork, Ireland, August 29–30, 2013, such as 'historical and political contexts' and 'youth and children', in light of this methodology.

3.1 Introduction

'Religious Education in a Global–Local World'—the title of the conference in Cork, on which this publication is based—could have been an alternative title for my book *Towards a Methodology for Comparative Studies of Religious Education*: *a Study of England and Norway* (Bråten 2013b). This methodology takes account of the relationship between the supranational—the global—and the national and subnational in religious education (RE). It is a tool for exploring this relationship comparatively

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while taking contextual elements seriously. The question of the relationship between the global and the local is a reason to do comparative work, as this is best explored through comparative studies. In today's world, RE practitioners in many countries are facing many of the same challenges, and it makes sense to explore this comparatively.

In this chapter, I explain my approach to the question of what comparative studies in RE are, and I present the core ideas of my suggested methodology. Then, I elaborate on its core components—the three dimensions and four levels of the methodology—and exemplify it further by presenting some findings from the original study and discussions involving the methodology in later publications. Included here are comments on a comparison between nine Western European countries (Bråten 2014b) and an explanation of how the model of the methodology can be seen as a map of contexts of relevance to RE (Bråten 2013c). Finally, I illustrate the model further by commenting on how it can be used to explore, think, delimit and analyse areas of interest to RE research. I also argue that in today's globalized world, it is necessary to see the field of RE, with all its differences nationally and subnationally, as a supranational field, and that the model helps point out how different levels and dimensions can be seen as connected or disconnected.

3.2 What Are Comparative Studies in RE?

Comparative studies in RE can be seen as explicit comparisons of RE between two or more national educational systems. They can be further defined by a survey of what kind of comparative studies exist; for example, Schweitzer (2012) has identified different types of existing studies as country-by-country comparisons, problem-centred comparative studies, integrated international empirical studies and comparative historical studies. However, many of the existing studies (Osmer and Schweitzer 2003; Weisse 2007), including my own (Bråten 2010; Bråten 2013b), transcend these categories (Bråten 2014a: 25).

With regard to the suggested methodology, I prefer to see it as the study of internationally shared problems, to look at issues concerning RE in a supranational perspective (Bråten 2013a, 2014a)—an idea I have taken from discussions in the field of comparative education (Kallo and Rinne 2006). In a world where different forms of RE across borders are facing similar challenges—having to do, for instance, with pluralization, secularization or globalization—I suggest that comparative analysis should focus on the impact of supranational processes on national developments. Such a study does not have to be an explicit comparison between two cases but can, for instance, be a study of how supranational processes affect Norwegian educational policy developments (Karlsen 2006). It can, for example, be an exploration of English RE in light of pluralization, of which Jackson's (2004) *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality* is an example. That pluralization is a supranational process makes this a study of interest also outside England, because this same process also influences others.

A comparative study has to be delimited, as it is not sensible to try to compare 'everything', and comparisons could be done in many different ways. In Bråten (2013b: 26), the scope was firstly limited mainly to RE after the shift to multifaith types in England in 1988 and in Norway in 1997, and secondly the framework for selecting examples was based on Goodlad and Su's (1992) idea of 'levels of curriculum'. Within the societal and institutional levels, academic debates and educational policies were focused on and discussed comparatively to look for reasons for similarities and differences. As quantitative data were not available, examples from qualitative data were linked to ideas of national imaginaries in order to discuss the instructional and experiential levels of the curriculum. In a recent comparative analysis of nine countries in Western Europe, where the methodology was applied again (Bråten 2014b), the material for analysis was delimited to nine national chapters in Rothgangel et al. (2014) and the 12 categories that structured these chapters. Here the focus was on how plurality was discussed and handled differently in those countries' educational systems. These examples represent two different ways of applying the methodology—one a broad exploration of the levels in each country, the other a more focused analysis of limited research findings.

3.3 Core Ideas of the Methodology

The perspective that comparative studies are about exploration of developments in one country in an international context was found in the field of comparative education (Dale 2006). It is one of two central ideas in this methodology. The other is found in comparative religious studies—namely, that for the comparison to be valid, it needs to be based on thorough contextual knowledge (Paden 1994). Emphasis on contextuality is also a well-known theme in religious education (Skeie et al. 2013). Other central analytical tools in my comparative studies are *social imaginaries*, *national imaginaries* and *social enculturation* (Schiffauer et al. 2004). These concepts are used to grasp the depth of the national dimension.

The three dimensions and four levels methodology is a combination of two sets of ideas:

1. That there are three dimensions in comparative studies: *supranational* processes, *national* processes and *subnational* processes (Dale 2006)
2. That there are four different levels of curriculum in a country: (A) the *societal* level, (B) the *institutional* level, (C) the *instructional* level and (D) the *experiential* level (Goodlad and Su 1992)

Combined, these ideas become a tool for taking the depth of the national contexts seriously while also considering the impact of supranational processes. Illustrated as a model, it may look like Fig. 3.1.

The model illustrates how each level exists in each dimension. There could, in theory, be a straight line of influence between (A) the societal level, (B) the institutional level, (C) the instructional level and (D) the experiential level, but we know

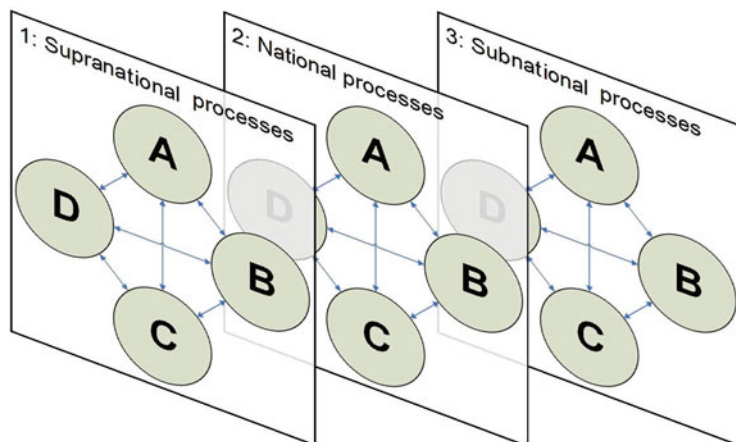

Fig. 3.1 Levels of curriculum: (**a**) the societal level, (**b**) the institutional level, (**c**) the instructional level, (**d**) the experiential level

from practice and research on practice (e.g. Fuglseth 2014; Bråten 2014c), that this is not always how teaching and learning happen. It is not always the case that that which is in the formal written curriculum, the institutional level (B), is that which the teachers teach (C) and the pupils learn (D), or is that which various members of society expect (A). In this model, the idea of linearity between the levels is counteracted, illustrated by *two-way arrows* and the *crossed arrows* in the centre. This makes clear the possibilities of *bypasses* between levels, where influences do not follow a straight line. For example, I saw how pupils with a secular humanist family background formulated views about their RE, which echoed the Humanist Association's arguments in the public debate, which would be part of the societal level (Bråten 2013b: 175). I elaborate on the different aspects of the methodology below.

3.4 The Dimensions

I have taken the view that in comparative studies, one should consider the supranational, national and subnational dimensions because many processes affecting RE in a country are of a supranational nature. I distinguish between *formal* and *informal* processes in the dimensions, where formal processes refer to formal educational policy-making or juridical processes. Examples of formal supranational processes could be the case against the state of Norway in the European Court of Human Rights (Lied 2009) or the production of the 'Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12' for RE in publicly funded schools by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe 2008). Informal processes, on the other hand, are social and/or political developments that go on in and through the formal processes but also outside them and in part independently of them, such as *secularization*, *pluralization* and *globalization*.

A central point is to see how these supranational processes take different forms as they are met in different national contexts. To compare how supranational processes are met differently, you need two or more countries in an explicit comparison, and you may then be able to analyse and find reasons for similarities and differences: Why do England and Norway have the multifaith approach, while Germany does not? Why has Finland chosen a model with parallel subjects, and how different or similar is that to, for instance, the parallel model in Belgian public schools? In general, reasons for differences are found in the national dimension, while reasons for similarities may be perceived in the common challenges, the supranational processes. However, analysis reveals that this is not always so straightforward. In my own analysis, national history—including the traditional relationship between state, church and education—proved decisive for what kind of RE is attempted even in meeting the same supranational challenges of, for instance, pluralization of society (Bråten 2013b).

With regard to the *formal* processes, a distinction is also made between *general* educational policy and *specific* RE policies. Of course, the politics relating specifically to religious education are most relevant, but general developments in educational politics are often very important to religious education as well—for example, the move towards learning outcome–based curricula, which is a supranational trend, and the emphasis on certain school subjects that are subject to international measurements (e.g. mathematics, language) over others that are not subject to the same measurement regimes (RE, social sciences, arts).

The *subnational dimension* is important in comparisons between national regions, especially in national contexts, where the content of RE is decided locally, as in England and Wales with their locally agreed syllabuses, or in Germany with the different Ländern having varying practices. In both England and Germany, there is, however, also a national level of legislation regulating RE. In Norway, there is a national curriculum, but, even here, local variations would be important factors to consider—for example, with regard to local work to adjust the curriculum or the sociocultural makeup of the school's surroundings. If empirical methods are used in a research project, it is always necessary to consider the subnational dimension. If one is interested in discussing the levels of practice, considering the subnational context is equally necessary, as practice always takes place in a local setting in addition to a national setting, as well as—in our globalized age—somehow always also in a supranational context, as the model illustrates.

The dimensions are understood in terms of processes, and time is recognized as a separate dimension. Ongoing debates and rapid changes are familiar traits of RE in many countries and in supranational fora relating to RE.

3.5 The Levels

The four levels consist of:

(A) *The societal level*: sociopolitical processes involved in deciding the content of a curriculum. Seen as an ongoing process, this includes politics, research and

general societal debate. This is the level most remote from the recipients—the learners—though they may participate in the discussions through the media or other democratic processes. Students may also be influenced by public debate or discussions with family—around the kitchen table, perhaps.

In the model, we find the societal level in all of the subnational, national and supranational dimensions. For example, how to deal with how religious plurality is discussed in international fora but also at a national level. The debates about religious plurality and RE in different countries are related, caused by the same tendencies towards pluralization and globalizing processes, but they also take specific *national styles* (Bråten 2013b: 198–202). For example, in France, this kind of debate would be coloured by the traditional discussions of the secularity of the state (Willaime 2014). In Scotland, the main factors influencing the nature of the discussion nationally may be the relatively small number of religious adherents outside the traditional religions, comprising a Protestant, secularized but traditional majority and an (Irish) Catholic minority (Conroy 2014). Focusing on subnational variations may be relevant if one wants to highlight differences between regions according to traditional religious affiliations, as well as, for example, the degree of local pluralization (Bråten 2014b).

(B) *The institutional level* is the curriculum derived from the societal level but specified by the state or province, or, in some cases, by the school boards. In some countries, the written curricula or syllabuses are decided locally, in schools or in the local area, while in other countries, they are decided nationally. For instance, in England, the institutional level includes the law, the non-statutory national framework, the locally agreed syllabuses and the GCSE examined syllabuses, while in Norway, it consists of the law and the national curriculum for religious education. Local work in schools to adjust the national curriculum may be seen as part of the institutional level, or it might be seen as part of the instructional level.

No supranational RE curriculum exists, but there are some formal documents and processes that give strong advice regarding the formal level of the curriculum, such as the Toledo Guiding Principles (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2007), or the 'Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12' for RE from the Council of Europe (2008), and *Signposts* (Council of Europe 2014). Though none would be legally binding for any country, they represent recommendations from the Committee of Foreign Ministers of 47 European countries and might be supposed to have some influence on curriculum developments in member states. The recommendations are derived from *formal* supranational processes in the Council of Europe, in the model: 1A. What lie behind this are, however, *informal* supranational processes, on the societal level (A)—changes in society regarding the religious makeup of the population, going on all over Europe and beyond.

While levels A and B are theoretical levels, consisting of ideas about what should be learned and how, levels C and D are practical levels. Here the focus shifts to what is actually done and learned in RE. To include this in the analysis, the use of empirical methods is necessary. In my original study, I did some

observations and interviews myself and also looked at other available materials, especially from the REDCo research (e.g. Van der Want et al. 2009). Empirical data soon become outdated, and this complicates the analysis. Still, I would like to stress the importance of including those levels and not stopping investigation of what the situation is and has been for 'real' RE on the ground. With regard to a document such as *Signposts* (Council of Europe 2014), it is especially pressing to reflect on the relationship with the levels of practice. How, one may ask, are links to classroom activities to occur?

(C) *The instructional level* is how teachers plan and deliver the curriculum. This depends on the institutional level, which would prescribe what should be taught. However, Goodlad's research, for example, has shown that there are several other processes deciding what will in the end be delivered (Goodlad and Su 1992). These include a teacher's skills and interest in RE, but a number of additional factors—including resources, the number of lessons per week, the priority on the school's agenda and support by school management—also play into the equation. The teacher may also be influenced by societal debates on the one hand and by his or her pupils and the local context on the other. The model illustrates connections between domains that, each in its own way, may influence what actually goes on in an RE classroom. These connections include influences that do not follow a sequential order, through *bypasses*.

(D) *The experiential level* is the curriculum that is internalized by the receivers—the learners—which may be seen as the end of all other levels. For this reason, Goodlad states this to be the most important of all curriculum levels and 'the test' of all curriculum organizations (Goodlad and Su 1992: 239). However, especially when RE is discussed in politics, it seems that this is not always the central perspective. For example, in a recent book on Norwegian RE in practice (Bråten 2014c), I suggested that sometimes politics regarding RE may seem to be directed primarily towards the societal level. Seen as part of politics, it becomes an arena for negotiating the role of religion in society without enough regard for the learners' situation.

In Bråten (2013b), I saw how pupils' answers reflected their teacher's view, but there were also examples of pupils expressing criticism of the RE they had experienced. This is an example of a *bypass*, where pupils are influenced directly from the societal or the institutional levels. Any actor, situated anywhere in the model, may be subject to a bypass, i.e. influences are not restricted to linear logic (as illustrated by the crossed arrows in the model). It may be necessary to create bypasses for *Signposts* (Council of Europe 2014) to take any effect. It is a central point in the production of *Signposts* to make the Council of Europe's recommendations on religious education in the context of intercultural education more useful for educational contexts. One educational context would be the level of policy developments (levels A/B), but it can also be at the level of actual teaching (C). For the latter to become possible in the near future, the content of *Signposts* needs to be taught in teacher education, for example, or in other ways made available to teachers. This would be an example of a bypass from level B of the supranational dimension to, for

example, level C on the subnational level. The idea of the bypass underpins the complexity in the relationship between the levels. Even though it must be understood that a model, by necessity, must be seen as a model of a *reality*, which is much more complex, it is through its capacity to simplify that the model has the potential to be a useful tool for analysis.

In the following discussion, I give some examples of findings in my original study (Bråten 2013b) and a later comparison between nine Western European countries (Bråten 2014b). Further, I explain how the model may be seen as a map of different contexts of relevance to RE and comment on where some topics of relevance for the field of RE would fit into the model.

3.6 Findings in the Original Study

In my own studies, this methodology proved productive for suggesting *explanations* for differences and similarities between RE in England and RE in Norway, as opposed to just pointing them out. I found that there were two main sources for explanations of differences: (1) from inside the domain of RE—differences in how the traditions of RE have been formed; and (2) from outside the domain of RE—differences in general school policies (Bråten 2013b: 82). The complexity here, however, can be illustrated by an example: a difference between England and Norway was that in England, scholars with a religious studies background had been both interested and influential in developments in schools' RE at an earlier stage (Smart 1968; O'Grady 2005; Jackson and O'Grady 2007), while in Norway, it was only after a political curricular change in 1997 that scholars of religious studies became involved (Bråten 2013b: 57–63). This relates to source 1—the domain of RE—but then again, reasons for this difference can be seen in relation to the general organization of schools and RE's place in the educational system, i.e. source 2—the domain of general school politics.

The fact that in Norway, RE is part of a central national curriculum, while in England, the curriculum for RE is decided locally, seemed relevant to developments in RE research. In Norway, there had been a strong focus on historical or interpretative studies of developments in the national curricula, while in England, I found no parallel to this (Bråten 2013b: 71). This could be seen as an explanation of type 1—from inside the domain of RE. However, this is again related to the historical involvement (in Norway and England) or present involvement (in England) of churches in provision of schooling. The history of the relationship between state, church and schools is relevant to the development of the whole education system in England, as well as in Norway, and in it lies the potential for explaining differences in RE even today. An example is the different approaches to opt-out rules: whereas in Norway, historically there has been a fight by some to get the right to opt out and there is presently only a partial right to withdrawal, in England, there is a full opt-out right dating back to legislation in 1870 (Bråten 2013b: 87).

In general, explanations for similarities were seen as a factor of the supranational influences—for example, that changes towards a multifaith approach in both England and Norway were related to addressing the supranational process of cultural and religious pluralization of Western societies. Still, the significance of the national dimension was such that I was led to ask if any direct parallels between the two countries' RE were coincidental. Explanations for developments are primarily found within the national dimension, but part of this is how supranational influences, such as pluralization, have been dealt with in the national tradition.

For example, in both countries, we find debates about preserving cultural heritage vs integrating plurality, but they have very different historical resonances. England has historically had to deal with more religious or cultural 'difference'. It had non-denominational Christian education as far back as 1870 and more different Christian traditions existing in addition to the established Church of England. England, being part of Great Britain (which includes three nations) and part of the British Empire, with its colonial history, also plays into its more pluralistic national imaginary. Norway, on the other hand, is imagined as more mono-religious and mono-cultural, which may be related to the one very dominant church tradition, the Lutheran Church of Norway. Further, the nation-building character of Norway's national (school) policy since the emancipation from Denmark (1814) and Sweden (1905) also strengthens the idea of a unified culture (Engen et al. 2006; Bråten 2014a: 27–30).

Applying the analytic concepts from Schiffauer et al. (2004), I found that multifaith RE, despite many similar aims, took on different national 'styles' in England and Norway. I saw different national imaginaries as relevant to the conceptualization of multifaith RE. Among the elements that may have been imagined differently was the idea of the 'the multicultural' in society and in schools. Similar aims from national guidelines seemed to be perceived differently by teachers and pupils in England vs Norway. For example, views on whether RE's main aim was to be integrative with regard to societal plurality (England) or to preserve cultural heritage (Norway) seemed to be markedly different (Lund 2009; Everington 2009). This led me to suggest that in Norway, the idea of the multicultural is negotiated on the basis of an idea of 'sameness', while in England, it was negotiated on the basis of 'difference' (Bråten 2013b: 161).

Significant differences in the school systems in general—as well as in the traditional relationship between state, school and church—were very important for understanding why England and Norway had each chosen a multifaith approach. Then again, it was, in both cases, the challenges posed by the supranational processes that had led to this new type of RE in state schools. What became clear in the comparative discussion was how developments reflected a balance between national processes and participation in supranational processes.

3.7 Comparison Between Nine Western European Countries

The impression that developments in a country's RE reflect a balance between national and supranational processes was strengthened by a later comparison of nine Western European countries (Bråten 2014b). While the original study (Bråten 2013b) offered a broad level-by-level comparative exploration, in this chapter in a book about Western Europe in the Rel-Edu series (Rothgangel et al. 2014), I chose to focus on one specific question—namely, how the challenge of increasing religious plurality was handled in those countries' educational systems and their RE. Because of limited information about the levels of practice (C and D), the societal and institutional levels were emphasized in the analysis.

According to the principles in the methodology that one should not 'compare everything' and that there should be enough depth on each national context, I chose to focus in the main on three of the nine countries: Belgium, France and Scotland. Others could have been chosen, but these served the purpose of demonstrating the breadth of variations across the national cases. *Belgium* was chosen because of its massive plurality in society and in its school system, *France* because of its unique position with its secular foundation of the school system and *Scotland* to represent an 'other than England' country from the British Isles, and also because of its 'traditionalism' and more marginal plurality. In addition, Belgium is traditionally Catholic, while Scotland is traditionally Protestant in their majority tradition. Seen together with France's strong secular tradition, this, in a way, covers the ground when it comes to traditional majorities in and across European countries. A central point is, however, also the uniqueness of each national context, where these three served the purpose of illustrating just that.

I considered the topography of the traditional religious landscape, what the plurality in those countries consisted of in more detail, and current conceptions and tasks of RE. Common to all nine cases, including my three, were censuses that showed that in every country, there were growing numbers who would tick the box 'no religion', and at the same time, there was an increase in the number of different religions. It might seem that secularization and pluralization were ongoing at the same time, but this was discussed also in relation to theories of increasing individualization in the way people in general related to religion, and to the question of whether the categories in the censuses are still sufficiently relevant to capture people's relationship to religion.

In the three countries I studied in detail, four main approaches to dealing with religious plurality in the educational systems were identified (Bråten 2014b: 305):

1. To maintain a religiously plural educational system (Belgium)
2. To promote a common educational system with an inclusive RE (Scotland)
3. In the face of state secularity, education strictly about religious facts (France)
4. Parallel subject options (state schools in Belgium)

One important insight is that more than one type of RE may be found in one country. This is especially true for Belgium but also for France and Scotland. In

many countries, there is a strong societal (professional, political) debate in which integration on the one hand and interest in preserving tradition on the other seem to be at the heart of controversies. The analysis brought out very clearly how important the specifics of the national context are for the way debates are unfolding and how the challenge of the growing plurality is handled. Despite profound differences, I found that the justification for the present system in Belgium, France and Scotland, for example, was to ensure the basic human right of religious freedom. In the present situation, there is no longer harmony between traditional educational systems and present religious reality. Therefore, I questioned whether the motive of ensuring human rights is actually met in a satisfactory way, even if religious diversity is increasingly being taken into account within each system.

Debates about religious education are unfolding in every country, the reason generally being that there is no longer harmony between current systems and the life views of the population. In their chapter on Belgium, Derroitte et al. argue that:

> Religious Education in Belgium, in the public realm of the school, is dealing with this broader European and global diversity, but because of the small space of the country and its deep history, the discourses on religious education seem to be even more intense. (Derroitte et al. 2014: 57)

Here it becomes clear that supranational processes influence developments and debates but also that the specific national context shapes how this is handled. For every nation, there would probably be perceptions of a 'deep history', and I would see this as a central part of the national imaginary (Bråten 2013b; Schiffauer et al. 2004). This is important to many people's (national) identity and may be a central ingredient of social cohesion.

The national imaginary is not easily changed, and there may be good reasons not to press for changes too quickly. Yet, within the traditional structures in Belgium, those who do not fall into one of the (seven) official categories of formally recognized traditions, reflected in the educational structures, will somehow continue to be 'others'. Belgium is here serving as an example of something that is found also in other cases—all of the nine cases studied in this volume, including England, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. We see that the educational structures that are in place are characterized by traditional patterns of religious life in each country. The national imaginary seems decisive for what kind of RE exists and how it is developing in the face of the challenge of growing secularization, pluralization and globalization. Summed up, this can be described as new social patterns meeting old educational structures. This is how the countries of Western Europe (and beyond) are dealing with religious plurality in education.

3.8 A Map of Different Contexts of Relevance to RE

All of the levels may be seen as different contexts of relevance for a specific RE class or one specific pupil in that class learning about religion/life views (Bråten 2013c). From the child's/learner's perspective, one may, for example, ask how an academic debate, part of the societal level (A), affects his or her learning situation. What the formal institutional curriculum (B) includes is definitely a context of relevance for her/his learning, but how is it interpreted and practised? This is a question of the relationship between the levels. An important link is the teacher, here conceptualized as the instructional level (C). The teacher's skills and capacity to teach are of importance for what is in the end delivered. On the experiential level (D) is the child/learner with his or her background, skills and resources as well.

Seen from the experiential level (D), the model can be regarded as child focused and not a top-down model. The levels can be seen as contexts within which to identify factors relevant to the child's learning; context here meaning educational surroundings of relevance for RE learning. The levels, from societal to experiential, can be said to move from text to practice. At the same time, there is also a movement from macro to micro, from the supranational and national to the subnational context. The dimensions and the levels must be considered simultaneously. As the dimensions are conceptualized as processes, seeing RE as a continuously developing process in the intersection between school, religion and society, a past-future axis may also be seen as being integrated into the model. It is also about transforming outer space into inner space, as knowledge from religions, life views and ethics meet the subjective reality of the individual child (Bråten 2013c: 243). It is at this crossroads that the child's interpretations, and possibly edification, can take place. A main point is that the model relates the micro level of the individual learner—the experiential level including all three dimensions—to a larger whole, represented by the three other levels existing in all three dimensions as well.

3.9 Where Some Topics of Relevance to the Field of RE Would Fit into the Model

Expanding on this view, it is possible to place some areas of interest to RE researchers in the model, and I use some of the topics listed as relevant to the 2013 conference in Cork on 'Religious Education in a Global–Local World' as examples. For example, *historical and political contexts* might be placed as an item at level A, the societal level, as this would involve questions of societal factors (Fig. 3.2).

Potentially, the model invites the researcher to ask whether he or she wants to explore the national context, the supranational context or the subnational context, and/or the interconnectedness between them. A further question could be what the relationship to legislation is, which would be a part of level B. Legislation and curricular documents often contain information of interest to those researching the

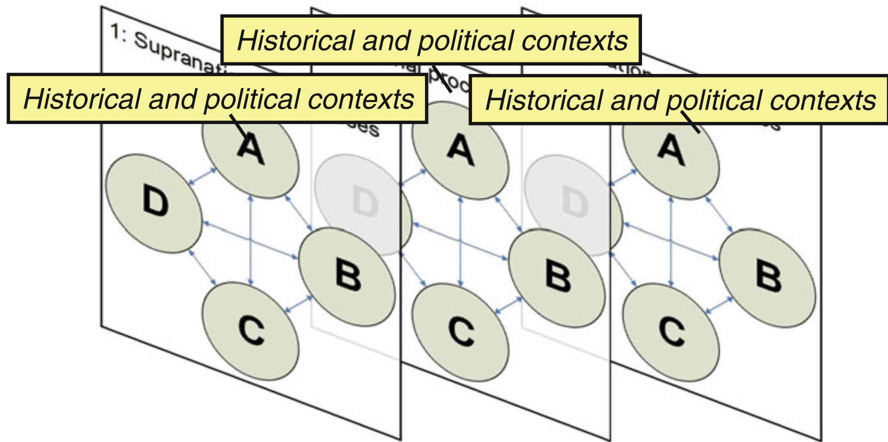

Fig. 3.2 Historical and political contexts – societal level

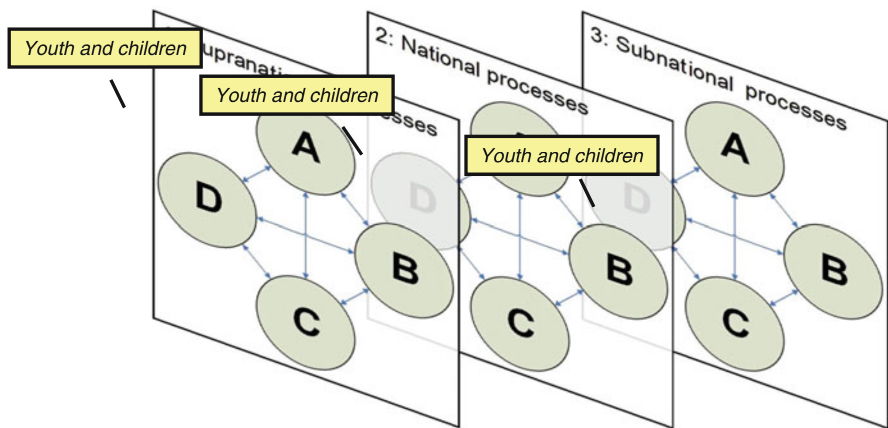

Fig. 3.3 Youth and children – experiential level

historical and political context of a country's RE. Importantly, if the model is used, it always invites the researcher to ask about the relationship to practice (B and C).

The model has the potential to help clarify what questions to ask, as well as what sources to search. It may be a tool for investigating how to delimit the research or where to expand it. For example, is exploration of the practical levels to be included? This is a challenging but important issue. Knowledge about real children's lives, views and experiences are essential for developing good theory for RE, but, on the other hand, such data need to be renewed frequently so as not to be outdated, which demands a great deal of resources. Different empirical methods could be used within the framework of this methodology (Bråten 2013b: 42, 2014a: 33).

A further example is that if your research interest is in *youth and children*, they are represented by the experiential level (D) (Fig. 3.3).

The learners always exist in a subnational context, a local classroom somewhere, influenced by subnational processes in their local environment, such as the socio-cultural makeup of the neighbourhood, whether it is a town or a rural area, and what kind of religious life is characteristic of the area. But they are also in a national context, which would also be important, for instance, in the question of learning (about) cultural heritage or the country's traditional religion(s). At the same time, some children might have migrated from other parts of the world or might have families abroad. Further, many pupils have travelled, and virtually all watch TV. All are probably using the Internet and social media. Thus, the world at large is somehow present in any classroom today. This might be 'activated' at any time, if a teacher or students raise issues from, for example, global news or if, for example, Christianity or Islam, as global religions, are topics that the curriculum suggests they explore. The model illustrates RE in a global–local world and helps the researcher orientate his or her research in the field, seen as a supranational field. All three dimensions are of relevance to research on youth and children in RE, but so are all three levels.

3.10 Seeing the Field of RE Research as a Supranational Field

We live in a global–local world, in which students learning about religion in schools are, in a sense, all global citizens. Most have travel experience, many have migrant experiences and all have access to information through media of various sorts. International news increasingly portrays religions as global phenomena, while the homeland's traditional religions may have declining numbers of adherents. It is quite possible that what is relevant to children of today to learn about religion is less reliant on national borders than the current provisions of RE represent, in most countries. Perhaps it is a global outlook that is needed to develop RE in different countries today into something that continues to be relevant to today's youth.

At the same time, it is very clear from my studies so far that the national dimension continues to be important for many reasons, not least reasons having to do with social cohesion, tradition and sense of belonging. Therefore, I believe that an important way forward for RE as an international field of research is to study specific national types of RE comparatively, in combination with considering the influence of supranational processes, such as secularization and pluralization. In particular, perhaps a new focus is needed specifically on the influence of globalization. For this, the suggested methodology is a potential tool.

3.11 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology from my book *Towards a Methodology for Comparative Studies in Religious Education* (Bråten 2013b). I have argued that we should see comparative studies in RE as the study of internationally shared problems. I have demonstrated how the combination of the three dimensions and four levels is a tool for taking national (and local) context seriously while considering the impact of supranational processes on RE.

I have exemplified this methodology further by presenting some findings from the original study and in later publications, including an explanation of how the model/methodology can be seen as a map of contexts of relevance to RE. Finally, I have illustrated the model by commenting on how it can be used to explore, think, delimit and analyse areas of interest to RE research.

I have also argued that in today's globalized world, it is necessary to see the field of RE, with all its differences nationally and subnationally, as a supranational field, and that the model helps point out how different levels and dimensions can be seen as connected or disconnected. In today's world, it is not the case that processes of relevance to RE in a country are found only in the national dimension. It is, therefore, necessary to do international and comparative work to understand what goes on even in one single country. I believe it is useful, if the development of RE is to continue to be relevant to today's young, to explore it as a supranational field, where the shared supranational process of globalization, in particular, deserves more attention. For this, my methodology is potentially a tool that I hope can be useful for further developments of comparative studies in RE.

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Chapter 4
What Have We Learned from Four Decades of Non-confessional Multi-faith Religious Education in England? Policy, Curriculum and Practice in English Religious Education 1969–2013

Denise Cush

Abstract If we date the beginning of non-confessional, multi-faith religious education in England to the formation of the Shap Working Party for World Religions in Education in 1969, we now have over 40 years of experience of attempting to construct policy and curricula for integrative religious education and to put these into practice in schools. Drawing upon academic research, reports from the government body responsible for inspecting schools in England (Ofsted) and other reports, and professional experience, the chapter will examine the factors leading to the introduction of this form of religious education, the aspirations of teachers in the 1970s, changes in English society and education, religious studies in universities, perceptions of the place of religions in a globalised world and consequent developments in religious education. It will examine the recent *Review of Religious Education in England* and *National Curriculum Framework for Religious Education* (October 2013) produced by the Religious Education Council for England and Wales. The author was involved in this initiative as a member of the Steering Group, representing the subject at university level. Looking back over 40 years, and at the situation in 2013, the chapter will suggest the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities for religious education in England.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on religious education in England rather than the UK as a whole, as religious education in Scotland and Northern Ireland has always been separately governed and RE in Wales has become increasingly different from that of

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England in recent years.[1] It discusses the factors that led to the introduction of non-confessional, multi-faith religious education, changes affecting religious education over the last four decades, and the strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities for religious education in England at the time of writing (February 2014).

By "non-confessional, multi-faith religious education", I mean religious education that is an academic school subject with educational aims rather than religious ones. This means that although it may seek to contribute to a pupil's personal and spiritual as well as intellectual development, it does not seek to nurture them in a particular religious tradition, nor in any way to evangelise, proselytise, catechise or promote any particular religion or "religion" in general. The content of this subject is drawn from a wide range of religious traditions, including so-called "world religions", smaller indigenous traditions and more recent developments, as well as "non-religious" traditions which play a similar role to "religions" in people's lives, and, in England, also a range of philosophical and ethical issues. This type of religious education is suitable for students from all faiths and none, taught together. Hence it is called "integrative" religious education by Wanda Alberts (2007) and "religion education" in South Africa.

The two countries that pioneered this form of religious education over 40 years ago were Sweden and England/Wales. In Sweden, *religionskunskap* (knowledge about religion) was introduced into the new curriculum in 1969 (Tidman 2005), which was also the date of the formation of the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education (http://www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/), a group of UK university lecturers, teachers and teacher trainers who championed the introduction of multi-faith religious education. An influential document in England and Wales was *Schools Council Working Paper 36* (Schools Council 1971) which recommended a phenomenological approach to a non-confessional, multi-faith religious education. Since religious education is organised locally rather than nationally in England, there is no single date for the start of non-confessional, multi-faith religious education in the country as a whole, but initiatives such as these soon spread to influence local syllabuses during the 1970s, with the 1970 Bath syllabus being a controversial early adopter of the Shap approach even before Working Paper 36 (Copley 1997: 99–100). Forty years later, non-confessional, multi-faith religious education is still a minority option for states around the world, that minority notably now including Norway, Denmark, Scotland and South Africa, as the majority opt either for leaving religion out of education altogether, or for confessional religious education, the latter either in the dominant religious tradition only or in separated faith groups. It is important to realise that for many countries, the concept of "non-confessional, multi-faith" religious education, is itself a novel paradigm for the subject (see for example Franken and Loobuyck 2011).

[1] Note: some of the material in this chapter reprises that in Cush (2011), but expanded and brought up to date.

4.2 Factors Behind the Introduction of Non-confessional, Multi-faith Religious Education at the End of the 1960s

Factors that influenced the introduction of non-confessional, multi-faith religious education include increasing religious plurality (in part attributable to post-war immigration from Commonwealth countries), increasing secularisation, the general social liberalism of the 1960s, liberal protestant theology, the development of religious studies as opposed to theology in British universities, the popularity of phenomenological approaches in religious studies, and the youth culture of the time which impacted on the pupils in schools and their teachers. The late 1960s and early 1970s saw an increase in, and increasing awareness of, the diversity of religious traditions present in England. This was partly as a result of immigration from the 1950s onwards, but also increasing awareness of a wider world through possibilities of travel and improved communications. Teachers in schools had to respond to the presence of children in their classrooms from Hindu, Sikh and Muslim religious backgrounds and Asian cultural backgrounds, before the introduction of multi-faith syllabuses. Such teachers and their trainers were part of the groundswell that led to the changes of 1969 and the early 1970s.

"Secularisation" is a very contested term, and to what extent England was 40 years ago, or is today, "secular", "Christian", "post-secular" or "diverse" (or all of the above) is much debated (see for example, Woodhead 2012: 5–11). Nevertheless, statistics of church attendance, the numbers of people prepared to call themselves "non-religious", and decreasing presumptions of Christian values certainly suggest a steady decrease in some spheres of the social influence of Christianity or theism more generally. Whatever the sociological theories say, in practice the presence of pupils and teachers identifying as "non-religious", or from "non-religious" families, puts a question mark over the suitability of confessional, even if "non-denominational", Christian religious education. In terms of numbers, the "secular" or "non-religious" pupils were and are a much larger proportion of the school population than pupils from non-Christian religions, especially away from the main urban centres (see Rudge 1998). The late 1960s saw a more general social liberalism, partly linked to the decline in influence of traditional Christianity, as evidenced by changes to laws relating to abortion and homosexuality (though in fact such changes were supported by some influential Christians). This more liberal and secular climate was supportive of a non-confessional, multi-faith religious education, as is evidenced by the contributions of the National Secular Society and British Humanist Association to the survey conducted by the Church of England's 1970 Report *The Fourth R* (Copley 1997: 98).

It is notable that the countries that introduced non-confessional, multi-faith religious education were those with (at least before 2000) an established and relatively liberal protestant church. Liberal protestant theology, beginning to be popularised in England in the 1960s (for example, in John Robinson's 1963 *Honest to God*), had been arguing for some time that divine revelation could be found in traditions other than Christianity (see Bates 1994). This openness to other faiths is clearly found in

the writing of the theologian and philosopher of religion John Hick, whose 1973 book *God and the Universe of Faiths* called for a "Copernican" shift in thinking that "involves a shift from the dogma that Christianity is at the centre to the realisation that it is *God* who is at the centre, and that all the religions of mankind, including our own, serve and revolve around him" (1973: 131). This provided a theological and philosophical justification for multi-faith religious education, even if not exactly non-confessional. (Hick's later writings are less theistic in language and it has been argued by Geoff Teece (2011) that if understood correctly, Hick's philosophy can provide an underpinning for non-confessional, multi-faith religious education).

A major impetus for non-confessional, multi-faith religious education was the development of religious studies as a discipline separate from theology in British universities. Although the study of "comparative religion" predated the 1960s by many decades, it did not take place in Departments of Religious Studies until the establishment of "new" universities in that decade. Particularly influential was the Department at the University of Lancaster, and scholars such as Ninian Smart who concerned themselves with the non-confessional study of religions, plural, at all levels of education; schools as well as universities. Smart was a founding member of the Shap Working Party, and Lancaster University hosted the Schools Council Project for Religious Education in Secondary Schools, between 1969 and 1973. Materials for schools were published between 1977 and 1981, for example *Journeys into Religion Teachers Handbook* (Schools Council 1977). Linked to the influence of Smart, and Lancaster, was the importance of a "phenomenological approach", to religious education, which was a major influence on religious education in England in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. At school level, this approach was mainly about the attempt to portray a variety of religious traditions in an impartial and empathetic way—in other words a synonym for "non-confessional, multi-faith" religious education as opposed to Christian confessional religious education, rather than any deeper engagement with phenomenology as philosophy.

A further important factor came from the pupils themselves rather than policies or professors. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, an interest in "alternative" ways of life was part of youth culture, and imagery from Eastern traditions and Paganism old and new became fashionable. The Beatles famously visited the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi in India in 1968. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness ("Hare Krishnas") came to London in 1969, and George Harrison's song "My Sweet Lord", featuring the Hare Krishna mantra, was the bestselling single of 1971. Whatever the official policies or set syllabuses, good teachers engage with the interests and questions of their pupils, and thus these traditions entered the classroom. Some of these pupils of the late 1960s and early 1970s were motivated to take a serious academic interest in a diversity of religious traditions, and were themselves teachers before the decade was out. The present author, for example, was teaching Hinduism and Buddhism to examination level from 1977.

The non-confessional, multi-faith religious education current in the 1970s in England tended to be characterised by the aim of "understanding" religions, as opposed to "being religious" or "explaining away" religions. It took a position of "methodological agnosticism" (encouraging an open-minded and impartial attitude

whatever one's personal stance; the phenomenological *epoché*) and sought to respect the believer (the phenomenological "empathy"). Those who favoured such religious education positioned it as an academic subject like any other, educational rather than religious, with no assumption of faith on the part of teacher or pupil. Religious education teachers were education professionals rather than an arm of the church. The content of the syllabuses tended to focus on the major so-called "world religions" with Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism gradually joined by Sikhism and Buddhism to become the "big six" traditions that feature in English syllabuses still today. However, religious education was not limited to the study of religious traditions, but also explored the experience and concerns of the pupils themselves, especially with younger children (see for example the Westhill Project in the 1980s (Rudge 2000)). Philosophy of religion and ethical and social issues were popular with older students, and examination syllabuses for pupils aged 16–19 had options in these areas in the 1970s, a choice that has increased in popularity in the following four decades.

To give the impression that all religious education in England in the 1970s was non-confessional and multi-faith would be misleading. There were pioneering locally agreed syllabuses and enthusiastic teachers but it must be remembered that one in three state-funded primary schools and one in six state-funded secondary schools in England were then and still are, to a greater or lesser extent, schools "with a religious character", connected to a religious organisation, the majority being Church of England or Roman Catholic. Thus the centrality of Christianity, and religious education as religious nurture, remained a substantial part of what was on offer in religious education. To complicate matters, some "church schools" were committed to the new multi-faith religious education, and some "county" schools had not yet caught up with it. In the Roman Catholic college for 16- to 18-year-old pupils in which I taught in the 1970s, the problem was addressed by having two sorts of religious education, the academic non-confessional type for examination purposes and the personal faith development type for everyone. However, we also covered a diverse range of faiths in the latter. It was never really that clear.

The 1988 Education Reform Act summed up the situation in the famous clause 8 (3) which still remains "the law" on religious education in Local Authority–run state schools and some categories of church schools to this day. Local Authority agreed syllabuses "must reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian, whilst taking account of the principal religions represented in Great Britain". This clause represents the acknowledgement at national level of multi-faith religious education, as well as the continuing importance of Christianity as the major "heritage" tradition.

4.3 Changes in the Last Four Decades

Much has changed in English society and education since the introduction of non-confessional, multi-faith religious education at the end of the 1960s, not least in the disciplines of religious studies and religious education themselves. Many have commented on the impact of major world events such as the 1979 Iranian revolution putting religion as a political force back on the agenda, the breakup of the "communist bloc" in 1989 releasing all sorts of religious revival and change in Eastern Europe, the association of religion with terrorism and security matters especially since 2001, and the 2008 financial crisis. A comprehensive picture of religion in English society today can be found in Woodhead and Catto (2012).

In some ways, the last four decades have just taken the changes of the 1960s further. Secularisation has increased, at least in terms of self-identification as "non-religious", as can be seen by comparing census data for 2001 and 2011. The number of people identifying as "Christian" falls from 71 % to 59 % and the number of people identifying as "none" rises from 16 % to 25 % (see Census 2011). There are a number of issues that would advise caution in interpreting these figures (see for example Guest et al. 2012: 61–2) but as a generalisation about increasing secularisation they illustrate a trend. There are those who, following Habermas, talk of having entered a "post-secular" phase, in that religion is now more obvious in the public arena, but the current author is wary of using that phrase, which may suggest both that religion went away and came back again and that secularisation is now decreasing.

The census data also illustrate an increase in plurality and religious diversity, with all non-Christian religions (except Judaism, which remains about the same) demonstrating a small but significant increase in numbers of adherents. There is also greater awareness of religious diversity, especially since the Equality Act 2010, which included "religion or belief" as one of the categories of "protected characteristics". An interesting recent piece of research (Weller et al. 2011) investigated the religious affiliation of staff and students in UK universities with the discovery that if the categories of "spiritual" and "pagan" were added to the options, "spiritual" scored higher than any non-Christian religion for staff, and both "spiritual" and "pagan" scored higher than any non-Christian religion, except Islam, for students. In attempting to replicate this research in our own university, student Lindsay Horler (2013, unpublished) discovered that many students could not put themselves in any of the boxes, but exhibited what Lähnemann (2008: 6) calls "patchwork religiosity", drawing upon several traditions in their own personal values. Eleanor Nesbitt has described this as an increase in the "existentially interfaith" (Nesbitt 2011: 232). Thus any account of the increase in religious plurality needs to recognise both "alternative" spiritualities and hybrid religious affiliations as well as traditional "religions".

Major social changes that do not require extended treatment here, but which have had significant impacts on religious education, include the communications revolution, Europeanisation, globalisation, feminism and other forms of diversity

awareness. Today's teachers have access to a wealth of digital resources unavailable in the 1970s. In the religious education world, organisations such as EFTRE—the European Forum for Teachers of RE (www.eftre.net)—and ISREV—the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (www.isrev.org)—have made the sharing of research and practice across the world possible. More attention has been paid to gender, sexual diversity and other equality issues. There have been two or three further generations of youth culture, in which religion or spirituality may not be very central for the majority, in spite of a general tolerance of religious diversity (see for example Savage et al. 2006). However young people from minority groups may see their religion as an important part of their identity.

4.4 Changes Within Religious Studies and Religious Education

In religious studies at university level, and religious education in schools in England, we can see several trends that have changed both subjects since the late 1960s/early 1970s. For a more detailed consideration of these, see Cush and Robinson (2014). However, it is worth listing some of the most important ones.

There has been an ongoing critique of the phenomenological approach from both religious studies and religious education. Examples would include Jackson (1997), Flood (1999), and Fitzgerald (2000). Phenomenology has been criticised for being essentialist about religion and religions, having a hidden agenda (whether that of liberal Christian theology or secular relativism), imposing Western categories on non-Western traditions, being superficial and descriptive, avoiding truth claims, cultural voyeurism, for being impossible (either to suspend your own views or to really empathise with the other) or unethical (engagement being preferable to an impossible "objectivity"). Whatever the validity of these criticisms, there has been a parallel stress on the importance of ethnographic approaches in accessing "real" religion, for example as practised by women and children as opposed to as taught in theory by elite males. Ethnographic approaches reveal diversity within as well as between religions. Examples supporting the ethnographic approach can be found in Jackson (1997, 2000, 2004), Nesbitt (2004), and Geaves (2007).

Religious education has seen a gradual growth in the interest in philosophy of religion and ethics, already present in the classrooms of the 1970s, perhaps in part through the stress on the need for critical thinking found in, for example, Wright's critical realism (e.g. Wright 2000), but also because teachers find that pupils enjoy topics where there is scope for their own views. This development in schools has had an impact on university curricula, such as the development of undergraduate degrees in religions, philosophies and ethics (all plural) at universities such as Bath Spa and Gloucestershire.

In addition to ethnographic/interpretive and critical realist pedagogies in religious education, other important pedagogies that have been developed since the

1970s include the "experiential", stressing pupils' own spiritual development (for example in the influential book *New Methods in Religious Education* (Hammond et al. 1990). The exercises in this book proved very popular with both teachers and pupils. Especially in settings where children interact with others from different faith backgrounds, the "dialogical" approach has proved important. Jackson (2004) gives a helpful summary of these and other developments in religious education responding to plurality, and Grimmitt (2000) introduces the most influential up to that date, including his own important "constructivist" pedagogy.

Important influences upon the study of religions at university level in recent decades have been feminist, queer and post-colonial theories. To some extent these have had an impact on religious education, in that textbooks are now careful to employ inclusive language and have illustrations with women and girls as well as men and boys, portrayals of Eastern and indigenous religions have attempted to escape from Western packaging and issues such as women priests or gay marriage are discussed. But we are yet to see an impact at a deeper level, and the implications of feminist, queer or postcolonial approaches to pedagogy are yet to be explored and developed.

4.5 1994, 2004 and 2014 (Late 2013)

Snapshots of the changing nature of religious education in the second half of our "40 years" can be gained by looking at documents produced in 1994, 2004 and late 2013. 1994 was an important year for English religious education in that it saw the production of the SCAA (School Curriculum and Assessment Authority) model syllabuses for religious education. There were two of these (advisory rather than statutory), and they portrayed a religious education which gave an important place to Christianity, as well as advocating a thorough coverage of the "big six" major religious faiths. These syllabuses were non-confessional, were multi-faith, were informed by both scholarship and consultation with representatives of faith traditions, and related the religious material to the experiences and questions of the pupils. These documents have proved very useful and influential upon agreed syllabuses to this day. However, critics (including the present author) noted the limited choice that only two models gave and argued that there were also some potential problems with the syllabuses. The authors of *A Third Perspective* (Baumfield et al. 1994) criticised the model syllabuses for limiting the content to the six religions, arguing at least for the inclusion of non-religious or humanist perspectives, given the number of children from "non-religious" backgrounds (originally the Humanists had been asked to contribute to the models, but then it was decided to limit them to the "six" religions). Baumfield et al. (including the present author) also thought that the models prioritised the religious material over the interests and concerns of the pupil, with a rather "top-down" approach to learning. The way that the religious material was presented, in six separate "boxes", suggested that religions are completely self-contained rather than interacting with one another, and this perhaps

stresses differences rather than similarities. We argued that there is a value in looking at topics thematically across religions, as well as studying one religion at a time. We suggested organising religious material by seven categories, which we argued were not distorting of religious traditions. This is debated in Copley (1997: 179). The authors have recently published an editorial in the *British Journal of Religious Education* (Baumfield et al. 2014) looking back on 1994 and developments in the following 20 years.

Ten years later, in 2004, the ongoing quest to get religious education right was represented by the publication of *Religious Education, the Non-Statutory National Framework* (QCA 2004). This document was widely supported by both religious education professionals and faith community representatives. The authors of *A Third Perspective* were pleased to see that it allowed for the study of a wider range of religious traditions, specifically naming Zoroastrianism, Jainism and the Bahá'í Faith, as well as "secular philosophies such as humanism" (QCA 2004: 12). It also allowed for an approach through themes as well as through religions, to enable both breadth and depth of content. In a roundabout way, via the Somerset agreed syllabus, the seven categories in *A Third Perspective* contributed to the six areas of enquiry found in the attainment targets for religious education in the 2004 document.

The learning objectives were challenging. For example, pupils aged 11–13 will, among other outcomes, be able to "analyse and explain how religious beliefs and ideas are transmitted by people, texts and traditions", "investigate and explain why people belong to faith communities and explain the reasons for diversity in religion" and "apply a wide range of religious and philosophical vocabulary consistently and accurately, recognising both the power and limitations of language in expressing religious beliefs and ideas" (QCA 2004: 28). These could easily be acceptable as learning outcomes at university level.

Twenty years on from the model syllabuses, in October 2013, the Religious Education Council of England and Wales published *A Review of Religious Education in England*, a document that included both a *National Curriculum Framework for Religious Education* and *Religious Education: the Wider Context*, the latter a document that discusses opportunities and challenges for the future of religious education in England. Again, the *National Curriculum Framework* is non-statutory, as religious education continues to be organised at Local Authority level, but the guidance is presented to assist those writing syllabuses to ensure that religious education is fairly represented alongside the subjects of the English national curriculum. As the number of different types of school has grown in accordance with government policy, "those writing syllabuses" now includes the compilers of Local Authority agreed syllabuses, but also Church of England, Roman Catholic and other religious groups who write syllabuses for faith-based schools, and the increasing numbers of individual schools or groups of schools who are in categories, such as "Academies" and "Free Schools", which are allowed to write their own syllabuses. One rather shocking fact is that the Religious Education Council had to fund the *Review of Religious Education* itself from donations and grants from member organisations and charities and rely on voluntary unpaid work from individuals. No government

money was provided, unlike the case for other subjects. However, some expenses have subsequently been provided for further guidance materials, due out in 2015.

The main impetus for the Religious Education Council's document was that the other subjects in the school curriculum (which constitute the "national curriculum") were subject to a review with a new curriculum to start in September 2014. Writing the document also gave the "religious education community" the opportunity to address some of the problems facing the subject.

There have been some criticisms, inevitably, but the document produced is generally welcomed as at least demonstrating that religious education has a vital place in the school curriculum, and is not going away without a fight. The framework seeks to clarify the aims and purpose of religious education and establish it as a challenging, academic subject. The aims cover knowing and understanding a diverse range of religions and worldviews and the impact they have on individuals and societies, enabling students to make their own responses to the ultimate questions raised by religions and worldviews, and developing skills to engage seriously with religions and worldviews. Examples of possible content are given for different age groups. There is certainly a stress on the intellectual challenge of the subject and its contribution to enabling diverse communities to live together respectfully and peacefully, as well as pupils being able to develop their own views. There is still an ongoing controversy about the inclusion of "non-religious" worldviews alongside "religious" worldviews in the framework.

We have yet to see the impact of the document on syllabuses and thus on practice in the classroom, but perhaps just as influential as the *National Curriculum Framework* will be the questions raised in *The Wider Context* about how best to assure the future of religious education. It remains to be seen whether the "Purpose of Study" statement (Religious Education Council 2013: 14), which argues that the subject is about challenging questions, understanding religions and worldviews and developing one's own perspectives, or the more radically expressed (but not really so different) one proposed by Chater and Erricker (2013:143), which argues that the subject assists pupils to question the big ideas that shape our world, and make up their own minds about what needs to change, will resolve the issue of the rationale for religious education. As the introduction to the document itself says "The outcomes of the Review may fall short of perfection but they constitute a significant development of RE in England, far greater than the sum of their parts" (Religious Education Council 2013: 10). Not least, the "religious education community" has demonstrated its resilience and determination in spite of governmental neglect of the subject.

As part of the process leading up to the review, an "expert panel" set up by the REC consulted widely on the strengths and weaknesses of religious education in England as it stood in July 2012. Their findings about the strengths and weaknesses of religious education are summarised in an appendix to the review (Religious Education Council 2013). There have been a number of important recent reports, research projects and analyses of the "current state of religious education" including the three most recent reports from the inspection service, Ofsted (2007, 2010, 2013), the REC's report from 2007(Religious Education Council 2007), the All Party

Parliamentary Group's report 2013, the Glasgow University 3-year research project *Does Religious Education Work?* (Conroy et al. 2013) and a thought-provoking book by Chater and Erricker (2013). The summary that follow draws upon these sources, as well as the professional experience of the author and colleagues.

4.6 Strengths of English Religious Education

Among the strengths of English religious education are simply that we now have over 40 years of experience of teaching non-confessional, multi-faith religious education, something that is still a novel idea in many countries. In spite of problems, it does seem to achieve its aims at least to some extent in some places. In the words of Jim Conroy, summing up the research findings which attempted to answer the question "Does Religious Education Work?", "a heavily qualified yes" (Conroy 2011). Significantly, it does seem to be a subject that pupils enjoy and find interesting even if they do not always consider it to be as important as other subjects like science, English or history (Conroy et al. 2013: 210). Certainly, between the late 1990s and 2012 the number of students opting to take examinations at 16+ and 18+ continued to increase year on year (REC 2013: 30). It does seem demonstrably to have contributed to the multicultural awareness of pupils and thus social cohesion (Ofsted 2010: 47–49). Students often see religious education's main purpose as helping them to be prepared to live in a multi-religious society, even if teachers may have other ideas about developing critical thinking or personal spiritual development (Levitt and Muir 2014).

Over the decades, a variety of useful pedagogies have been developed (see above) which, although they might disagree over the philosophy of religious education, can actually all be mined by the skilled teacher for successful lesson techniques (pedagogies as methods rather than total approaches). The involvement of faith communities in organisations such as the RE Council, and at local level on each SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education), which advises the Authority on religious education and convenes the body that agrees the local syllabus) means that the representation of religion is checked for "authenticity", at least according to some adherents, though there are those who think the religions have too much say (Chater and Erricker 2013: 93–24). Nevertheless, there are real strengths to the local organisation, in that it provides an opportunity for teachers and faith communities to work together at the local level, and maybe this process matters more than the end product of a syllabus.

The stress for several decades on an "enquiry" approach to the subject has given students abilities to enquire, discuss and reflect, which they can take with them into university study or the world of work (noted in Ofsted 2013: 10, but seen as insufficiently widespread). Religious education, because of the stress on pupils' reflecting on their own beliefs, values, customs and identity, makes a strong contribution to spiritual and moral education. English religious education has strong professional organisations such as NATRE (National Association of Teachers of RE) and AULRE

(Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education). In the opinion of the present author, the inclusion of "non-religious" worldviews is a strength of English religious education, illustrating that the subject is not just for "religious" people, though not everyone would agree. Another strength of religious education is that it can be "counter-cultural" (Conroy 2011) and question some of the values implicit in the education system, for example that the point of education is to get qualifications to get a good job to get money which will bring happiness.

Although reading the research and reports mentioned above can be quite depressing, both for internal weaknesses and externally imposed constraints on the subject, the verdict of Chater and Erricker that religious education deserves to die if it does not transform itself (2013: 146) is somewhat melodramatic in the opinion of the present writer. Perhaps anecdotal rather than research evidence (but women's experience is a source of authority), I have met many enthusiastic and creative religious education teachers, as well as welcomed on to degree courses students who have been inspired by them, and whose skills at asking good questions about religious and other issues (commented on by outsiders to the subject) must reflect their school experiences. There are many examples of good practice to be found and emulated on sites such as that of the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education (NATRE http://www.natre.org.uk/) and RE:ONLINE (http://www.reonline.org.uk/), examples that have been provided by English religious education teachers. The author is a judge for the annual "Hockerill Prize" (http://www.hockerillfoundation.org.uk/) awarded for excellence in religious education, and there is some impressive work out there. One suspects that when the inspectors, researchers and experts leave and the classroom door is shut, there is actually valuable religious education taking place.

4.7 Weaknesses of English Religious Education

Many of the problems faced by religious education in England, in the opinion of the present writer, result from external factors outside the control of religious education professionals. Much could be put right with investment in training. Religious education has long been seen as a "Cinderella subject" (apparently a phrase popularised as long ago as 1961 (Copley 1997:69)) with low status, a situation which persisted through the changes to a non-confessional, multi-faith subject, and continues to this day. Report after report has demonstrated that religious education receives the least funding and has the most unqualified teachers, the least time on the timetable, the least input in training for primary teachers (for children aged 5–11), and the fewest opportunities for continued professional development (see most recently APPG [2013], but also Gates [1993], 20 years earlier, and Religious Education Council [2007]). The current government and university establishment has dealt a number of blows to religious education which have exacerbated the situation. The subject was not included in the review of the school curriculum to be implemented in September 2014, necessitating the RE Council's initiative to do it ourselves. It was omitted

from the list of subjects (known as the "English Baccalaureate") considered important and on which schools will be judged. It was omitted from the list of subjects, called "facilitating subjects", which was published in order to help school students and their parents decide how best to position themselves for gaining a place at the most prestigious universities. There has been a cut in the number of places for training teachers for secondary schools, leading six universities to date to cease such courses. This has recently been reversed, but too late to affect these decisions. Most subjects receive varying amounts of bursaries to help towards training fees, and religious education received nothing. However, a piece of recent good news is that the bursary for religious education training will be restored from 2015 to 2016, perhaps a sign of improvement in the status of religious education more generally. Policies encouraging the creation of "academies" and "free schools" which are funded directly from central government have significantly reduced the number of schools using the locally agreed syllabus, and this together with other budget cuts for local government have affected the ability of local authorities to support the subject. Fairer funding could solve many of the problems of religious education. These "externally imposed" weaknesses are also discussed in Religious Education Council (2013), Ofsted (2013), and Chater and Erricker (2013).

However, the subject must also own up to some internal weaknesses. The strange position of religious education in the English curriculum—a compulsory subject but one that is not in the national curriculum (the idea of a national curriculum being introduced in 1988)—tends to lead to its neglect. In report after report (2010, 2013) Ofsted have suggested that the "existing settlement" or "statutory arrangements" for religious education be reviewed—in other words, that local organisation is not working, at least, not everywhere. The natural response would be to campaign for religious education to be included in the national curriculum. However, the "religious education community" is very divided on this one, not only out of self-interest. It is natural that those dealing with religious education nationally would find one syllabus more convenient, and that those who are on SACREs would prefer to keep their local role. The danger of a compulsory national syllabus is that we may not like what we get, and the decision-making power is centralised. The current arrangement may be messy, but perhaps healthier (see Hunt 2008). In any case, the relevance of the national curriculum is being weakened as it is not compulsory for the newer sorts of schools like academies and free schools. One perhaps fruitful suggestion to cut through the national versus local debate is that the subject could develop a layer of regional organisation (Religious Education Council 2013: 38), especially for the training of and support for teachers.

A major weakness of the subject is that it is often given a low priority, by parents and pupils as well as school managers and governments. The subject needs better marketing, to show that it is valuable for both life and employment as well as providing a critique of current societal values. In England, especially when compared with countries like Sweden and Denmark, the subject is particularly neglected for older students at the stages where they take public examinations. If not choosing the subject for an examination, often very little is provided by schools for 14- to 16 or 16- to 18-year-olds. Some research also suggests that those who do choose the

subject for examinations have their learning distorted by inadequate syllabuses, associated textbooks and the pressure on teachers to get students high grades (Conroy et al. 2013 Chap. 6). At time of writing, groups including the current author are working on revised criteria for examinations with the aim of improving standards.

Other weaknesses observed are poor-quality teaching of Christianity, assessment and standards compared to other subjects, and the expectation to achieve too much in terms of a huge variety of aims. This latter weakness is repeated by every researcher and commentator, most forcefully by Conroy et al. who list 13 major human concerns that religious education is expected to address (2013: 43–44). The subject is compulsory but parents can withdraw their children—a situation that can be seen as a weakness (for why would anyone want to withdraw their children from a non-confessional subject) or as a strength in that it avoids any challenges on human rights grounds as happened with compulsory religious education in Norway.

Chater and Erricker claim that religious education has a tendency to portray religions positively (2013: 71), rather than honestly and politically, which they see as a legacy of phenomenology and anthropology, whereas Conroy considers that the subject neglects "transcendence" and "fails to engage with the epistemic challenges of religion" (2013: 124). Both these challenges deserve further discussion.

4.8 What Can We Learn from Four Decades of Trying to Teach Non-confessional, Multi-faith Religious Education?

Some of the main lessons of the last four decades are as follows. Non-confessional, multi-faith "integrative" religious education is an increasingly crucial part of the education of anyone growing up in this plural and interconnected world. A lack of knowledge and skills in this area is literally dangerous (hence the interest of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which sponsored the *Toledo Guiding Principles* (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe 2007)). The subject must be made relevant to all pupils, whether "religious" or "non-religious", liberal or conservative. The content should therefore include major faith traditions, smaller and newer traditions and non-religious worldviews as appropriate to the local setting. It should also include philosophical, ethical and social issues, particularly those that interest the pupils, but this should not take over completely from the study of religions, or vice versa. There should be space for pupils to develop their own beliefs, values, customs and identity, to gain a vocabulary and grammar with which to discuss religious and philosophical matters in an intelligent and informed way. Religions should not be sanitised, with only the attractive aspects presented, and there should be room for critical evaluation. It is not the role of the teacher to be an apologist for religion in general, or indeed for secular philosophies of life, any more than for one particular religious tradition. On the other hand,

critical evaluation should not be premature, and the attempt to empathise and understand, as well as to respect those who differ from oneself, should be encouraged.

It is vital for teachers to be clear about their aims and objectives, even though there will never be complete consensus as to what these are or how they should be balanced. At least some distinction between main aims and purposes and "side-effects" could be made. According to Chater and Erriker, individual teachers need to develop their own personal pedagogy, which is not just a teaching method but an "existential stance" (2013: 108).

Pupils should be enabled to interact and if possible dialogue with those from other religious backgrounds, via technology if necessary but ideally face to face, as nothing breaks down barriers more effectively. Public understanding of the subject needs to be improved. A change of name (to what?) might help, as "religion" has negative connotations for many and it is easy to see why outsiders might conclude that "religious education" is about being religious—especially when in some situations, such as faith-based schools, it is. Research in religious education needs to be made available to teachers, and teachers need to engage in their own research. Religious education needs funding just as much as other subjects and should not have to rely on charitable donations. Finally, I would argue that the most important resource in the whole enterprise is the teacher, the best of whom can provide "compelling learning experiences" whatever the policy, syllabus or lack of resources. I disagree with Chater and Erricker (2013) and agree with Ofsted (2013) that this needs to include subject knowledge—which does not mean "facts"—as well as concepts and pedagogy. So high-quality initial teacher training and continuing professional development—investing in people—is where I would concentrate any efforts and funding to improve religious education in England or anywhere else.

4.9 Note on February 2014–February 2016

The above account reflects the situation as of February 2014. In the 2 years since there have been a number of developments worth noting. The criteria for examinations at 16+ and 18+ have been released (DfE 2015a, b) and require students to study two religions at 16+ and chose three papers out of four topics (a religion, a religious text, philosophy of religion and ethics). Three important reports have been published (Clarke and Woodhead 2015; CORAB 2015; Dinham and Shaw 2015) which have highlighted the need to revisit the legal framework including parental right of withdrawal, and supporting a national curriculum for religious education. The inclusion of non-religious worldviews continues to be debated in the light of increasing numbers of people identifying as 'non-religious.' The Religious Education Council is to set up a Commission to enquire into the changes, legal and otherwise, required to improve the quality of religious education in England.

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Chapter 5
Negotiating Religious Literacy Between National Policy and Catholic School Ethos in Cape Town, South Africa

Danika Driesen and Abdulkader Tayob

Abstract The South African National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) is designed to expose learners to the diversity of religious traditions that constitute the nation. The new policy replaces the mono-religious system of education promoted during apartheid. Since 1994, there has been extensive research on the background and theory of the new policy. However, there is insufficient empirical research on how the policy is implemented in various schools in the country. This paper uses the concept of religious literacy to explore this implementation in a state school founded on church ground. The article focuses on examining the meaning of religious literacy in relation to the policy and to this school. It shows that diversity education and personal development are the main goals of religious literacy in the national policy. It also shows how the Catholic school in question is equally committed to these goals, but with a distinctive meaning of nurture and socialization.

5.1 Introduction

The South African National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) promotes religious diversity by exposing learners to the diversity of religious traditions that constitute the nation. The new policy replaces the mono-religious system of education promoted during apartheid. It mentions "religious literacy" as a key objective to bring about change in how religion education is to be conceptualised and promoted in the country's schools and classrooms. Religious literacy is a concept used by scholars of religion education in a number of countries. It refers to non-confessional religion education suitable for pluralistic societies in a democratic state.

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This article focuses on examining the meaning of religious literacy in relation to the South African National Policy on Religion and Education (2003) and to a public Catholic primary school. St. Mary's is an English-medium, co-educational Catholic Dominican school situated in the inner city near St. Mary's Cathedral and the Houses of Parliament. The article compares the goals and meaning of religious literacy between the policy and this school. It demonstrates how the school is committed to religion education but merges the goals of the policy with a specifically Catholic perspective.

5.2 Background

The conceptualisation and promotion of religion education changed from the apartheid to post-apartheid South African contexts. Religion education was shaped by the apartheid government's implementation of the Christian National Education policy, which promoted a mono-religious system of education with a strong Calvinist bias. The policy also reinforced segregation on the basis of cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic signs of difference. After the end of apartheid and the advent of democracy in 1994, the country developed a new political culture by adopting the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa in 1996. In this context, South Africa re-examined the meaning and function of education in general and religion education in particular (Chidester 2006).

The formal adoption of the South African National Policy on Religion and Education in 2003 reflects post-apartheid efforts in redefining religion education (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003). Departing from a confessional Christian National Education curriculum, the national policy promotes a programme of teaching religious diversity in South Africa. The policy draws a distinction between "religion education" and "religious instruction" (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 1). The former is defined as an educational goal and an objective suitable for schools (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 22). Religious instruction is defined as the teaching of a particular faith or belief, which is "primarily the responsibility of the home, the family, and the religious community" (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 55).

5.3 On Religious Literacy

The policy identifies the achievement of "religious literacy" as a broad goal in keeping with the national policy (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 19). The term "religious literacy" appears to have gained popularity in international debates. These debates reveal the difference between defining religious literacy for public civic life and private religious life. Religious literacy is regarded as a highly suitable and sometimes necessary goal of citizenship education.

Within the British context, Andrew Wright uses the term "religious literacy" for a post-liberal approach to religion education. He rejects the phenomenological and experiential approaches to religion education and argues for "linguistic competence" in the understanding of religions. For Wright, religious language is not located "in its ability to enhance inner experience, but in its ability to picture the actual nature of reality" (Wright 1996: 173). Religious literacy is an immersion "in the various public linguistic traditions that seek to account for the ultimate nature of reality" (Wright 1996: 174). According to Wright, religious literacy also develops critical thinking about different truth claims. Learners would know "how to differentiate and interpret their raw experience in the light of public discourse" (Jackson 2004: 77). Wright, then, promotes a religious literacy that encourages individuals to engage with British public discourse.

Robert Jackson agrees with the main thrust of Wright's approach, but argues that his approach is too rationalistic and pays insufficient attention to the emotional factors at play in religions (Jackson 2004: 84–86). Jackson himself promotes a cultural and interpretive approach in advancing religious literacy. He describes this approach as a flexible model that facilitates children and young people in finding their "own positions within the key debates about religious plurality" (Jackson and O'Grady 2007: 182). His approach promotes skills of interpretation and critical reflection that help students make constructive critiques of the material studied (Jackson and O'Grady 2007: 182). It also helps students to examine their behaviours and practices, and re-examine their methods of learning.

In the Australian context, Peta Goldburg distinguishes religious literacy from religious-based literacy, which is "a practice of devotional reading of holy books or holy words that is often restricted by gender and by age" (Goldburg 2006: 1242). In contrast, religious literacy involves gaining "some knowledge and understanding of at least the major world religions and appreciation for the contribution [that] religion makes to culture" (Goldburg 2006: 1242). The author promotes the development of religious literacy through Critically Engaging Creative Arts. Goldburg emphasizes the artistic dimension of religion as it is lived, experienced and imagined by its adherents (Goldburg 2006). Like Wright and Jackson, Goldburg also sees religious literacy as an important part of citizenship education.

Stephen Prothero also promotes religious literacy for democratic citizenship in the USA. Religious literacy, he says, "should not be reduced to memorizing and regurgitating dogma" but the "ability to participate in…ongoing conversations about the private and public powers of religions" (Prothero 2007: 14). Eugene V. Gallagher adds to the work of Prothero by encouraging teachers "to go forth and increase religious literacy" (Gallagher 2009: 209). He says that religious literacy should be an educational goal in higher education (Gallagher 2009: 218). Following a similar pedagogical approach, Moore offers tools for educators, students, and citizens to overcome the debilitating effect of religious illiteracy within the USA. This illiteracy hinders their "capacity to function as engaged, informed, and responsible citizens" of democracy in the USA (Moore 2007: 4). She also argues that the cultural studies approach is the best vehicle to promote religious literacy in public schools (Moore 2007: 54).

Within the South African context, one can argue that the meaning of religious literacy changed after 1994. Paul Prinsloo points out that the new policy does not explicitly "define or describe what it means with 'religious literacy.'" In his view, however, religious literacy in the policy is "grounded in the learner's own identity and spiritual growth", and requires learners to have "an informed understanding of other religious traditions" (Prinsloo 2008: 319). Also in the South African context, Cornelia Roux associates religious literacy with hermeneutics which is fundamental for "religious teaching and learning in social contexts", and includes human rights literacy (Roux 2010: 992, 996). Religious literacy is the ability to cultivate self-identification (the ontological self) and "to communicate with understanding with/or about world opinions (the other)" (Roux 2010: 998). It involves first understanding one's self in order to understand the other. Hermeneutic literacy is important as a method of interpreting and understanding (religious) knowledge or content, with a realization of the "circumstances within which understanding…take[s] place" (Roux 2010: 996). Religious and hermeneutic literacy are essential for human rights literacy, as they contribute towards developing an understanding of one's own rights and the rights of others.

This short review points out that religious literacy is closely related to the role of religion in public life in democratic contexts. The various authors discussed in the literature review reveal that they reject confessional religious instruction in public schools. Instead, they value religion education in learning about the Other, engaging him or her in public life. The authors emphasize religious literacy as a necessary part of being informed, responsible and participating citizens. The authors differ slightly on what they consider the main subject of religion education: some emphasize culture, others linguistic competence, and others the arts. Some authors also emphasize the value of developing an understanding of the self and the other. The development of one's identity, values and spirituality comes close to religious education on an individual level. Religious education, for some, is not only about learning the content of religions but also helping learners to find their own faith, beliefs and practices. Most of the authors, however, focus more on the meaning of religious literacy in secondary schools and/or in tertiary education institutions than in primary schools.

5.4 National Policy

South Africa's context brings a distinctive approach to religious literacy for democratic education. This is revealed in the national policy, but also more generally in the curricula developed for schools. The main goal of religious literacy in South Africa is to facilitate diversity education, and the social development of the individual with particular attention to redressing the discriminatory history of the past. In the following, we revisit the policy in some detail and then the curricula based on this policy, identifying the specific meanings and objectives of religious literacy at the primary school. We use these objectives to infer the meaning of religious

literacy in the policy and the curricula. This discussion paves the way for evaluating religious literacy at the Catholic primary school in Cape Town.

The policy sets ambitious goals for learners in religion education. Learners should be exposed to the diversity of religions, with particular emphasis on South Africa (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 7). This focus on South African diversity is further identified as a necessary tool for civic engagement and for national unity. Diversity education will cultivate "the capacities for mutual recognition, respect for diversity, reduced prejudice, and increased civil toleration that are necessary for citizens to live together in a democratic society" (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 4). Learning about diversity should lead learners "to think in terms of a new national unity in South Africa" (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 4). The policy also emphasizes the value of religion education at the individual level, for personal and academic development. On the personal level, learners would engage with a diversity of religious traditions for "their inner spiritual and moral dimensions" (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 19). An affirmation of one's own identity would lead to "an informed understanding of the religious identities of others" (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 19).

The national policy requires a high level of knowledge and competence from teachers. It demands professionalism (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 34), and sensitivity in the teaching of religion (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 35). The educator should focus on teaching instead of preaching (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 39). The policy highlights what it calls the challenge of "religious illiteracy" among educators in South Africa (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 37). Educators need "access to textbooks, supplementary material, handbooks, guidelines for teaching methods and student assessment, and in-service training" to develop and maintain their professional competence in religion education (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 37). The policy calls on higher education institutions to "translate the study of religion into a viable academic programme" and to provide appropriate training for educators (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 37).

We now turn to the curriculum goals, where we can identify the specific goals of religious literacy. The Department of Basic Education in South Africa divides education into two bands: General Education and Training (GED) for Grades R to 9, and Further Education and Training (FET) for Grades 10–12 (National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12, pp. 3, 30). The General Education and Training band is further subdivided into three phases: the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3), the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6) and the Senior Phase (Grades 7–9). In this paper we focus on the Intermediate Phase, since our research was conducted at a primary school with specific reference to Grades 5 and 6 learners and educators.

The policy states that learners in the Intermediate Phase should be taught religion education as part of Life Skills. There is no distinctive subject called Religion Studies focusing exclusively on the study of religions. The study of religions in this

phase is located within the Study Area called Personal and Social Well-Being. According to the National Curriculum Statement of 2011, learners in Grade 4 should know the "major religions in South Africa: Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Baha'i Faith and African Religion". Learners in Grade 5 focus on the "Festivals and customs of a variety of religions in South Africa", and Grade 6 are exposed to the "dignity of the person in a variety of religions in South Africa" (National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Intermediate Phase Grades 4–6 2011: 10). The focus clearly lies on learning the diversity of religions, culminating in appreciating the value of individual dignity through religions in Grade 6. The latter is significant in relation to the history of discrimination and exclusion in the history of South Africa.

One may conclude that the national policy focuses on diversity education and personal development, and these may be identified as the key components of religious literacy at this level.

5.5 St. Mary's Primary School[1]

St. Mary's Primary School was established in 1863 and celebrated its 150th Anniversary in 2013. It was established by six Dominican sisters from Ireland who came to Cape Town at the request of Bishop Grimley. The school was initially called St. Brigid's Primary School. Both boys and girls attended this school, but boys moved to another school after Grade 3, and girls continued until Grade 7. St. Mary's High School was established for girls a few weeks after St. Brigid's was founded. In the early 1980s, St. Mary's High School was closed and St. Brigid's became St. Mary's Primary School (St. Mary's Primary School 1863 to 2012 n.d.). In 2013, the school boasted 300 learners. The Headmistress stated that the school had a very mixed population of learners and educators. There were many more Catholics learners in the past. At the time of the research, Catholic learners were a small minority at the school while the majority of non-Catholic learners were Christians from various denominations.[2]

The school had an unmistakable Catholic presence and ethos. The main entrance passage was adorned with posters of Pope Francis I and his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI. Below these posters was a table with a candle and a Bible, and further down the passage there was a large crucifix hanging over an entrance to the stairway to the classrooms. But there were also national images and symbols at the school—such as a number of posters of (former) President Nelson Mandela in the Grades 5 and 6 classrooms and in the main entrance passage.

[1] Research was conducted at the school in August 2013. It included observations, and interviews with the Headmistress, Religious Education Coordinator, and educators, and group interviews with learners from Grades 5 and 6.

[2] Headmistress, 5 August 2013; St. Mary's Primary School.

The Catholic character of the school was expressed in other ways as well. For one, the school has determined "daily times for prayer". Every day at noon, I (DD) observed learners and educators say a prayer in veneration to Mary as the Mother of Jesus Christ. The school pays special attention to its Catholic character at assemblies (Lifebound: Religious Education Curriculum Guide for South African Catholic Primary Schools: Curriculum Guide Grade 10 2000: 10). Every Thursday morning the Headmistress and learners and educators in the Intermediate and Senior Phases (Grades 4–7) meet in the school hall for assembly. On the first Friday of every month, the Headmistress, learners and educators attend mass—usually at St. Mary's Cathedral. In one of the assemblies that I attended, an educator provided guidelines for learners on how to behave at mass—particularly in the celebration of the Eucharist. The learners also practised singing hymns for mass. The school also celebrates certain Catholic feast days and festivals. The Headmistress told me that St. Mary's Primary was allowed to treat any two Catholic festivals as additional school holidays per annum (Lifebound: Religious Education Curriculum Guide for South African Catholic Primary Schools: Curriculum Guide Grade 10 2000: 10).[3] The feast day of St. Dominic, for example, was celebrated every year on August 8th at the school. In 2013, as part of the school's 150th Anniversary, the observance of St. Dominic's Day was a huge celebration. However, there are certain Catholic feast days and festivals where not all learners are required to participate. For instance, I observed that only the Catholic learners attended mass on the Feast of the Assumption of Mary.

The Catholic ethos at the school did not contradict government policy. According to the South African Schools Act of 1996, St. Mary's Primary is categorised as a "public school on private property" (Section 14). Under the terms of this classification, St. Mary's may maintain its Catholic ethos. The school is allowed to promote and preserve its Catholic character, and its long Catholic heritage. Similarly, the South African Policy on Religion and Education allows such schools on private property to adapt national policy. They are not obligated to follow all the requirements for religious instruction and religious observances, but "are required to achieve the minimum outcomes for Religion Education" (National Policy on Religion and Education 2003: para. 16). Indeed, St. Mary's conformed to this requirement by developing its own policies on religion and religious education which balanced the demands of the national policy within a Catholic ethos.

St. Mary's adopted the general guidelines of *The Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systematic Schools* developed by the Diocese of Broken Bay in New South Wales, Australia (Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systematic Schools 2005). On the basis of these guidelines, St. Mary's formulated a Pastoral Care Plan. The guidelines begin with a focus on the life of Jesus Christ as a role model on how to be "fully human, fully alive and able to participate in the life and love of God" (Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systematic Schools 2005: 1). Secondly, they emphasize dignity and respect of the human person and the cultivation of individual growth (Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systematic Schools 2005: 4–5).

[3] Headmistress, interview by Danika Driesen, St. Mary's Primary School, 6 August 2013.

Teaching and learning should take place in a "safe and supportive school environment" for all (both Catholics and non-Catholics) (Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systematic Schools 2005: 5). Fourth, they emphasize that pastoral care "takes place every day" through school organisation and culture. Finally, they promote "the development of parent, parish and diocesan partnerships" (Pastoral Care Policy for Diocesan Systematic Schools 2005: 5).

What is more interesting for our purposes is the St. Mary's Primary School policy for religious education which was adopted in 2008. It is called "The Policy for Religious Education in the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Cape Town and the Diocese of Oudtshoorn, relating to RE Assessment and RE Teacher Training" (hereafter the CRE Policy). Religious literacy is mentioned as a goal in this document. In conformity with the national policy, learners are exposed to religions in Life Orientation. But St. Mary's allocates another 2 h per week for a subject called Religious Education. The subject is devoted specifically to religious instruction, and supplements what learners would normally get in Life Orientation. At St. Mary's, teachers are asked not to mix Religious Education and Life Orientation, and they are shown as two separate teaching units in the class timetable. They are also graded separately from each other.

According to the CRE Policy, Religious Education at St. Mary's Primary School has two focus areas: "Religious Education Assessment" and "Religious Education Teacher's Formation". Religious Education is here defined as "the acquisition of knowledge and skills" and not "the depth of the faith relationship". The CRE Policy, however, requires the themes for Religious Education to be drawn from the Religious Education curriculum—i.e. from a Catholic *Lifebound* series. The *Lifebound* series is a set of curriculum guides for Religious Education in South African Catholic primary schools. Religious Education is described here as aiming to teach *about* religion, to educate *through* religion, and to prepare learners *for* religion (Lifebound: Religious Education Curriculum Guide for South African Catholic Primary Schools: Curriculum Guide Grade R–Grade 7 2000: 9). Teaching and learning *about* religion encourages learners to develop "a foundational knowledge of the Christian faith, and an understanding of the Catholic Church within this tradition", as well as cultivating a foundational knowledge of other beliefs or traditions (Lifebound: Religious Education Curriculum Guide for South African Catholic Primary Schools: Curriculum Guide Grade R–Grade 7 2000: 9). Teaching and learning *through* religion guides learners "to discover, cherish and develop a set of values that embody a sense of responsibility towards self and others" (Lifebound: Religious Education Curriculum Guide for South African Catholic Primary Schools: Curriculum Guide Grade R–Grade 7 2000: 9).

Religious Education at St. Mary's, then, tries to address two needs at the same time. It conforms with the national policy in exposing learners to the diversity of religious traditions in South Africa. It also promotes the personal development of learners, in which understanding one's self is central to understanding the other. However, it uses its prerogative to maintain a distinctive ethos by exposing learners to religions through a Catholic lens. It promotes the cultivation of moral thinking in terms of Catholic values and principles.

5.6 Religious Literacy and Educators

The Headmistress and some of the teachers shared their understanding of religion education. Their responses provide insight into how religious literacy is promoted in the school between the national policy and the Catholic ethos. Their responses are consistent with the policies discussed above.

The Headmistress teaches and manages the school and ensures its Catholic ethos. She is responsible for teaching Religious Education in Grades R to 3, and works closely with the Religious Education Coordinator of Grades 4–7 in implementing and reviewing the progress of Religious Education at the school. In order to remain professionally competent in her position, the Headmistress attends conferences organised by the Catholic Schools Office. In this way, she keeps "in touch with other Catholic schools" and updates herself on issues related to teaching Religious Education in relation to current social and education problems. She has also completed courses offered by the Catholic Schools Office for Religious Education training—such as the Religious Education Formation Programme. This course provided a detailed guide to understanding the Religious Education curriculum guidebook of the *Lifebound* series. The Headmistress stated that both Catholic and non-Catholic educators have opportunities to attend courses and workshops that are provided by the Catholic Schools Office. Ethical professional behaviour was central to achieving one of the main outcomes of Religious Education at the school, namely "to instil the values of life".

The Religious Education Coordinator at St. Mary's is the Grade 7 educator, and is responsible for teaching Religious Education to Grades 4–7. She monitors and evaluates the progress of the Religious Education curriculum and policy. She coordinates the planning of school assemblies, mass, and Catholic feast days and celebrations. She also attends courses offered by the Catholic Schools Office. The training includes understanding the role and responsibilities of the position and how to work with the *Lifebound* curriculum. The RE Coordinator stated that she uses the "*Lifebound* curriculum as a Bible" because "it sets out the [Religious Education] lesson perfectly". It provides a guide on how to start a Religious Education lesson, what resources and materials to prepare and use for the lesson, and how to evaluate the lesson. Religious Education is defined by the RE Coordinator as being more learner orientated than content orientated. Religious Education is not "chalk and talk", and is "more like 40 % content and 60 % input from the children". In addition to learning factual knowledge on various religious traditions, Religious Education is focused on the value systems of these religious traditions, getting to know one's self and others, and cultivating an awareness of God.

The Grade 5 educator was responsible for teaching English, Afrikaans, and Mathematics in his classroom.[4] He also taught History to Grades 4–7. At the time of the interview, he had been at the school only 2 months, and had not yet received Religious Education training from the Catholic Schools Office. He was exposed to

[4] Grade 5 Educator, interview by Danika Driesen, St. Mary's Primary School, 13 August 2013.

little religion or religious education in his training as an educator. He confirmed that teaching Sunday school at his church contributed towards his understanding of religion. He included what he called the content of Religious Education in other subjects such as History and English. In a Grade 5 History lesson, for example, he discussed the religion of the Ancient Egyptians. He also addresses the school assembly on topics in religious education.

The Grade 6 educator assured me that the learners are knowledgeable about and engaged with the content of the subjects she teaches.[5] She also had minimal exposure to religion/religious education in her formal training, but benefited from attending workshops and courses offered by the Catholic Schools Office. From the *Lifebound* curriculum she learnt about teaching Catholicism and other religious traditions in a learner-orientated programme that includes life skills. Like the Grade 5 educator, she participated in assemblies where religion was taught.

It is clear that the educators, both established and new, play an active role in religious education in the school. They introduced religions in their subject areas, but also played a role in presenting ethical direction at school assemblies. The school provides guidance and direction in training teachers in its specific understanding of religious education. While they are fully aware of the national policy and its focus on exposing learners to the diversity of learners in the classrooms, they also feel confident in their specific Catholic policies that help learners to focus on values and spiritual development.

5.7 Religious Literacy of Learners

Group interviews with Grade 5 and Grade 6 learners at the school confirmed the policies developed at the schools.[6] The learners were asked about their knowledge of religions in general, and Christianity in particular, and how they had acquired this information. The learners were encouraged to participate freely in these discussions. Their responses pointed to how the school balanced the requirements of the national policy with a strong Catholic ethos. The group interviews were not extensive, but they provided some important hints as to the achievement of religious literacy in the school.

Grade 5 learners shared their understanding of Christian beliefs, Muslim burial traditions and rites of passage in Judaism and African traditional religions. Beginning with Christian terms like Muslims "going to church", they could also identify some of the common features and unique terms from these traditions. They also indicated that they were given small projects to complete on their own, and drew on the expertise of their parents, neighbours and the internet. The Grade 5 learners seemed to say that they learnt about non-Catholic traditions in Life Orientation classes. In contrast,

[5] Grade 6 Educator, interview by Danika Driesen, St. Mary's Primary School, 12 August 2013.

[6] Group interviews by Danika Driesen, St. Mary's Primary School, 5 August 2013 (Grade 6 learners) and 6 August 2013 (Grade 5 learners).

their responses suggested that they learnt about Catholicism and the Dominicans in the Religious Education class. In one Religious Education lesson, they related that love meant supporting each other and strengthening "bonds between people". The experience of love was "Jesus' new commandment" to "show respect to each other".

The Grade 6 learners were also exposed to the factual content of various religious traditions in South Africa, but now all in Religious Education lessons. The pupils were aware of the different denominations within Christianity and named a few of them—such as Catholicism, Anglican, New Apostolic and Old Apostolic. The learners said that belief in God was central to the tradition and that "God sent his son [Jesus] to die for our sins." They also discussed the feast days and festivals of Christianity such as Christmas, Easter, Ash Wednesday, Holy Week, and St. Dominic's Day. They learnt about Muslim men, and not women, going to mosques, and some of Islam's festivals and marriage ceremonies. They learnt what distinguished Judaism from Christianity, and Judaism's rites of passage. They were also exposed to traditional healers in the Zulu and Xhosa traditions, and knew the different terms associated with these traditions. As expected in the national curriculum guidelines, they also learnt about personal morals and values. In one class, learners had to understand and evaluate the motive behind the choices they make in supporting or demeaning (themselves and) others. They also had to write a poem that expresses their good qualities, to understand that God loves them "the way they are" and that they should therefore love themselves and others for the way they are.

Based on the comments and remarks made by Grade 5 learners, we thought that Life Orientation exposed learners to the various traditions while Religious Education was reserved for Christian nurture. But the Grade 6 remarks indicated that this was not necessarily the case. In Grade 6, Religious Education exposed learners to the diversity in all religions, including Christianity. Religious literacy for learners, then, included factual information on the traditions in various religions. They were taught to become familiar with the specific terms used within the religions, and showed signs of appreciating the uniqueness of various traditions. It was, however, clear that general moral and ethical discussions were formulated in Catholic/Christian terms in Life Orientation and Religious Education. This was most clearly seen in the objective of the national curriculum for Grade 6 to expose learners to "the dignity of the person in a variety of religions" (National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement: Intermediate Phase Grades 4–6 2011: 24). St. Mary's learners seemed to have grasped this goal, but the outcome was clearly articulated in Catholic terms.

5.8 Conclusion

The use of religious literacy within the British, Australian, US and South African contexts reveal that it is closely connected with democratic development on a public and private level. South Africa's context, in particular, has a distinctive approach to conceptualising and promoting religious literacy for democratic education.

The meaning, function, and goals of religious literacy changed when the South African National Policy on Religion and Education broke with the confessional nature of the apartheid regime's Christian National Education. The new national policy promoted religious literacy to redress the discriminations of the past by exposing learners to diverse religions in South African society. Like some international trends, it also suggested that religious literacy should include personal identity and spiritual formation.

This two-dimensional goal of religious literacy provided a space for the Catholic school to teach religion within its Catholic ethos. Religious literacy at St. Mary's Primary School was a balance between national policy and Catholic formation. The principles of pastoral care—such as the cultivation of dignity and respect for human beings, inclusivity and respecting diversity—were formulated in Catholic terms. The policies, curricula and school assemblies left a clear imprint of Catholicism. But the school was aware of the demands of the national policy. St. Mary's School promoted respect for the diverse religious and cultural reality of its school population in particular, and of South Africa in general. While the national policy promoted democratic citizenship, the school promoted democratic citizenship for religious learners.

Our article has presented a clear example of religious literacy with a distinctive direction and flavour, and sets the ground for comparative studies of religion literacy within South African schools based on secular, Muslim, Jewish and other Christian traditions.

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Chapter 6
Arab Money in Malian Islamic Schools: Co-optation of Networks, Domestication of Educational Sectors, and Standardization of Knowledge

Emilie Roy

Abstract Malian médersas are private primary and secondary Islamic schools where both secular and Islamic courses are part of the curriculum, and where Arabic is the language of instruction. Médersas are attended by and produce a more or less self-aware and homogeneous group of teachers, students, and graduates referred to as "arabisant" who, first and foremost, self-identify as Muslim. I discuss here the historical struggles between the Malian Government and the arabisants of Bamako's médersas over the curriculum and the desire to harness foreign sources for funding, which need to be addressed in parallel. Indeed, the international funding of médersas in Mali during the oil-boom decade of roughly 1973–1983 and its later consequences in terms of government control and curricular changes have combined to lead toward a standardization of Islamic knowledge within Islamic schools. However, within the constraints and at the fault lines of government and donor control, Bamako's arabisants create, maintain, and improve this educational system, which provides the tools for young Malians to be pious Muslims and productive citizens of the Republic of Mali. Bamako's médersas thus function as a lens to view the complicated interaction of Islamic religious actors, the exercise of power by local government, and the influence of foreign capital in Mali and in the development of religious education and of the class of religious citizens emerging from them.

6.1 Introduction

Médersas (private Islamic schools) in Mali are primary and secondary schools where both secular and Islamic courses are part of the curriculum, and where Arabic is, at least in part, the language of instruction. Médersas are attended by and produce a

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more or less self-aware and homogeneous group of teachers, students, and graduates referred to as "arabisant." The arabisants are individuals trained in médersas, who often also end up working in one, and use Arabic as their first language of communication. Arabisants self-identify as Muslim, first and foremost. Most médersas were created from the funds of the Malian owner or via donations from the community, and running costs are covered by tuition fees. Médersas are mostly sustained via the tuition fees paid by students, but international connections and funding are nevertheless necessary to their functioning (as with most other sectors of activity in Mali, which is a great recipient of international aid). Despite that relative reliance on tuition fees, médersas in general are the Malian educational institutions (including public schools and private Catholic or secular schools) that receive the most funds from international private donors. Private donations represent 42 % of the running costs per student in the primary cycle of a médersa and almost 50 % per student in the secondary cycle (1994 figures) (Traoré and Péano 1997).[1] Most of this aid comes from Arab petro-monarchies and has been instrumental in the development and expansion of médersas in Mali. In turn, the transfer of these sums from Arab countries and organizations to the arabisants of Mali's capital, Bamako, led to the Malian Government's attempt at harnessing the médersas and their informal funding networks. Over almost 30 years, the Government of Mali and the médersas have been negotiating the modalities of integration into the national educational system. In a snowball effect, the double pressure to harness funding from highly diversified Arab sources and to cooperate with the Malian Government in order for the médersas to be officially integrated into the national educational system has led to the standardization of the material taught in Islamic schools, especially in the religious domain.

I discuss here the international funding of médersas in Mali during the oil-boom decade of roughly 1973–1983 and its later consequences in terms of government control and curricular changes. The Malian example provides good reason to be cautious about assumptions of the effectiveness of aid in affecting curricular development in local schools. Indeed, the literature often overstates the importance of this decade (roughly 1973–1983) of close cooperation and plentiful aid from Arab states to African ones. South–South cooperation has been hailed as an alternative model to the North–South axis of economic and international cooperation and relations. It was assumed that the elements of inequality and exploitation would be absent in such a South–South cooperation scheme (Zarour 1989); Arabs and Africans would cooperate as equals to better the quality of life in Africa. The failure of such a grand ideal was inevitable, as the relations between Africa and the Muslim World remained unequal and Arab aid was never as disinterested as it presented itself to be. By 1985, the Afro-Arab cooperation heyday was over, although funds, much diminished, continued to flow. While the influence of transnational economics must be understood in this more conservative context, the question of Arab influence

[1] More recent statistics of this quality are not available, and these can still be of use in this analysis. Indeed, long-standing financial support would have effects on the standardization of the curriculum long after the funding itself has stopped. We do know that the funding has not stopped, though other sources, to be discussed later, hint at a diminution of it.

on Malian schooling remains pertinent: to what extent are activities and curricula in the local Malian setting of médersa schooling influenced by the transnational contacts of its actors and the political interests of distant states?

I argue here that Arab aid to Malian médersas, analyzed in terms similar to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), has been only partly successful. The aid has not been sustained over time on the same scale, limiting its ideological impact on the material taught in Bamako's médersas. The aid relationship has often been tense, as the benefactors from Arab countries and the Malian Government or individual Malian Muslims were rarely considered as equals. Malians were always (and were only ever considered as) recipients of the aid and were seldom consulted as to their specific needs (as is often the case in relation to NGOs). The ideological rivalries among Arab and Muslim countries, as well as their lack of focus or long-term commitment, mean that much of the Arab aid to Africa has had a limited impact in Mali (as in the rest of Africa). Aid was given to further the agenda of the donor, not of the recipient.

The historical struggles between the Malian Government and the arabisants of Bamako's médersas over the curriculum and the desire to harness foreign sources for funding need to be addressed in parallel. Indeed, both have led to a standardization of Islamic knowledge within Islamic schools. Bamako's arabisants create, maintain, and improve this educational system, which provides the tools for young Malians to be pious Muslims and productive citizens of the Republic of Mali. The founders of the first médersas in Mali, in the 1940s, wanted to combine the best of the two types of schools that were present in Mali at that time: the traditional Qur'anic school and the secular public school based on the French system. That the integration of these innovative schools into the state education system has been a success is a view shared both by government officials and by Islamic actors for whom the schools serve as a vehicle for propagating particular Islamic interests. Bamako's médersas thus function as a lens to view the complicated interaction of Islamic religious actors, the exercise of power by local government, and the influence of foreign capital in Mali. I therefore also argue that, given the management capacities of individual Malians (and to a certain extent, that of the state) receiving the funds, Arab aid has been co-opted by the Malian arabisants who have used it to further their own agenda. Malian arabisants have used Arab aid to further develop the Islamic schooling system according to their own conceptions of what it is to be a Muslim citizen of a secular democracy. In that sense, and although it did not further the agenda of the donors, Arab aid has been instrumental in the development and expansion of médersas in Mali.

6.2 Instituts Islamiques Naharu Djoliba and Yattabaré: Introducing the Main Actors of the Islamic Schooling Field in Bamako

The bulk of the material presented here was gathered via extensive field research in Bamako's médersas for 6 months in 2005, over a period of 2 years in 2009 and 2010, and again for updates in the summer of 2013. I have conducted interviews

with several owners, principals, and teachers in various médersas, and I undertook participant observation in classrooms in these médersas. Due to the cooperation of their owner, two médersas in particular, the Institut Islamique Naharu Djoliba and the Institut Islamique de Yattabaré, will be used as examples throughout, since the data gathered are extensive and cover a period starting in May 2005 up until August 2013.

The Institut Islamique (of Yattabaré) is a well-known and renowned médersa in Bamako. Cheickna Yattabaré, a learned man with close ties to Saudi Arabia, founded the school in 1958 in the Niaréla neighborhood.[2] The school later moved to its current location in Medina Coura, close to the Stade Omnisport Modibo Keita. The current building, two stories high with an enclosed courtyard, is well maintained and spacious with fully furnished, airy, and well-lit classrooms. The courtyard of the school is also well equipped with basketball nets, a small parking lot for the students' and teachers' scooters, and information signs in French and Arabic. In 1985, as soon as it was possible, the Institut Islamique registered with the Ministère de l'Éducation to become one of the first formally recognized médersas in Mali. Since then, the school and some of its employees have actively participated, with some success, in the design of the official curriculum[3] for médersas as well as in the preparation of a nation-wide examination for the *Baccalauréat* diploma. This médersa teaches in both French and Arabic, although more time is dedicated to Arabic. The school is now owned and run by Abdul Aziz Yattabaré, a well-educated man of great personal charisma and prestige. Although I have met with Mr. Yattabaré on numerous occasions, both at his school and at other work-related functions, I mostly worked in collaboration with his director of studies, Mr. Kaba. The latter is a graduate from the Islamic University of Medina and, although language proved challenging between us (his French was limited, my Arabic and Bamanankan were weaker), he was able to provide invaluable information on the Institut Islamique. For the school year 2010–2011, 921 pupils (gender-segregated classes for the first cycle, grades 1–6, and mixed classes for the rest) were registered at the fundamental level and 236 at the lycée level, making the Institut Islamique one of the biggest médersas in Bamako. Teachers of the first cycle usually have a *Baccalauréat* degree; teachers of the second cycle (grades 7–9) have a "local Islamic diploma"[4]; teachers

[2] The history of the school and of Cheickna Yattabaré can be found in Brenner (2001).

[3] It is interesting to note here that I inquired at the Ministère de l'Education Nationale about how to get a copy of the official curriculum (of the Ministry) for médersas. I was told that no copies were available in any of the Ministry's offices and that I should go to the Institut Islamique de Yattabaré to find one. Upon my next visit to the Institut, I was able to buy the curriculum for the fundamental cycle at 3000 FCFA francs and for the lycée at 5000 FCFA francs. These documents were available at the Institut Islamique only because it is the headquarters of the Union Nationale des Médersas, and Yattabaré is the director of the organization.

[4] The status of this diploma remains unclear, since there are no Islamic Universities in Mali; the diploma in question is either a License from the Arab Department at the Université de Bamako, or a Baccalauréat from a médersa.

at the lycée level have all studied in Arabic-speaking universities abroad. The lycée offers a Humanities and Literature program, a scientific program, and a vocational path. This is important, as it is the only médersa with professional training: 2 years added to the *Baccalauréat* gives one a *Certificat d'Aptitude Professionel*, and 4 years in addition to the *Baccalauréat* allows one to obtain the *Brevet de Technicien*. The Institut Islamique offers these diplomas so that the students can train as commercial employees, electricians, seamstresses, or accountants.

The Institut Islamique Naharu Djoliba is situated in the Badalabougou neighborhood. The médersa was founded in 1966 by the father,[5] Amadou Kansaye, of the current owner and director, Zakariyah Kansaye, and was registered with the government in 1985. This médersa teaches all subjects in Arabic, although it has French and English classes (as second and third languages). Naharu Djoliba always had close ties to Iraq (teachers came from there, and other Malian teachers went there for training). Zakariyah Kansaye himself studied in Iraq and Jordan. The school grounds are spacious and surrounded by one-story buildings where the classrooms—well furnished, large, well aired and lit—are located. The school is constantly under construction, as Mr. Kansaye builds classrooms on a second story when more space is required and as funding becomes available. The school has 270 students at the fundamental cycle and slightly more than 200 at the lycée level. There are slightly more male than female students.[6] Although the school has a conflicted history in regard to the official curriculum, Naharu Djoliba is well known for the quality of its scientific program at the lycée level. Indeed—and this is significant—Kansaye was able to find scholarships for his students to study medicine and computer science in Sudanese universities and to pursue scientific diplomas at al-Azhar University in Egypt. He points out with pride that students of other schools "only" got theology diplomas at al-Azhar. Naharu Djoliba is the mother-school of a network of satellite schools covering the entire country (including five in Bamako).

The functioning of these two schools, their sources of income, their internal organization, the material they present to children, and the resulting values and beliefs of the young men and women graduating from these schools are central to my claim here. Indeed, although these two Instituts Islamiques are not representative of all médersas in Mali, or even in Bamako, they are influential in the milieu and other schools take them as models. Their owners, teachers, and graduates are the most likely to pursue successful careers in the public domain and to have a voice that matters in the public sphere.

[5] This man, the founder of the Institut Islamique Naharu Djoliba, in collaboration with Cheickna Yattabaré (already mentioned), Sufiyana Dramé, of the médersa al-Hilal al-Islamiyya in Hippodrome, and the founder of the al-Mohammediyya médersa, created the Union Nationale des Médersas du Mali.

[6] Mr. Kansaye explained that many of his female students left his médersa after the opening of an all-girl médersa in the neighborhood.

6.3 Arab Aid in Bamako's Médersas: Hopes and Failure

Following the oil crisis of 1973–1974, revenues for oil-producing Arab countries increased spectacularly and prompted an augmentation in foreign aid to Africa. Monetary aid takes three broad forms: (1) bilateral and multilateral aid, which involves an agreement between Mali and one Arab state partner or organizations financed by various countries (e.g. the Arab League) to Mali; (2) Islamic philanthropic sources of donations; and (3) the globalized personal network of individual Malian arabisants. In terms of government-sponsored financing, this meant an average donation of about $5 billion a year between 1974 and 1977. This represented 30 % of the world's public aid to Mali (Zarour 1989). In the decade of the oil boom, more than $600 million was lent or given to the Malian Government alone (Brenner 2001). This does not account for all of the private donations made to particular Malian educational institutions or individuals. The increased revenues from oil also meant that individuals in oil-producing countries became increasingly rich and also participated in the transfer of capital, although at a private level, toward Africa. Assessing the exact amount of aid provided to Africa in general, and Mali in particular, by specific countries is difficult. Mertz and Mertz's (1983) assessment of statistics available for Arab aid to sub-Saharan Africa is that they are at best published haphazardly and, at worst, not at all. In addition, accountability and any form of paper trail for a number of disbursements are not easily accessible, if at all.

6.4 Arab Aid in Monetary Form

I will limit discussions of this financial aid to general trends rather than exact numbers; suffice to say that the estimated sums are much smaller at present than they were in the 1970s and 1980s.[7] The exact numbers are less important here than the acknowledgement that "[s]tates are not simply victims of determinants such as 'civilization' or 'religion.' They can and do use them and shape them in policy formulation and strategic choices" (Rudolph 1997: 244). Arab donations instrumentalize religion in such a way. Bilateral donations to Africa have been the preferred means to distribute development assistance for most Arab countries. Indeed, as explained by Mertz and Mertz (1983), bilateral relations have clear advantages for donor countries insofar as aid becomes a key element of foreign policy. This form of foreign policy through aid has historically been much more important for Arab than for Western countries. Bilateral aid allows the donor to dictate with greater specificity areas of particular importance for their own national interests. Bilateral donations

[7] Most owners of médersas interviewed by me mentioned and bemoaned the drying up of funding from Arab states in the past two decades. A notable exception at the time was Mr. Farraj at the Centre Culturel Islamique de Hamdallaye. That being said, since the crisis developed in Libya—the Centre Culturel's main financial backer with the United Arab Emirates—the situation may have changed.

also permit maximum visibility and PR for the donor country—rather than funds given to multilateral institutions where the individual donor country's name disappears behind that of the institution (Mertz and Mertz 1983).

Prior to 1973, only three oil-producing countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Libya—had given substantial amounts of money to African countries. Other countries, such as Egypt, were also involved early on in South–South cooperation. Kane (1997) provides an explicit example of the instrumentalization of aid to a specific Malian Sufi order (the Niassène Tijaniyya) by Nasser's Egypt: Nasser provided Ibrahim Niasse (the founder of the order) with scholarships to al-Azhar for his sons and followers, with the aim of creating a class of youth favorable to Egypt, the President, and his ideology. The popularity of the Egyptian President also involved a wider dissemination of the pan-Arab secular nationalism he promoted. This threatened Saudi Arabia and its own pan-Islamic policy and sparked a fierce competition between Egypt and Saudi Arabia for influence in the early years of African independence (Kane 1997). However, and as opposed to Libya and Saudi Arabia, Egypt's influence on Mali has very little to do with its financial investment and more with religious/cultural capital. Yet Egypt's influence on politics and policies in the Muslim world did go beyond the intellectual domination of al-Azhar University.[8] By promoting a secularist, radical republicanism, Egypt prompted other Islamic states to invest heavily in ostensibly or vaguely Islamic endeavors in order to increase their influence abroad. Egypt's activities prompted Saudi Arabia to act on the African scene to regain influence and would also affect Libya's policies toward Africa. In the case of the Tijaniyya *turuq*, for example, the competition between petro-monarchies and Nasser's Egypt for influence meant funds were flowing from the Gulf to Mali despite the Saudi disapproval of religious practices such as Sufism (Kane 1997). However, Egypt's defeat in the 1967 war against Israel, the death of Nasser in 1970, and Egypt's expulsion from the Arab League as a result of its peace treaty with Israel in 1979, prompted and confirmed a major shift in the pecking order of the Arab world, bringing Saudi Arabia to the forefront of both religion and politics in the Muslim world (Fraser 1997).

Iraq, despite the secularist nature of its regime, largely participated in the aid and subsidies to Africa to promote Arabic education. It gave scholarships for Africans to study in Iraqi universities and funded many Islamic centers in Africa. As Kane (1997) explains, "this generosity corresponded exactly with the outbreak of the Iran–Iraq War. During this period, Iran undertook an intensive propaganda offensive in black Africa against Iraq and the monarchies of the Gulf; Iran counted numerous ardent supporters among young African Muslims, a number of whom had spent time in Iran" (56). A beneficiary of this aid was Kansaye senior, the founder of the Naharu Djoliba médersa, one of the biggest and most renowned in Bamako, who has hosted Iraqi teachers and sent many graduates, including his own son Zakariah Kansaye, to pursue higher education in Iraq.

[8]The influence of al-Azhar University shall be further discussed in the section dealing with scholarships.

Iran, although not an Arab state, needs to be mentioned here, as the ideological influence of the revolution (and, in a lesser measure, of its funding and foreign policy) should not be understated. Beside the impact of the revolution itself on the political imagination of Muslims all around the world, it also sparked a fierce backlash from other Islamic states (Saudi Arabia first and foremost) to further their own, alternative version of a legitimate Sunni political order (Otayek and Soares 2007). That competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran was transferred into internal debates among the Muslim community in African countries where some young Muslims "eagerly looked to the Iranian Revolution for inspiration for the transformation of their own society at a time when the space for political debate was very restricted, and many Muslims looked to Saudi Arabia for educational opportunities and funding" (Otayek and Soares 2007: 9). In Mali, as elsewhere, the Iranian Revolution fed the debate, now much more public, as to how Muslim-majority societies were to organize themselves politically. The Malian arabisants, although never supporting the idea of a state apparatus copied from the Iranian model, were inspired by this Islamization of the political order.

The Maghreb has long considered West Africa as a potential influence zone due to its geographical and cultural proximity. As such, Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria participated greatly in the financing of educational and cultural enterprises south of the Sahara (Bahri 1993). Morocco, although not an oil producer itself, also funded a number of religious institutions in West Africa, with which it has had long-standing relations, and provided scholarships to well-renowned Moroccan universities. Again, the Moroccan aid to West African answered larger concerns than merely the education of young African Muslims. The sudden funding of African *turuq* right after the major conference of the Tijaniyya in Fès in 1985 coincided with a moment in African international politics when most West African states had come out in support of the self-determination of the Western Sahara. The donations and renewed "Islamic" link between Morocco and African Muslim countries seem to have been a direct attempt by the Moroccan king to persuade African diplomats and heads of state to support the annexation (Kane 1997). In this particular case, the instrumentalization of a religious gathering for political reasons on the part of Morocco is obvious. In a much more recent development, Morocco has taken a renewed interest in Mali and is now participating, through new bilateral agreements, in the reconstruction of Mali after the events of 2011–2012. Of importance here is the agreement for the training of 500 Malian imams in Morocco.[9]

Institutional aid to African countries in the years following the oil boom of 1973 also came from various multilateral organizations. Three major multilateral Islamic institutions focus on aid to Muslims: the Islamic Development Bank, the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF) and the Muslim World League (Mertz and Mertz 1983). The first one focuses on economic and social development and foreign trade; the second,

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[9] "L'arsenal juridique qui régit les relations entre les deux pays se trouve ainsi enrichi après avoir déjà connu en septembre dernier un développement considérable dans le domaine religieux, lorsque le Maroc a accédé à la demande du Mali de prendre en charge la formation de 500 imams maliens" (Royaume du Maroc 2014).

on welfare programs and educational and cultural Islamic enterprises; the third, the Muslim World League, is the politico-religious arm of Saudi Arabia. The ISF has funded, for example, the Islamic University of Say, in Niger, where numerous graduates from Malian médersas have pursued higher education. The ISF also funded a number of Islamic Research Institutes in various sub-Saharan African countries, including one in Mali (Mertz and Mertz 1983). The Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (ABEDA) is another Arab-sponsored multilateral aid donor in Africa. Aid would be given based on extremely advantageous conditions, as close to donations as multilateral agencies are likely to be (Ayari 1985). Mali was also the second largest beneficiary (after Tanzania), of the OPEC Fund for International Development, with 8.1 % of the total of aid provided (Zarour 1989). The decade 1973–1984 saw an Arab investment of about US$10 per Sahelian per year. This represented one of the highest aid rates in the world at the time. Mali was, overall, the third largest recipient of Arab funds during the oil boom, after Senegal and Guinea (both neighboring countries to Mali) (Ayari 1985).

Mali has been one of the main recipients of multilateral funds. Whether in regard to its population, level of poverty, or political importance, Mali has received a disproportionate amount of aid from the Muslim world compared with other African countries. As Mertz and Mertz (1983) explain, “the geographic distribution of aid is a highly sensitive gauge of donor national interests and the relative importance of bilateral relations with various countries” (25). Although the oil bonanza did provide Arab states with the opportunity to make large sums available to garner support for their foreign policy, Arab states remain developing countries and resources are limited. The concentration of their resources on strategic countries and populations is telling of the donors’ ambitions and objectives.

6.5 Non-Governmental Networks

Non-state-sponsored Muslim aid to Africa needs to be analyzed here, as a number of médersas in Bamako receive funding from individuals or NGOs. The size of these donations is even harder to track than the size of those made by state-sponsored agencies, and their ideological content can also be more difficult to assess. As explained by Rudolph (1997), in Muslim-majority societies, “[t]o what extent these institutions represent the virtues of generosity and fellow feelings and to what extent they represent institutional and political self-interest is often unclear” (253). The proliferation of Islamic NGOs must be understood in the context of the disengagement of African states from key sectors of social services such as health and education (Otayek and Soares 2007). The diminished impact of the Malian state as an educational provider opened the door to private entrepreneurs financially backed by Arab NGOs to enter the field of education, and médersas have been the prime beneficiaries.

Humanitarian Islamic aid on a global scale developed largely in the 1970s and was aimed mainly at Afghanistan, which was fighting the Soviet invasion at the time, and at sub-Saharan Africa. Africa, then as now, was the region of the world

with the most "conversion potential." This, combined with Africa's catastrophic economic situation, made it an obvious choice for Islamic humanitarian aid. Later, the democratization process happening in Africa in the 1990s, coupled with the disengagement of the Malian state from a number of social programs under the pressure of Structural Adjustment Plans, left the field open for transnational Muslim entrepreneurs to offer the basic services so much needed in Mali (Otayek 2003). In Mali, Islamic NGOs went from representing a little more than 15 % of all NGOs to 28 % of all NGOs on the ground between 1980 and 2000 (Salih 2002). These NGOs closely combine humanitarian and religious goals, and overtly present themselves as a challenge to Western NGOs accused—not without reason in some cases—of using humanitarian aid to further conversions (Otayek 2003).

In non-Muslim societies, or in secular Muslim-majority states such as Mali, Islamic NGOs have taken over the role of collecting and distributing the *zakat* (Weiss 2002). Islamic NGOs, due to the lack of a clearly delimited proper Islamic state, aim to reach the entire *umma*, which is by definition a supranational community (Otayek 2003). *Zakat* should usually be redistributed in the community where it has been collected. However, it is licit to transfer *zakat* moneys to other territories as long as it serves the aim of spreading Islam (Weiss 2002). As such, alms from Arab countries can be donated in Mali for example, when it is aimed at *da'wa*, Islamic education and the construction of mosques. Based on this logic, Islamic NGOs were and still are actively involved in the development and/or improvement of Islamic schooling in Africa. "Donor support includes upgrading of school structures and materials, import of Islamic teachers from other parts of the same country or abroad, payment of subsidies and provision of food" (Salih 2002: 13). The intense competition between Arab countries and individuals in the domain of humanitarian aid to Africa explains the proliferation of Islamic NGOs as well as their relative success. The competition, not to say rivalry, led to a degree of sabotage among Islamic NGOs on the ground, trying to gain precedence over one another (Otayek 2003). Nonetheless, capital and knowledge were transferred from Arab countries to sub-Saharan Africa, and vice versa.

The Saudi royal family, like other wealthy individuals, are, as private citizens, great philanthropists and are an appropriate example here. They have contributed to numerous international Islamic projects including schools and mosques worldwide as well as cultural centers (Mertz and Mertz 1983). In this particular case, however, differentiating between personal alms giving and state interests is excessively difficult. Malian operators prompted and financially supported by Saudi donors have opened some médersas, such as the Institut Khaled bin Abd al-Aziz, in Bamako (Kavas 2003). Although I cannot provide the financial details of the participation of this Saudi royal philanthropy, it is quite clear (and partially acknowledged by the principal of the school) that a Franco-Arab médersa called al-Amir Ahmed bin Abdul Aziz received, for its creation in 1974 and maybe for its running costs, money from this particular Saudi Prince. Private donations from Saudi Arabia—although again the exact sums are not known—are mostly easily traceable insofar as links with Wahhabi organizations and individuals are well known. As such, schools like Institut Khaled bin Abd al-Aziz, the Institut Islamique de Yattabaré, Naharu Djoliba,

and al-Amir Ahmed bin Abdul Aziz—the name "Institut Islamique" often denotes Saudi links—are known to have ties with Saudi individuals for funding, although their network should not be understood as limited to the Saudi connections.

International networks in Arab (and other) countries also provide Malian médersas with much of their pedagogical material and textbooks. The publication and distribution of Malian textbooks is insufficient in all domains, let alone in Arabic and Islamic sciences and, therefore, books are imported from abroad. Teachers and other médersa employees often sustain long-standing correspondence with interlocutors in Arab countries. One of the aims of such correspondence is to receive teaching materials, textbooks, and new publications that are not easily available in Mali (Kavas 2003). In numerous médersas in Bamako, textbooks are provided free of charge although in limited numbers to students. The influence of the Arab benefactor providing the books (such as Saudi Arabia, Libya, Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, the Sudan, Kuwait, or Iraq) is passed through the content of said textbooks. At Naharu Djoliba, Mr. Kansaye estimates that 90 % of textbooks were donated by Iraq (where he has himself studied, again emphasizing the importance of personal connections) and others by an Italian NGO—neither of which indicates where they were published. At the Centre Culturel Islamique de Hamdallaye, the books in use—though limited in number—were printed in Mali, which is uncommon, with funding from Canada. From a religious perspective, textbooks from Morocco have the advantage of containing *fatwas* from the Maliki school of jurisprudence while those from Egypt usually contain *fatwas* from all four schools of law. Books from Saudi Arabia contain exclusively *fatwas* from the Hanbali school (Roy 2007).

The translocal circulation of Islamic knowledge is made even clearer by the case of international studies and scholarships. Various Muslim countries have had, for a long time, an influence on the global *umma* via their renowned centers for *da'wa* (preaching) formation. Al-Azhar University in Egypt, Qarawiyyine University in Fès, the Zaytouna College in Tunis, and many others have attracted hundreds of sub-Saharan Muslim students over the years (Mattes 1993). As early as the 1960s, Modibo Keita, the first President of independent Mali, struck a deal with Nasser's Egypt in order for the latter to provide Malian students with 12 scholarships each year to pursue higher education at al-Azhar University (Brenner 1993). Each year, graduates from Malian médersas receive between 60 and 80 official scholarships to pursue higher education at the universities of Libya, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Kuwait, and the Sudan, and at the Islamic University of Say, in Niger (Hardy 2010). Even Iran, which has been very active since the revolution, has recruited sub-Saharan students by offering scholarships via its Ministry of Education (Mattes 1993).

In 1985, Amselle (1985) reported an impressive number of students from Bamako's médersas pursuing higher education in various Arab countries. The Institut Islamique de Yattabaré had sent 50 students to Medina's university, 25 to Cairo, 10 to Libya, and 5 to Algeria by 1985. Naharu Djoliba was also sending students abroad with scholarships from Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait. Up until 2010, the Centre Culturel Islamique de Hamdallaye offered two scholarships to Libya for the two graduating students with the highest scores in the *Baccalauréat* examination. Mr. Sissoko, director of studies at the center, adds that for the 2010

cohort, 7 out of the 32 students who passed the examination went on, through various means, to pursue higher education in an Arab country. Mr. Kansaye, of Naharu Djoliba, prides himself on having found two scholarships for medical school and two for computer sciences in the Sudan for his students. He has also found five scholarships for al-Azhar university, which, he insists, were not all in theology. Mariam Coulibaly, owner of the médersa al-Aman, has been a beneficiary of such scholarships: she went on to study psychology at al-Azhar upon graduation from Naharu Djoliba. Kansaye mentioned, numerous times, the fact that it is much more difficult, today, to find such scholarships for deserving students, and gave as an example of the past ease in finding scholarships the one his father had secured some 45 years ago for a Naharu Djoliba student to study at the Sorbonne, in Paris. In 2010, the Institut Islamique de Yattabaré sent two students to al-Azhar University to study theology (the son of the owner is also studying there presently) and one to Saudi Arabia, according to Mr. Kaba, director of study of the Institute and himself a graduate from Medina's Islamic University.

I have obtained some data as to the number of Malian students with a *Baccalauréat* who received official scholarships to pursue higher education in the Maghreb countries (possibly in French, in this case).[10] Between 1999 and 2010, 39 Malian *bacheliers* went on to study in Tunisia. Between 2000 and 2010, 205 *bacheliers* received scholarships to Morocco and 552 to Algeria. Médersa graduates and *bacheliers*, with no distinctions here, also received 93 official scholarships for al-Azhar University, in Cairo, between 1996 and 2010. However, the chief of the Section des bourses of the Ministère de l'Éducation did acknowledge the fact that it is only a relatively small number of scholarships from Arab countries that passes through the Ministry. More often than not, promoters of médersas find scholarships for their students outside the official circuits and, furthermore, the renown of a médersa is heavily based on its capacity to attract such scholarships. It is however impossible to know the real number of students who leave for these same universities by their own means. In all cases, these students, while they are abroad and after they have returned to Mali, participate, by the relations they maintain with other arabisants inside or outside Mali, to a vast transnational network of educated, Arabic-speaking, Islam-conscious people exchanging ideas, knowledge, books, and money.

6.6 The Overstated Effect of Aid and the Failure to Change Local Perspectives

The impact of Afro-Arab relations on Islam as it is conceptualized in Mali has been overstated by academics and politicians alike (see Otayek 1986). It is partly overstated because of the fear (propagated by Western scholars and policy makers) of networks

[10] Information was obtained at the Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale of Mali, Division de l'Enseignement Supérieur, Section des bourses. I was not allowed to photocopy the documents in question, likely because the name of each student having received one such scholarship was on the documents.

of terrorism, stemming primarily from Libya (following the Lockerbie crash) and from Saudi Arabia after September 11. The impact of Arab aid to Mali has to be relativized with respect to the diversity of Arab ideologies (religious and political) of the Arab polities. Even if they have punctually agreed on some broad diplomatic goal in Africa, Arab states have never been able to present a unified front as to their foreign policy (worldwide and in Africa). The capacity for intervention and influence of Arab countries has often been overestimated. Arab states were and remain developing countries with limited financial and technical resources. Finally, the strength of Mali's internal Islamic dynamics is often downplayed, giving undue weight to the external (i.e. Arab) dynamics at play in the local field of Islamic schools in Mali (Otayek 2003).

The limits of institutional pan-Islamism should not obscure the mobilizing potential of the transnational flux of people, ideas, and money outside the official circuits. The intensification of informal networking speaks to a form of integration "from the bottom" between Malian arabisants and the global *umma*. These informal, parallel, sometimes illegal dynamics can be considered a mode of Islamic diplomatic action that bypasses official diplomacy. Crossing borders and occupying the gaps in the international system, these informal Islamic networks form a complex nexus where religious, economic, political, and humanitarian goals and ideals are impossible to separate (Otayek 2003). Médersas' constituencies, the arabisants, have created links with a global community of Muslims with whom they communicate and constantly exchange information, techniques, knowledge, etc.

Indeed, as Kavas has observed in the médersas that he studied, teachers and other employees have extensive epistolary relations with Arab scholars and colleagues abroad. Of 34 teachers in Bamako's médersas with whom Kavas (2003) conducted interviews, 12 sustained a correspondence with former teachers or fellow students in Arab countries. My own interviewees have studied in Arab countries and remain in close communication with former professors and colleagues. In this way, the affinities embodied in these networks are economic, social, cultural, and religious. These networks are de facto international and conceptually transnational. Owners, promoters, principals, and teachers of Malian médersas maintain close relations, by various means, with individual or institutional donors from the Maghreb and the Middle East. These multiple relations guarantee, up to a certain point, the independence of the arabisants from both Malian policies regarding national education and from donor organizations or individuals by varying the sources of income, (Hardy 2010) an issue that will be discussed further in the following section regarding governmental control over the médersas.

6.7 The Unintended Impacts of Arab Funding in Mali Médersas: Domestication of Médersas and Standardization of Islamic Knowledge

Arab aid to Mali's médersas and other Islamic institutions can be considered, in many cases, a success from the point of view of the Malian social actors involved in these schools and the Malian Government. If the Arab countries often used the

Islamic dimension to justify other political aims in Africa, African countries also used this dimension strategically to better capture some Arab funds dedicated to the *da'wa*. This appropriation of aid money by the arabisants enabled them to extend their own constituency, therefore forming a group with relatively definite attributes who are now numerous enough to weigh in on the civil and political debates of Mali. Indeed, Malian arabisants are active agents in co-opting moneys from Arab (and non-Arab) countries to finance their own agendas. The arabisants, by their link with the *umma* and with secular government officials in Mali, place themselves in the position of mediator between their country and the rest of the Muslim world. The arabisants promote the Islamic image of Mali abroad, which allows Mali access to greater sums of petrodollars. In this way, it would be false, as Otayek (2003) has argued, to see Mali or other African recipient countries as passive victims of the hegemonic ambitions of the Arabo-Islamic world: African states have become masters at playing inter-Muslim rivalries to advance their own interests by manipulating the sacred to political and economic ends.

6.8 Domesticating Islamic Education

Under French colonial rule, as well as during the first three decades of independence in Mali, successive governments attempted to suppress médersas, though they failed. Successive governments after independence developed a policy toward médersas, termed "malign neglect" (Brenner 2007: 202). They mainly ignored Islamic médersas by denying them the status of educational institutions. In the 1980s, however, the financially bankrupt Malian state realized that médersas offered the opportunity to educate large numbers of children while also attracting funds from external, mostly Arab, donors. In 1982, the Government of Mali acknowledged and first took active responsibility for the Islamic schooling system. Oversight of the médersas was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior and its Religious Affairs Department to the Ministry of Education. In 1985, the Government of Moussa Traoré formally integrated médersas into the state's education system by granting them the status of primary schools in which Arabic was the language of instruction and religious education was part of the standardized curriculum.

The domestication of médersas by the Government of Mali, a multi-step process which should not yet be considered successful, was instrumental in the standardization of Islamic knowledge in médersas. The domestication of Islamic schooling is a typical feature of the modern state in many countries, although the dates and modalities vary from one place to another. It is largely acknowledged that schooling (who is educated, how, and what is taught) "has played a central role in the making of modern nations, citizens, and religion" (Hefner 2007: 13). The 1985 decision and the imposition of the state curriculum sparked intense debates within the médersa constituencies and the national association of médersa owners. The Institut Islamique de Yattabaré and Naharu Djoliba were at the forefront of the struggle between médersas and the government over the curriculum for Islamic schools; the

time constraints on the teaching of religious material were and still are at the center of the struggle. The attempt by the Malian state (by no means yet complete) to manage and regulate all of modern Islamic education in the country had unintended consequences similar to those Hefner (2007) sees happening throughout the Muslim world.

> For state officials intent on managing religious education, the benefits of objectifying Islam seemed obvious. Religious knowledge could be packed into curricular modules and disseminated in mass educational programs. In doing so, it was hoped, the political message of that knowledge could also be stabilized and made regime-friendly. But marketing mass religious education in this way encouraged other actors to think of religion in a similarly disembedded, formulaic, and political manner. It was not long, therefore, before other, non-state actors began to create modular "Islams" of their own (33).

Médersas were used to having complete autonomy and control over the content taught in their classrooms (facilitated by their financial independence due to tuition money or donations from Arab states), but recognition necessarily brought about a standardization of the curriculum in order to bring it closer to the curriculum of public schools. The *Union Nationale des Médersas* was created to propose a "counter-" program to the government's after the forced introduction of the official curriculum in 1985. The final result was a compromise: less religious class time than wanted by the médersa constituencies, but more than wished for by the government.

The sometimes conflictual development of the official curriculum of the médersas can be seen as a step in the process of standardization of Islamic knowledge. The official curriculum for the médersas does provide details for the program to be applied in médersas' religious classes. All of the topics covered are basic and uncontroversial, allowing the student a better understanding of Islam, historically, theologically, and in practice as a standard set of beliefs and practices worldwide. The standard and vague understanding of Islam presented in the official curriculum could have allowed the médersas to input their own vision of Islam in each class, but the time constraints also imposed by the curriculum are a serious obstacle, as is the division of Islamic knowledge into neat little bundles of independent topics.

6.9 Standardized Knowledge in Bamako's Médersas

Although the traditional modes of transmission of religious knowledge have significantly changed within the setting of médersas, the traditional ideal of creating a virtuous, complete, individual is still very much at the heart of the educational enterprise and also something sought after by parents of médersa students. Médersas have taken advantage of the crumbling of the Malian state to forge their own Malian understanding of their Islamic identity. The very idea of teaching religious classes alongside secular ones, the sometimes forcible imposition of a national curriculum for médersas during the 1980s and 1990s, and the push by both the government and médersa entrepreneurs to make Islamic schooling available to an ever wider public

has led to the standardization of religious knowledge. The standardization process I discuss here refers to the ever greater integration of the médersa school system "into the contemporary political economy, financially, pedagogically, socially, and even politically" (Brenner 2007: 222). The change in both the method and the content of Islamic teaching in Mali's médersas can be summarized as follow:

> [A] new rationalized epistemology began to appear that eroded esoteric concepts of knowledge. Of course, the divine revelation of the Qur'an continues to provide ultimate guidance for the behavior of Muslims, and also is considered superior to all secular forms of knowledge. But according to this rationalized epistemology all knowledge, both secular and religious, is acquired by means of the intellect and humans are not seen to have access to other forms of secret or hidden knowledge. Religious devotion becomes separated from the process of acquiring knowledge as such.…religious and secular topics are taught side by side, and all knowledge is equally available to everyone (at least in theory). (Brenner 2007: 220–221)

The religious education provided in médersas, like the schools themselves, is a hybrid product which combines subjects taught in traditional qur'anic schools with a modern pedagogy. Traditional Islamic educational material such as *Qur'an*, *fiqh*, *ḥadîth*, *tafsîr*, *sîra*, *tawḥîd*, *tajwîd*, and Islamic history are taught in Bamako's médersas but, unlike traditional Islamic education, religious subjects are studied next to each other at the same level and from early years. The differences between médersas and traditional qur'anic schools, although they both aim at transmitting Islamic knowledge, are mostly in the "very different 'structures of thought' concerning the nature of Islamic knowledge itself, and how and to whom it should be transmitted" (Brenner 2001: 7). In Mali's médersas, three types of knowledge are to be found. Firstly, religious knowledge is gained in courses covering the Qur'an, the *hadîth*, theology, jurisprudence, qur'anic recitation, the life of the prophet, and other related topics. Second, Arabic is covered, as both the sacred language of Islam and a modern tool of communication, in various courses touching on grammar, morphology, reading, writing, and rhetoric. Finally, most domains of scientific knowledge are covered in classes on the natural sciences (biology, botany, geography), on the exact sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry), and on the social sciences (history, sociology, philosophy) (Kane 1991). In a modern médersa, the traditional idea of a progressive learning of religious topics depending on the student's personal moral development and knowledge is completely dropped. Religious education, like other topics, is divided into little bundles of finite material, the acquisition of which, by the student, is meant to be tested regularly.

The division of Islamic knowledge into classes where topics are neatly divided and coexist on the same level as secular classes participates in the standardization of knowledge by placing all subjects on the same plane. This contributes to the standardization of knowledge insofar as various religious topics are treated here as independent subjects which ought to be learned by students regardless of their overall knowledge of religious duties and their personal achievements in piety. This is particularly striking in the case of the class on jurisprudence. Most Malian médersa offer such a class in which rites and obligations are taught as well as the legal

procedural steps for commercial exchanges, marriage, and other social activities. However jurisprudence is taught completely separately from its basic sources, the Qur'an and the hadiths, which are themselves taught as independent classes.

In médersas, students learn by heart some of the *sûra al-Fâtiḥa* as well as other shorter sura which are necessary to properly perform the daily prayers, while some other sura which do not require memorization are simply written on the board and explained. The focus, especially in the lower class, is not on a proper recitation but rather on the basic knowledge of the relevant passages for everyday purposes such as prayers. The recitation lessons (*tajwîd*), due to time constraints, are mostly intended to teach children how to approach and read the Qur'an with the necessary reverence while the *fiqh* classes, although involving much discussions in both Arabic and vernaculars, do not involve any memorization. From the point of view of the student, religious topics take up few slots in an otherwise quite busy week in school. Furthermore, a series of studies undertaken in the early 1990s at the *École Normal Supérieure* of Bamako have shown that médersa students of the second cycle (7, 8 and 9 grade) tend to consider "religious topics" as the easiest classes, the ones in which they do not have to invest much effort.[11] The coexistence of religious and secular topics is nowhere as evident as in the Islamic ethics course where recommendations for the behavior of children are taken indiscriminately from religious ethics and local cultural practices.

The content of religious courses in Bamako's médersas is basic and non-controversial: it is meant to give the students a basic knowledge of their religion allowing them to perform adequately their daily duties as Muslims. Mr. Sissoko, director of studies at the médersa of the Centre Culturel Islamique de Hamdallaye, formally funded by Libya, when discussing the curricular activities of the school, brushed off the topic of religious courses in a single sentence: "We teach the student how to pray correctly, not much more." Language also loses its primarily religious connotation in modern Islamic education in Mali. The first developers of médersas in Mali introduced Modern Standard Arabic as a language to be learned in its own right as well as the language of instruction for both secular and religious subjects which were to coexist in the busy schedule of médersa students. This is very important: Arabic is learned for its own sake, not solely as the language of religion (although it remains important). This approach is in striking contrast to traditional religious education where the mastery of Arabic (if ever mastered) was chiefly to memorize religious texts. Despite the fading away of some traditional instruction in Islamic knowledge, the formation of a virtuous person, knowledgeable in religious matters as well as secular ones, is still very important to the médersa constituencies although it does not always translate into the number of hours that both parents and educators might wish be spent on religious topics weekly.

The recognition of diplomas delivered by médersas also entailed the same process of standardization, since students would need to be tested on the same topics as those of public and private French schools. The standardization of knowledge and

[11] See, for example Tidiane (1991) and Tolo (1991).

the attempted domestication by political authorities are exemplified by the testing of médersa students who are now subjected to the same examinations as all other Malian students, albeit in Arabic.

> [T]eachers in madrasas may have a general impression of every student, but cannot know their individual progress. Instead, madrasas assess students' knowledge with uniform exams for the entire class. In the 6th, 9th, and 12th classes, exams are the same for all (recognized) madrasas across the country. With diplomas attached to the exams in the 6th, 9th, and 12th classes, the students' level of knowledge is "objectively" defined in relation to one another. (Bouwman 2005: 68–69)

As opposed to the idea that the Islamic content of a médersa education has been diluted by this standardization, the process of integration of the médersas into the state's educational system, started in the 1980s and still at work today, can alternatively be seen as a victory by the médersa constituencies who, after decades of operating at the margins of the social sphere, have successfully imposed their presence upon Malian society and the state. Conversely, the integration process can also be seen as a victory for the state, which appropriated for itself a functional system of education in the development of which it has not invested any of its own resources (Brenner 2007: 222). The conflictual development of the curriculum was a step in the standardization of Islamic knowledge as explained by Brenner:

> It was through these conflicts and tensions [over recognition, curriculum, and examinations] that Muslim schooling began to be integrated into the national system of education in Mali. The "rationalization" of Muslim schooling refers to the gradual and conflictive [sic] process through which the madrasa constituencies and the state gradually accommodated themselves to one another. And this transformational process was unavoidable if Muslim schooling were to become relevant to the contemporary social and political context. (Brenner 2007: 213)

As a result of this increased bureaucracy, the traditional, personal, three-way relationship between the teacher, the student, and knowledge found in qur'anic schools has been completely changed in the setting of médersas. The education received in Bamako's médersas such as Naharu Djoliba and the Institut Islamique de Yattabaré is therefore the result of the local religious and political field. Arab aid was beneficial insofar as it was instrumentalized by Malian actors within this field, but it never yielded the benefits intended by donors.

6.10 Conclusion

I have argued here that the competition to harness donations from petro-monarchies for both the arabisants and the Malian Government has furthered the standardization of knowledge provided in Bamako's médersas. The academic literature often overstates the importance of the decade (1973–1983) of close cooperation and plentiful aid from Arab states to African ones. I have argued that Arab aid to Malian médersas

has been only partly successful from the point of view of the donors.[12] Aid has not been sustained over time on the same scale, limiting its ideological impact. The aid relationship has often been tense, as the benefactors from Arab countries and the Malian Government or individual Malian Muslims were rarely considered as equals. Malians were always (and were only ever considered as) recipients of the aid and were seldom consulted as to their specific needs (as is often the case with relation to NGOs): aid was given to further the agenda of the donor, not of the recipient. This simple fact has limited the long-term impact of Arab aid in the Malian Islamic educational system.

The impact of Arab aid can be analyzed in a manner parallel to the impact of global international aid to Africa: the rise and fall of the NGO sector. In the 1990s, money flowed toward NGOs in Africa, which were seen as the panacea for all of Africa's ills: "a 'magic bullet' that would find its target no matter how poorly fired" (Igoe and Kelsall 2005: 1). During that decade, NGOs were the fastest growing industry in Africa and academic research on NGOs grew accordingly, most often praising the system for its effects. The assumption, praised in the case of NGOs, that one could change mentalities and modes of behavior by pumping money into the country led academics and specialists in the field to overstate the influence (presumed negative) of petro-dollars on Malian médersas. Indeed, transnational religious actors, as actors in civil society, can be conceptually linked to NGOs and analyzed in similar terms (Rudolph 1997). Given the failure of the secular regimes to deliver long-promised development and their participation in increasing worldwide and countrywide inequalities, organizations from the civil society that are faith-based, such as médersas and Islamic NGOs, have grown exponentially to fill the gap left by the states and secular NGOs (Ibrahim 2008). The positionality of Bamako's médersas, straddling the border of state control and private Islamic interests, has led to the standardization of Islamic education in Bamako's médersas: a generic version of Islam, separated from local and cultural specific content, is presented to students in neatly divided topics alongside various other topics on which one will be tested with a standardized examination.

However, the debacle of the NGO sector shows how all this aid changed very little in the daily reality of the recipient countries' populations. Indeed, the situation has become so bad that, in 1997, the impact of international aid (including Arab aid) to Mali was summarized as follow:

> What emerges from this quick overview of Mali's financial situation is that integration into the world market has so far failed to reduce the country's highly dependent international position. Development aid has either failed to reduce such dependency or it has been misused and misappropriated to such a degree that its overall development effect has been insignificant (Brigaldino 1997: 131).

While funnelling great sums of money to Africa, Arab donors are competing against each other for influence in the Muslim world. The lack of a common

[12] Aid effectiveness should be measured by three variables: "(1) the management capacity of the recipient; (2) the aid relationship; and (3) the sustainability of aid." See Carlsson et al. (1997).

pan-Arab strategy for aid in Mali certainly limited the impact of aid, but the lack of consultation with Malian recipients was also problematic. Indeed, I have shown how Arab states and individuals financed various Malian institutions in order to further their own agenda. The Islamic solidarity professed by Arab donors was met with disillusionment by African recipients who deplored the insufficiency of the aid and the ideological strings attached (it can be noted that they reacted similarly to Western aid). The needs, experiences, and perceptions of Malians, as the recipients of Arab funds, were rarely taken into account. The ideological impact of Arab aid in Mali is therefore limited by the lack of attention paid by the benefactor to local concerns over development, aid, education, and Islam. Islamic aid to Mali can therefore be considered as having failed insofar as, for example, the Saudi-type Wahhabiyya or the Libyan revolutionary pan-Islamism/pan-Arabism never materialized broadly in the Malian Muslim population or specifically in médersas, Mali's most conservative Muslim arena. Arab aid in sub-Saharan Africa was too episodic and too rarely implemented using religious and cultural *cooperation* to allow it to be effective. Although Arab aid has not been as influential as previously assumed, it should not be understated either: Arab money did build mosques and médersas; Egyptian, Saudi, and Libyan teachers do participate in the betterment of Malian médersa schooling; and the students coming back from Arab universities sustain the imagined splendor of the "heartlands" of Islam (Otayek 1993). In this way, the impact of most of the bilateral and multilateral aid from Arab countries to Africa in the oil-boom decade has been limited by the characteristics intrinsic to developing countries' levels of cooperation. Indeed, the lack of consultation with recipients in Mali, and between Arab states due to their competing agenda and ideologies, limited the impact of the aid on Malian society.

If the Arab countries often used the Islamic dimension to justify other political aims in Africa, African countries also used this dimension strategically, the better to capture some Arab funds dedicated to the *da'wa*. This partial appropriation of aid money by the Malian Government through the domestication of the médersas enabled them to extend their own network and propagate their ideas. In this way, it would be inaccurate to see Mali or other African recipient countries as passive victims of the hegemonic ambitions of the Arabo-Islamic world. Given the management capacities of individual Malians (less so the state) receiving the funds, Arab aid has been co-opted by the Malian arabisants who have used it to further their own agenda. In that sense, the arabisants are indeed well connected to the global *umma*, understanding it so well as to play its inner factions to their own advantage.

Médersa owners also play different cards with different donors: the "Islamic card" to Arab donors and the "alphabetization and promotion-of-schooling card" to Western governments and NGOs. The Malian Government has also used this strategy, by using the médersas themselves to secure money from both sources. The arabisants have succeeded so well in making their institutions a part, in their own right, of the Malian educational system that when, in the 1990s, Arab aid began fading away, other international partners began to donate funds to Islamic schooling. Indeed, following the Jomtien Conference of 1990, UNESCO, the World Bank, UNICEF, and others started funding médersas in Mali as key participants in the

alphabetization and promotion of schooling in Mali (Gandolfi 2003). Some médersas, such as Naharu Djoliba, reported receiving aid from Western NGOs: Mr. Kansaye is building new classrooms with funds from an Italian NGO and receiving textbooks from a Canadian one.

This highlights the agency of Malian arabisants in co-opting moneys from Arab (and non-Arab) countries to finance their own agendas. By doing so, however, and in multiplying their chances of harnessing funding, the médersas developed an uncontroversial, standardized version of Islam to be part of their curriculum. This allowed them to attract money from donors with widely different ideologies and goals (Saudi Arabia, and Libya under Qaddafi are good examples of this). Islamic education was instrumentalized by the arabisants in order for médersa owners to "cast a wide net" and try to attract funds and scholarships from as many sources as possible, and this consequently pushed toward a standardization of Islamic knowledge.

Malian médersas and their constituencies are very much rooted in a Malian Islamic consciousness (communal, authentic, and local); yet, at the same time and not in contradiction, they are well connected and worldly, using every opportunity to broaden their networks. Médersas transcend the borders of the Malian state and provide direct institutional contact between "the people" and a world of ideas, institutions, and money, all of which are united through their shared identification with Islam. Islam provides an integral nexus of relationships between Africa and the Middle East. However, Malian arabisants are less influenced by the massive influx of money and ideology from the Arab world than has previously been assumed and they are more developed in their own understanding of what it means to be Muslim, Malian, moderate, modern, and globalized than has been recognized. The local and international histories, politics, and power relations found in Mali greatly influenced the development of a local, yet standardized (even by international standards), understanding of Islamic knowledge. By appealing to a greater range of possible donors and sources of legitimation within and outside Mali, the arabisants have "limited" themselves to presenting an Islamic face that appears friendly across the board: a watered-down, non-controversial, and standardized Islam.

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Chapter 7
Islamic Religious Education in Muslim Schools: A Translation of Islam to the Swedish School System

Jenny Berglund

Abstract In the literature about Islamic religious education (IRE), the process of teaching Islam to the younger generation is often referred to as "transmitting Islam". Obviously, there are certain "facts" that often are transmitted from one generation to another, such as names of prophets, the five pillars of Islam and the words of the Quran. But what significance and meaning these persons and concepts have is not necessarily "transmitted". In this paper, I argue that using the concept of "transmitting" brings about several problems, such as giving a static view of the process of Islamic education, thereby neglecting the contextualisation that is an important part of all teaching. Drawing on Homi Bhabha, I instead suggest that the concept of *translation* is more accurate to what teachers of Islamic religious education do, since translation includes notions of interpretation and thereby shows the power teachers have when they make educational choices. The empirical material used in the chapter stems from fieldwork in Swedish Muslim schools.

In Sweden, Islamic religious education (IRE) is a confessional school subject that can be taught only at religious schools with an Islamic profile. In public debate, but also in this chapter, these schools are called Muslim schools. The emergence of Muslim schools in Sweden can be understood as an outcome of different views on what knowledge children need to acquire to become good citizens, different perceptions of integration and/or the changes that the Swedish educational system has undergone in recent decades.[1]

[1] Note that these changes seem to be a general European trend. Although different countries' ways of organizing compulsory education historically has been very different, it appears that on-going reforms with greater focus on administrative measures and control over the content of teaching and learning are a global phenomenon (see for example Ball 2003; Bunar 2009; Beach et al. 2003). Sweden is thus only one of several countries where school reforms since the 1990s have led to a greater decentralization of resources through school vouchers, combined with the ability to choose

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The debate about Muslim schools has been, and still is, heated. It is characterized by different views on what importance schools have for the integration of immigrants, but also differences in recognition of minorities and educational opportunities (see for example Ajagan-Lester 2001; Berglund 2010; Ihle 2007; Mandaville 2007; Taylor et al. 1994). Features that characterizes the debate about Muslim schools in Sweden are that these schools are often portrayed as a homogenous phenomenon, that all Muslim schools function in the same way, that the teaching of Islam would be very much the same in all schools and that Islam is simply "transmitted" from the older generation to the younger without adaptation to the place and context in question. Such a perspective is, however, problematic because it gives a static impression of religion and its practitioners, as well as diminishing the teacher's role in the teaching process.[2]

In this chapter I will argue that it is, from an educational and study-of-religions point of view, problematic to describe religious education in terms of "transmission" and that we can learn something from studying Muslim schools and IRE. But before engaging in these two questions there is a need for some more general information about the establishment of Muslim schools in Sweden.

7.1 Alternative Schools as a Prerequisite for Development

When the Swedish government in the 1990s initiated the changes that led to increased school alternatives, the arguments that were often brought forward had to do with improvements and an educational renaissance. The Bill on Independent Schools (so-called free schools) of 1996 shows for example that the idea behind it was that a diversity of educational options was seen as "a prerequisite for development and educational renewal" and that "competition in conjunction with the freedom of choice that exists today is a stimulus for the development of the school" (Johansson and Persson 1996: 37). Montessori and Waldorf education were often brought forward as examples of educational innovations that previously had stimulated this kind of development and change, and it was argued that Sweden needed

schools and competition between schools with different types of profile. Globalization has also brought about a "marketization" in the education sector, where schools compete by, among other things, demonstrating their "identity politics", (see for example Ball et al. 2007; Bunar 2009; Parekh 2006).

[2] Since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 and the so-called London bombings of 2007, the debate about Muslim schools has intensified in several countries. The Islam taught in these schools has been the subject of extra attention because of the fear of the spread of a "fundamentalist" interpretation. These concerns have been particularly prominent in the UK and Germany, but have also been suggested in the Swedish context (Berglund 2015). There seems to be a fear that individual Muslims would rather be loyal to the Muslim community (*umma*) than the nation state (Roy 2004) and that certain kinds of teaching in Muslim schools, such as Islamic religious education (IRE), could provide fertile ground for such a development.

more of this kind of pedagogical initiative. Furthermore, the idea was that local commitment to special pedagogies like these would enrich municipal and other independent schools without specific pedagogical profiles, and that teachers in different school organizations could learn something from encountering educational alternatives. The bill, as well as the debate that followed, also discussed religiously profiled schools, but never on the basis that they had something to contribute with regard to the educational and pedagogical development of schooling. They were rather seen as archaic relics of the education system that had to be permitted in order for Sweden to avoid ending up in court.[3]

7.2 What Can Be Learned from Muslim Schools?

In this text my starting point is the idea of learning from the variety of schools represented in the bill of 1996; that is to say, there is something to learn from the study of the teaching of various types of schools that may be important beyond the individual school category. I have studied the content of Islamic religious education (IRE) at some Muslim schools in Sweden and therefore want to discuss what we can learn from this particular type of schooling that may be of interest outside the topic of IRE and Muslim schools (Berglund 2010). There are, in my opinion, a lot of things that we can learn through such a study. For this chapter I could have chosen to discuss what can be learned from IRE teachers' teaching methods, for example how IRE teachers use storytelling or singing, and musical methods that different teachers apply (Berglund 2014). Here, however, I do not intend to focus on teaching methods; instead I intend to discuss IRE on a more theoretical level to show what can be learned from a didactical perspective.[4]

7.3 Background to IRE Within the Framework of the Swedish School System

Sweden has undergone an educational policy shift that can be understood as a "market adaptation" of which competition and choice of school constitute the basis. A range of independent schools are now competing for the public funding that is attached to each pupil. The emergence of religious schools within this market can be understood as an expression of the fact that education is increasingly seen as a

[3] Sweden has been brought to the European Court of Human Rights for not living up to the European Convention, where it is stated that "all parents have the right to choose religious and philosophical education for their children" (see Kilkelly 1999: 71). Permitting independent schools with a religious profile has been one way of securing this right in Sweden.

[4] "Didactical perspective" here means focusing choices of content selection in relation to the subject in focus, here Islam.

private matter rather than a public one. In a secular country like Sweden, this coincides with the view of religion as a private concern. For sceptics of religious schools, this reasoning only covers the fact that some parents want to deny their children the right to a pluralistic education (Englund 1996: 107ff.). Others argue that religious schools are needed primarily because students and parents from ethnic or religious minorities feel excluded in municipal schools. In this case the reasoning is based on a view that municipal schools are run according to a hegemonic-majority view of life, and therefore they offer minority students only “heteronomy and submission”. Examples that have been used to justify such a view show that minority students are sometimes classified as “students with special needs” and are thus excluded from the “normal” instead of being offered the “autonomy and community” they are entitled to according to the curriculum (Ajagan-Lester 2001). According to this reasoning, minority schools, such as Muslim schools, give parents greater opportunity to feel involved and to avoid being constantly regarded as different or alien. A study concerning the matter of “choice of school” (*skolvalfrihet*) supports this view: parents who choose to send their children to Muslim schools do so for purposes of security and wellbeing rather than for the purpose of religion. Thus their choice might be seen as one way of avoiding discrimination and obtaining acceptance of difference—i.e. as primarily involving concerns over power of influence and democratic rights (Bunar and Kallstenius 2006).[5]

The restructuring of the school system is also visible in terms of what is understood as equal rights. There are studies that show that while the variety of schools and school programmes give pupils and parents a greater choice, segregation and social exclusion have also increased (Kallos and Lindblad 1994; Lindblad and Popkewitz 1999, 2001, 2004). Others argue that the “market adjustments” and the competitive situation between different schools, despite earlier showing segregating effects, can also be understood from the perspective that for many families from so-called multicultural and segregated areas this includes “an opening in their integration aspirations” and thus an opportunity to get away from areas that are branded as “ethnic” (Bunar 2009: 230). The presence of Muslim schools in Sweden also needs to be understood in relation to these arguments.

Some brief background facts about Muslims in Sweden, Muslim schools and religious education is also necessary for an understanding of the reasoning that will follow. In Sweden today there are approximately 450,000 people who have a Muslim background and there are 14 schools that can be defined as Muslim schools (Larsson and Sander 2007: 71). What distinguishes a Muslim school from other publicly funded schools is that some form of Islamic religious education (IRE) is taught as an extracurricular subject for 1–3 h a week in addition to the compulsory subjects listed in the national curricula.[6] There is no teacher training for those who

[5] See also Ihle (2007:50), who indicates that the choice by Muslim parents to send their children to Muslim schools in Denmark may be based upon the perception that the state school system is inclined towards secularism, promoting it as an ideological norm.

[6] Of the schools that I choose to call “Muslim”, nine are classified as Islamic in the National Agency of Education’s statistics, and thus belong to the category of religious schools. The other

wish to teach IRE in Sweden, unlike some other European countries such as Germany and Austria (Aslan 2012; Yasar 2013). The IRE teachers who work in Swedish Muslim schools are either trained in Muslim-majority countries or do not have any teacher diploma at all.

Muslim schools are, like other independent schools, funded by the state. To obtain state funding they must not only teach all the school subjects that are prescribed in the national curriculum (including non-confessional RE),[7] but also "instil and impart" the so-called fundamental values specified in the national curriculum.

7.4 Transmitting Islam to the Younger Generation?

A significant theoretical educational implication that emerges from the study of IRE in Muslim schools is the way in which religious traditions change and adapt to the context in which they are taught, including the role that teachers have in this process. One problem is thus that religious education is often described in very static terms both by scholars and by representatives of religions. This easily gives the impression that religions are static systems without potential for change. In the literature on Islamic religious education, for example, we find that the teaching of Islam is often described in terms of Islam being "transmitted" from the older generation to the younger (Berkey 1992; Hefner and Zaman 2007; Larsson and Sander 2007; Wardenburg 1979: 360ff.). For example, medieval historian Jonathan Berkey has done an excellent study about teaching and learning in medieval Cairo. In his study, he shows that education was considered a very personal process that was deeply dependent on the relationship between individual religious scholars and their students, and that teaching, through the lack of official institutions, never became locked into formal structures. There was no solid educational content, curriculum or examinations, nor were special buildings used, but instead education was focused on finding a suitable teacher, a religious scholar, who was supposed to pass on his knowledge to the learner over a number of years. Probably much teaching took place in mosques where students gathered around respected scholars in informal

five are classified as "Arab" or as having an "international profile". Since many (but not all) of these add subjects such as teaching of the Quran or Islamic culture, I argue that it is possible to include at least some of them in the category of Muslim schools.

[7] Non-confessional religious education—which is, as mentioned above, a compulsory subject in Swedish schools—is, in a European but also global perspective, something rather unusual. In many European countries it is the parents' right to choose the kind of religious education they want their children to get at school. In some countries, such as Finland and Germany, there is the possibility to choose from a variety of subjects (various forms of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, etc., but in some cases also a non-confessional option). In other countries (like Poland) there is only one confessional alternative (in Poland, Catholic Christianity). In these cases, parents who do not want their children to get a confessional religious education can let their kids refrain from receiving religious education. In some countries there is non-confessional religious education, and Sweden is one among a few countries where students cannot be exempted from the topic.

"study circles", but other premises and natural surroundings were used (Berkey 1992: 42).[8] Although Berkey's work clearly indicates the importance of the individuals and educational context in medieval Cairo and he shows changes in the teaching processes, he uses the term "transmission" when he describes this process (Berkey 1992). In my view, the impression that becomes entrenched in the reader when encountering the concept of *transmission* in the title of his work (not the content) is that it is exactly the same Islam that is transmitted from the scholar to the student in Cairo. Use of the term "transmit" is not typical of Islamic religious instruction, but it is often used when religious education is being described and less often in discourse about other subject areas. What appears to be typical, however, is that when the term "transmission" is used, it is *confessional* religious education that is being referred to.[9] However, describing teaching in terms of transmission is problematic from both an educational and study-of-religions point of view for several reasons, partly because it brings a static view of religion and education, but also because such an expression tends to neglect the teacher's responsibility and power in this context.

To further illustrate this, there is reason to note how the term "transmit" is used outside the educational context. The word "transmit" is, for example, used in medical or computer science contexts, and derives from the Latin word *transmittere*, which means "to send over" (Smith and Lockwood 1976). This is also how the word transmit, as well as the related "transmission", are used within natural and technical sciences. In computer science they refer to the sending of certain data from one point to another and in medicine they refer to how nerve impulses are carried through the body. In other words, "transmit" and "transmission" are often used as technical terms that refer to moving a fixed entity from one point to another without any other change taking place. In these contexts it is essential that, for example, the transmitted files do not change. If files that have been shared through transmission between computers would be changed, we would most certainly trash the software or the computer, or at least indignantly call for support!

By studying IRE in Muslim schools, there is the opportunity to demonstrate empirically that the teaching process does not involve the transmission of Islam from teacher to student without change taking place and that a teacher's educational choices and didactic awareness are of importance to what is actually offered to the students.[10] As with any religious education, there are of course certain facts that are

[8] The educational ideas, as emphasized, were based on pedagogical reasoning by well-known Islamic scholars such as Al-Farabi (d. 950) and Ibn Sahnun (d.870), whose thinking is characterized by "individual centering" and "lifelong learning" (Günther 2007)—concepts familiar from the current Swedish educational discourse.

[9] Note however that in the Swedish national curriculum the word "transmission" is used for the teaching of the "fundamental values" in a similar way that transmission is often used for the teaching of truth claims from a confessional point of view.

[10] The examples are taken from the classroom ethnographic work that is the basis for my dissertation *Teaching Islam* (2010). In this context it involves classroom ethnography that I have participated in as well as observing IRE lessons and interviews with IRE teachers in three Muslim private schools in Sweden. In addition to these three schools, where I have followed the instruction at

"transmitted" in their original sense from one generation to another. When it comes to Islam, this can be the names of the prophets, the five pillars of Islam and, for example, the words of the Quran, which are often memorized and recited in a certain way.[11]

Islam is what every IRE teacher relates to in her or his teaching, but whatever meaning and significance they attribute to Islam is not expressed in the same way. However, teachers often express their overall objectives of IRE in a similar way; they want their pupils to become "good Muslims" in Swedish society, to have knowledge about the history of Islam, to have knowledge about the Muslim religious texts and to know how to practise Islam. This is part of what may be described as the common Islamic history (Berkey 2001: 8). The names of the most significant prophets and what they are thought to have done and said according to Islamic historiography, the five pillars, and how to perform the prescribed rituals and articulate the six articles of faith constitute parts of this history, as well as the recitation of some suras of the Quran. What meanings are ascribed to these narratives, rituals and concepts, however, as well as what social or societal impact they are considered to have, differ between schools, between teachers or even between different classrooms. Sometimes these differences are large, and sometimes they are only concerned with details. Every single teacher whom I have observed and interviewed in my research presents Islam with a specific content, function and meaning, but when comparing the content of these teachers' teachings, it turns out that Islam is attributed different meanings, and thus it has different meanings in different classrooms. The reasons for this are, according to my understanding, the differences that exist between interpretative traditions, but also the teacher's didactical awareness and the way in which they perceive their students' situation in Swedish society. These conditions affect how different teachers make their educational choices in terms of content for IRE.

A clear example of these differences can be seen in how teachers relate to popular music. There are teachers who believe that pop artists such as Yusuf Islam, Sami Yusuf and Native Deen (Islamic pop artists who include Quranic verses in their texts) should be used to teach IRE. These teachers justify their choice of making use of this halal-pop in their teaching of IRE as a way to advocate Islam's place in a modern society in which popular music is part of young peoples' culture.[12] Other teachers would never use any kind of singing that is accompanied by instruments

close range, I have also visited six other Muslim private schools. During these visits I interviewed IRE teachers and/or principals and participated in individual lessons.

[11] Here it is also interesting to note the importance given to the chain of transmitters, the *isnad*, within Islamic sciences. It is, for example, of importance to know the names of the persons who have transmitted the words of the Quran, since one of the aims of this is to guarantee that the words have not been changed. Note therefore that teaching and learning the recitation of the Quran makes up only a very small part of IRE in the schools studied here; in some schools it is not a part of IRE at all. See Berglund (2010), for further discussions on the teaching and learning of the Quran within IRE.

[12] The term "halal-pop" comes from "halal", which means "permitted" in Arabic. Halal-pop is considered permissible because the lyrics deal with areas that include the key virtues of Islam, for

other than hand drums because they believe that pop music is one of the problems for the youth of today's society. These teachers argue that students instead need to learn ways of detaching from this kind of youth culture since pop music draws young peoples' attention away from God, but also because it is often played in places where alcohol is present and there is a risk of meeting the opposite sex in an unsuitable way (interview with IRE-teachers 061217). The perception of popular music's value varies depending on what interpretation of Islam the teachers adhere to. To justify the choice of using music or not in IRE, both proponents and opponents not only use the theological arguments that are attached to each of these interpretations, they also use didactical arguments, as well as arguments that are related to how they perceive the situation of their students in Swedish society. Both groups also use arguments about music that are based on previous scholars' interpretations and on religious texts, but none of the teachers can thus simply be said to transmit these teachings of Islam, since in both cases the context perceived by the teachers is very much visible in their arguments (interview with IRE teachers 061207; see also Berglund 2010, 2014).

Another example—which in my understanding makes it difficult to talk about the content of the teaching of IRE as something static and also demonstrates the teacher's authority, responsibility and didactical awareness—concerns how IRE teachers address the issue of the lack of teaching materials. There are no textbooks produced for IRE in Sweden. Teachers must either import books or produce their own teaching materials. Most IRE teachers whom I have interviewed import textbooks from Muslim-majority countries. However, many of the teachers also state that it is not possible to use everything in these imported textbooks. Instead they say that some books need to be censored, or at least modified, in order to become relevant for students in Sweden. One teacher told me that she cut out or copied parts of different imported books and thus made her own teaching material, the reasons for this being that she wants to present an equal number of pictures of women and men for the pupils and that the imported books often had a much greater number of pictures of boys than girls. She uses a method of counting pictures of men and women, something that has been discussed in the educational debate in relation to textbooks for other subjects. This example also shows that it is problematic to describe the content of teaching as something uniform because the teacher is not satisfied with the versions of the books that she can get, but instead she presents images of Islam in a way that she believes is better suited for the students' situation in Sweden (interview with IRE teachers 2005/10/24).[13]

example, God's love, love, the prophets, respect for fellow men, solidarity and so on. For how music is used in IRE, see for example Berglund (2010) or (2014).

[13] Please note that teachers of most school subjects do not use everything in the textbooks, but often choose certain parts from them. See Berglund (2009) or (2010), for a more extensive discussion of textbooks in IRE on Muslim schools in Sweden.

7.5 Problems with Transmission

The above examples demonstrate the problem of both describing religion as immutable and describing the content of IRE as something that can be statically transmitted to the younger generation. Teachers of IRE choose their educational content from a rich variety of possibilities and, to varying degrees and in different ways, they adapt the content to the context through their educational choices. Furthermore, the empirical data from the IRE classrooms show that, through their educational choices, the teachers are able to influence not only how the curriculum is implemented but also what kind of Islam and which aspects of Islam are presented within the framework of the Swedish school system. Some choices are planned in advance while others emerge in the classroom. These educational choices will, at the end of the day, influence what form of Islam is ultimately offered to the students. These choices lead to adjustments and even slight changes in interpretation in relation to the students, as in the above example of teaching material where the choice could be described in terms of gender quota since it aims to show an equal number of pictures of boys and girls for the students.

One of the problems that arises when a religion is described in static terms is that this forms presuppositions about how the people belonging to that religion think, feel and act in today's society. It brings about stereotypes that risk adding to existing xenophobic ideas of how people from various religious *are*, just because of their religious belonging, not taking into account other significant factors of identity such as gender, social class, education and ethnicity. It should thus be noted that from a confessional (inside) perspective, it is possible to understand the use of the term "transmit" as appropriate, as it sometimes, but not always, lies in the believer's interest to argue that "God's word" or "the message" is the same now as during the time of Muhammad. From both educational and study-of-religions perspectives, this is, however, not adequate.

The confessional use of *transmitting* Islam is thus also interesting to study from a power perspective. When the concept of *transmitting* Islam is used for teaching Islam from a confessional perspective, a hierarchical teaching order emerges. In several European countries both Islamic theology and Islamic pedagogy are being established at state universities. This theological subject is primarily targeted at educating imams (i.e. prayer leaders, but they fulfil, in many countries, a church leader and teaching function) and the pedagogical subject of training IRE teachers. These are two professions that are both expected to teach and explain Islam to a growing generation of European Muslims. However, the students of Islamic pedagogy are not attributed any religious authority as they are expected simply to *transmit* Islam to the younger generation. According to Ednan Aslan, Professor of Islamic Pedagogy in Vienna, Islamic education is regarded as an applied science and not a theological discipline (Aslan 2008: 427–443). This could be understood as denying teachers the power, opportunity and responsibility they actually have when they formulate IRE. Furthermore, if we adopt a gender perspective of the hierarchy that exists between these different professions, it becomes clear that women are more or

less restricted to professions that are not attributed any religious authority, despite the fact that IRE teachers through their educational choices have great opportunities to influence what form of Islam is presented to their students.

7.6 To Teach Is to Translate

What alternative ways are there then to describe the teaching of religious traditions? How can we, from an educational and study-of-religions perspective, describe and discuss both the processes and content of religious education in a way that does not imply that religions are pre-packed, non-changeable units that are possible to send from one generation to the other in a way similar to sending files between computers? The simplest answer to this is that we should stick to the idea of *teaching*, and detach transmission from teaching, at least when we are not talking about learning by heart, as is done with the words of the Quran, German grammar or the great lakes of Sweden.

In my view, it would be beneficial if teaching instead could have a clear connotation of *translating*. The post-colonial theorist Homi Bhabha uses the concept of *translating* in a way that I would argue includes the aspects that are missing when teaching religion is analyzed as transmission. Bhabha discusses, in several of his works, the necessity of "cultural translation" and uses the concept of translation not in the strict linguistic sense, but rather as an image. His use includes an aspect of mimicry, but in a slightly subversive manner, which indicates that the original meaning is not given priority, but rather that a phenomenon can change, be simulated and made into what he calls a "trope" in a positive sense (Bhabha 2004: 212ff.). The reason why I claim that Bhabha's use of translation is interesting in an educational context is that it includes context as well as the teachers' responsibility and power. Responsibility and power are of importance since it is the IRE teachers who, through their educational choices, *translate*, not transmit, Islam to the classroom context and Swedish society. This is an important didactic aspect of teaching that risks disappearing if religions and religious education are described as static phenomena. Using the concept of translation contributes to an understanding of teaching as a process where you constantly have to choose and adapt, in a similar way to when languages are translated and the translator must choose between appropriate words to adapt the content to a specific audience. Hence, the concept of translating brings forward the importance of the teacher and his or her educational choices and awareness. Moreover, it makes it possible to understand the different forms of IRE that are offered to the students of the present study. Regardless of whether it is IRE or any other school subject that is prescribed in the national curricula, translation signals agency, responsibility and the power that teachers have when they teach a growing generation.

7.7 The Importance of Educational Awareness

In this chapter, I have shown that the study of IRE can provide knowledge that is of significance beyond the Muslim schools where the teaching is conducted. The study of IRE in different Muslim schools shows that it is inaccurate to describe religions as well as religious education as static pre-packaged systems that can be transmitted from teacher to student without adaptation taking place. I have highlighted the teacher's role in this context because it is the teacher who ultimately chooses what is taught and how Islam is presented to the students. The educational choices that are made by the teachers have considerable significance for what type of Islam is offered to the pupils, thus highlighting the importance of didactic awareness. Awareness of the power of educational choices is important not only for individual IRE teachers but also for teachers who teach other school subjects, such as teachers who teach the mandatory subject of non-confessional religious education in Sweden. These teachers' choice of content also affects the image of religions that students may have access to in classrooms around Sweden. Of great importance for both teachers of confessional and non-confessional religious education is of course teacher training. There is a risk that if teachers are not well educated in the history and diversity that exist within religions, they might teach a static image of religions that will actually only transmit their presupposed views. This is thus a concern not only for teachers of any kind of RE subject but also for all teachers who teach about religion in other school subjects, such as history, literature or art. No matter what subject the teacher teaches, the teaching process involves opportunities and power but also responsibility. This is a fact that quite clearly emerges when we now, in accordance with the bill of education that was mentioned initially, have the opportunity to study alternative forms of education. The study of confessional school subjects such as IRE can thus also contribute to didactical awareness and pedagogic innovation, and thereby stimulate the development of schools.

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Interviews

Interview with IRE-teachers 2005/10/24
Interview with IRE-teachers 2006/12/17

Chapter 8
Religion, Education and Religious Education in Irish Schools

Áine Hyland and Brian Bocking

Abstract The character of religious education (RE) in Ireland is intimately linked to the religious patronage (ownership) of most publicly funded schools by religious institutions. Approximately 90 % of schools are run by the Catholic Church. This tradition of religious patronage is increasingly at odds with Ireland's contemporary multicultural and multireligious society and raises pan-European questions of human rights, especially children's rights, in the sphere of taxpayer-funded education. The chapter outlines the education system in Ireland (little known outside the republic) and discusses primary and secondary RE as well as current RE teacher education programmes including the innovative "Religions and Global Diversity" undergraduate programme at University College Cork. Progress towards the kind of multireligious RE recommended by the European Council of Ministers has recently slowed. The Irish Government exercises only limited control over what is taught in schools' RE, and there are still very few teachers properly qualified to deliver education about religions (plural).

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter we look at religious education (RE) in Ireland at a systemic level before describing some of the key features of the "Religions and Global Diversity" undergraduate programme at our own institution, University College Cork, which since 2008 has been equipping prospective RE teachers with the subject knowledge

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and cross-cultural awareness to deliver a truly multicultural and multireligious curriculum. In Ireland this is something radically new and arguably long overdue. We focus initially on the national systemic level for two main reasons. One is that the very specific context and character of RE as it generally exists in Ireland is hardly appreciated outside the country. The type of RE found in Ireland is, for example, utterly unlike that of the UK, where a multireligious curriculum is well entrenched (see, for example, Cush [Chap. 4, this volume]). Ireland received only a passing mention (as is so often the case) in Gregory Alles' *Religious Studies*: *A Global View* (Alles 2007) and we hope that our brief account will help to provide the context for any more fine-grained discussion of RE in the classroom. The other reason for focusing on the systemic level is that RE in Ireland is in a process of erratic and unpredictable transition. The predominantly faith-based training of primary and RE teachers, coupled with private, mainly Catholic Church control of the overwhelming majority of schools, is seemingly clashing head-on with the demands of an increasingly multi- and non-religious civil society, with new national RE curricula, and with the human rights of parents, children and indeed teachers. Two years on from the "RE21" conference held in Cork to debate the future of RE globally, including in Ireland,[1] the dynamism of the then Education and Skills Minister in reducing Church patronage and promoting pluralism in the Irish school system has given way to seeming inaction (Humphreys 2015a; Mawhinney 2015).

8.2 Background

Ireland[2] has been an independent country since 1922 and a member of the European Union since 1973. The population of the republic in 2011 was 4,588,252, with over 20 % under the age of 15. In the 2011 census, 84 % of the population declared themselves Roman Catholic, 5 % Protestant (including Anglican, Presbyterian and Methodist); 1 % Orthodox (Greek, Coptic or Russian) and 1 % Muslim. Six percent declared "no religion" and 1.5 % did not declare any religion. The remaining 1.5 % included self-declared Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Pantheists, Quakers and Mormons (CSO 2012). Despite the apparently high level of religious affiliation, a recent international survey found that those in Ireland who considered themselves religious had fallen from 69 % in 2005 to 47 % in 2011—the second greatest drop (after Vietnam) in the 57 countries surveyed (McGarry 2012).

[1] See the Introduction to this volume.

[2] In this chapter, Ireland refers to the 26 counties of the Republic of Ireland. It does not include the six counties of Northern Ireland which are part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (comprising England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland).

8.3 The Irish Education System

In Ireland, 8 years of primary schooling (from ages 5 to 12) are followed by 5 or 6 years of second-level or "post-primary" schooling (ages 13–18). Primary schools and most second-level schools are privately owned (overwhelmingly by religious bodies, principally the Catholic Church) but publicly funded. The funding by taxpayers of privately owned schools is a very significant and distinctive feature of the Irish educational landscape. Today, with approximately 3000 primary schools in Ireland, 90 % of pupils attend primary schools owned and controlled by the Roman Catholic Church and 6 % attend schools controlled by Protestant churches. Two schools are operated by the Irish Islamic community and one by the Jewish community. There are now 74 multidenominational primary schools, relatively recently established by parents, attended by about 2 % of the school-going population and co-ordinated by a national body called Educate Together.

Concern about the lack of choice of schools has grown in recent years and the Minister for Education between 2011 and 2014, Ruairi Quinn, set up a Forum on Patronage and Pluralism to address this issue. The forum's report, published in April 2012, observed that there was a "mismatch between the inherited pattern of denominational school patronage and the rights of citizens in the much more culturally and religiously diverse contemporary Irish society" (Coolahan et al. 2012). Outsiders to Ireland may find it quite hard to grasp that the Irish State funds all these schools, yet exercises only very limited control over what goes on in them.[3]

At second level, until around 1970, schools were either "secondary" schools mostly owned by Church bodies and offering a traditional academic curriculum leading to higher education and general public service employment or they were "vocational" or "technical" schools, offering a practical or technical curriculum under local public authority control. In 1968, free second-level education became available and a common curriculum was introduced for all pupils, regardless of the type of school.

As the demand for second-level education grew, new types of schools—"comprehensive" and "community" schools—were established. Today, there are 729 seconds-level schools in Ireland, of which 52 % are private (mostly Church-owned) secondary schools, 35 % are vocational schools or community colleges and 13 % are community or comprehensive schools. The churches are represented on the Boards of Management of community and comprehensive schools. "Faith formation"

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[3]The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in Ireland has limited powers to determine what happens in the classroom, since schools are controlled by their patrons (normally the local Bishop). As the NCCA website diplomatically explains: "While Ireland has a centrally devised curriculum, there is a strong emphasis on school and classroom planning. At school level, the particular character of the school makes a vital contribution to shaping the curriculum in classrooms. *Adaptation of the curriculum to suit the individual school* is achieved through the preparation and continuous updating of a school plan. The selection of text books and classroom resources to support the implementation of the curriculum is made by schools, rather than by the Department of Education and Science or the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment" [our italics]. See NCCA (2015).

classes are timetabled within school hours for Catholic pupils in these schools; in vocational schools and community colleges as well as in Catholic secondary schools. Although parents have the legal right to withdraw their children from such classes, alternative provision is seldom made and in most cases, "opted out" children are left at the back of the classroom, reading a book or similar (see Shanneik [Chap. 11, this volume]). Difficulties around the pervasiveness of religious activities such as prayers throughout the school day, the practicalities of implementing the right to opt out, schools' lack of awareness of their legal obligations and the ineffectual complaints process, figure significantly in the submissions made to the 2011 Irish Human Rights Commission report on religion and education, discussed further below (Irish Human Rights Commission 2011: esp. 47–62).

8.4 Religious Education in Irish Primary Schools

Since the foundation of the primary school system 180 years ago, religious education has played a central role in primary schooling in Ireland. The still-current (1965 edition) *Rules for National Schools* state (Rule 68):

> Of all parts of a school curriculum Religious Instruction is by far the most important.… Religious instruction is…a fundamental part of the school course, and a religious spirit should inform and vivify the whole work of the school (Department of Education 1965).[4]

Although the rules require that all schools provide a programme of "religious instruction", the Department of Education and Skills does not prescribe the RE curriculum, which is the responsibility of the school Patron (usually the Catholic Bishop). Government guidelines suggest that 30 min a day, or 2.5 h per week, should be spent on RE.

In the 90 % of schools under Roman Catholic patronage, RE includes Catholic faith formation and preparation for the sacraments of First Communion and Confirmation. This takes place within school hours and is taught by the classroom teacher. The Catholic RE curriculum is called the *Alive-O* programme, with a series of textbooks and workbooks for each year, a handbook for teachers and resource materials.

In schools under Protestant patronage, a general Christian-based RE syllabus is taught and faith formation is provided in Sunday schools organised by the different Protestant denominations. The RE programme for Protestant schools is called "Follow Me" and includes a full-colour pupil's text and workbook, a detailed teacher's book for each class and other resource materials.

In Educate Together schools, a common Ethical Curriculum called "Learn Together", intended for children of all religions and none, is taught by classroom

[4] The 2012 *Report of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism* (80) recommended that the Rules for National Schools should be reviewed and updated and that, as a first step, Rule 68 should be deleted as soon as possible.

teachers within schools hours. The programme has four strands—moral and spiritual; equality and justice; belief systems; and ethics and environment. In Educate Together schools, "faith formation" is regarded as a matter for parents. Groups of parents who wish to arrange for such classes, outside school hours, are facilitated to do so by the school's Board of Management.

In the two schools under Islamic patronage, 50 min per day are timetabled for teaching Arabic, the Qur'an and RE to all classes. In addition, pupils from third to sixth classes attend daily prayer in the Mosque and senior pupils also attend Friday Jum'ah prayer (Department of Education and Skills 2010).[5]

In the past 5 years, in response to the increase in child population in some areas, the state has set up a new type of primary school known as a Community National School. Nine such schools have opened in the country since 2008, under the direct patronage of the Department of Education and Skills. It is intended that these schools will eventually fall under the patronage of local educational authorities. The RE curriculum currently being developed on a pilot basis in these schools is called "Goodness Me, Goodness You". The Catholic Bishops insisted that separate faith formation classes be made available for Catholic children in these new schools and in 2008 a previous Minister for Education committed the Government to this policy against the private advice of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA); the NCCA was subsequently dropped from the project (RTÉ 2012). In spite of concerns expressed by some groups that separating Catholic children for RE dilutes the inclusive ethos of the schools and in particular might be seen as "the segregation of native white Catholic children from non-white newcomers" (O'Kelly 2012), the policy still remains. Under the current pilot programme for the Community National Schools, in order to provide separate faith formation classes for Catholic children within the school day, pupils are divided for some of the school year into four separate RE groups: (1) Catholics; (2) other Christians; (3) Muslims; and (4) Hindus, Buddhists, Humanists, atheists and others. Unsurprisingly, this proposed RE programme aroused public controversy once the details became widely known[6] and the discussion on the form of RE to be provided in these new schools continues.

As the overwhelming majority of Irish schools are under Catholic control and there is usually only one local primary school within reach, many parents, Catholic or not, have no choice but to send their children to Catholic schools. While, in theory, children may "opt out" of RE classes at their parents' request, schools can be unwilling or unable to accommodate such requests (see Shanneik [Chap. 11, this volume]). Recent reports of the Irish Human Rights Commission (Irish Human Rights Commission 2011) and the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism have called

[5] Sakaranaho points out that due to lack of suitable English-language textbooks drawing their examples from Islamic culture (for all subjects): "Muslim schools use the standard Irish textbooks which are often informed by the Catholic ethos" (2009: 213).

[6] O'Kelly (2012) includes links to numerous government files released to RTÉ, the national broadcaster, in response to a Freedom of Information request submitted 2 years earlier. See also RTÉ (2012).

for the Rules for National Schools and school policies and practices to be amended to ensure that schools comply with "the human rights requirements of national and international law" (Coolahan et al. 2012), in relation to freedom of conscience. They have also called for state action to provide a greater diversity of schooling options at primary level. Since parents seldom have a choice about where to send their child for primary schooling, the forum also concluded that a programme for all primary schools on Education about Religion and Beliefs (ERB) as well as Ethics be developed to ensure that children can receive education "about religions" as opposed to faith formation in primary schools. Responsibility for developing this programme has been delegated to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and an Education Officer was appointed in summer 2013 to undertake this work. According to the NCCA website (February 2015), consultation on the content of the programme is due to begin "shortly" but the programme development process has been slow to date and it is difficult to predict when a national ERB programme will be available.

8.5 Religious Education in Irish Second-Level Schools

The provision of RE at secondary level is less controversial—possibly because Catholic children will normally have received the Sacraments of Holy Communion, Confession and Confirmation at primary level and preparation for these sacraments is no longer on the agenda. While the Catholic Church continues to provide denominational RE within second-level schools, a non-denominational RE syllabus, drawn up from 2000 onwards by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and acceptable to all the main religions in Ireland, is now offered to a greater or lesser extent (according to the school's own preference) in the majority of second-level schools. This RE syllabus calls for "the exploration of issues such as meaning and value, the nature of morality, the development and diversity of belief, the principles of a just society, and the implications of scientific progress" (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment 2012). It is examined by the State Examinations Commission at both Junior Certificate (age 16) and Leaving Certificate (age 18) levels. In 2014, 28,600 candidates sat the Junior Certificate examination—about 50 % of all candidates (a proportion that has not changed for several years). At Leaving Certificate level, where the subject is relatively new, only 1221 candidates sat the RE examination in 2014—fewer than 3 %. This number may rise in future years, but only if schools recruit sufficient teachers with relevant expertise in the study of religions, and in fact the proportion has not risen in recent years.

8.6 Teacher Education

Initial teacher education programmes for primary teachers are provided by five publicly funded colleges of education—all of which are owned and controlled by the churches. Four are controlled by various Catholic authorities, and one small college is controlled by the Church of Ireland. Initial primary teacher education is also provided by a private online provider—Hibernia College—which in 2012 attracted considerable press attention and a question in the Dail (Irish parliament) over the overt anti-atheist content in its RE curriculum (Cussen 2012; Donnelly 2012).

The BEd programme in all these colleges includes a module on RE and the Catholic colleges provide a separate Certificate course in RE. Since this Certificate in RE is required for employment in Catholic schools, virtually all students enrol on this optional course. Concern has been expressed that the programmes currently available in these colleges do not adequately prepare student teachers to teach the Ethical Curriculum in Educate Together Schools. There is disquiet also at the time spent on RE in some teacher education colleges. A recent Review Panel from the Teaching Council (the statutory professional standards body) expressed concern that subjects such as Science, Geography and History are currently given only 12 h in the BEd programme while RE has 48 h—and this in addition to the time spent on the optional Certificate in (Catholic) RE. One explanation for this is that in order to be recognised by the Catholic Bishops (patrons of 90 % of Irish primary schools) to teach in a Catholic school, student teachers must have 120 contact hours in RE during their initial teacher education programme "to include an exploration of Catechesis and Catholic Religious Education (hours of Religious or Theological subjects in the BEd or other degree) and of Religious or Theological Studies (taken in an additional Certificate)" (Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference 2011).

At second level, most intending RE teachers complete a 4-year programme in Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin, whose degrees are validated by Dublin City University. Graduates of Teaching Council–approved 3- to 4-year undergraduate programmes in the Study of Religions (e.g. at University College Cork) or of Theology/Religion in other major Irish universities can go on to the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (RE) or increasingly the 2-year Professional Master's in Education (PME) provided by the universities and thus qualify to teach RE. Such an accredited university-level qualification will reportedly be required of all RE teachers in the future, but at present many teachers in second-level schools who have studied neither religions nor theology at university level may nevertheless find themselves assigned to teach RE.

8.7 Undergraduate Education Towards RE: The "Religions and Global Diversity" Programme at University College Cork (UCC)

A new undergraduate programme offered at UCC since 2007 aims to equip students with knowledge and understanding of a wide range of contemporary religions as well as a reliable grasp of theoretical and methodological issues in the academic study of religions. A proportion of these students expect to go on to become primary and post-primary RE teachers in Ireland and elsewhere. The "Religions and Global Diversity" programme offered by UCC's Study of Religions Department remains the only one of its kind in the republic. Approximately 120 students in year 1 take an introductory module covering the study of religions worldwide and methods, concepts and theories in the academic study of religions. Around 50 students continue to the second and third years of the programme, normally graduating with a BA degree which combines Religions and Global Diversity with one other Arts/ Social Sciences subject. Year two and three students choose modules from a list which includes:

- Authority and Community in Contemporary Christianities*
- Buddhism in Practice
- Christianities in a Global Age*
- Contemporary Religions in Ireland
- Hinduism and Indian Religions
- Indigenous Religions
- Islam: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives
- Religions of East Asia
- Sufism: Charisma and Devotion in Islam
- Texts, Theories, Approaches in the Study of Religions
- Topics in Christian Theology*
- Western Esotericism and New Religious Movements
- Research Project in Religious Education
- Dissertation in the Study of Religions

Intending RE teachers are required by the Irish teacher accreditation body the Teaching Council to take the three modules marked * in the list above (i.e. those explicitly relating to Christianity) in order to qualify for RE teaching in Ireland, but otherwise the choice of modules is unrestricted. The broad curriculum offered to UCC students, which reflects the extensive linguistic and regional research expertise of academic staff in the Study of Religions Department, goes well beyond the minimum curricular requirements specified by the Teaching Council. The Teaching Council until 2014 required only that students wishing to qualify for RE teaching in Ireland should have studied:

> Moral Theology, Scripture or Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology and Christology/ Origins of Christianity with either Philosophy of Religion or World Religions [sic] (Teaching Council 2013: 27).

These criteria have very recently (2014) been revised, with the Teaching Council now looking retrospectively at what a student has studied, rather than accepting completion of a "recognised" degree programme as a qualification. The latest iteration of the Teaching Council's subject requirements for RE suggests a little more emphasis on religious diversity, for an intending teacher is required to have studied in their degree at least the following:

(a) Sacred Texts including the Bible
(b) Christianity—Origins and Contemporary Experience
(c) World Religions[7]
(d) Secular Belief Systems
(e) Ethics
(f) Systematic Theology and Philosophy of Religion[8]

Details of modules in the UCC "Religions and Global Diversity" programme can be found via the UCC Study of Religions Department's website at http://www.ucc.ie/en/studyofreligions. Here, we draw attention to just two modules in the programme taken by intending RE teachers. "Authority & Community in Contemporary Christianities" is a fieldwork-based module which has students going out into the local community to research at first-hand—using ethnographic methods of observation, interviews and audio, photo and video documentation—diverse expressions of local Christianity, ranging from the lives of members of traditional Catholic religious orders to charismatic house churches, LGBT Christian groups and the activities of street evangelists. The module "Research Project in Religious Education" similarly involves fieldwork; in this case interviews with parents and teachers of RE in a primary or post-primary school. Students taking these modules are carrying out first-hand research among real religious and educational communities. We find that this "hands on" approach to learning, which holds some challenges for undergraduates more used to studying passive written and visual materials relating to religions, typically generates excellent results and fosters a high level of enthusiasm and engagement which we can confidently expect students to carry with them into their future careers as RE teachers.

8.8 Conclusion

An in-depth, nationwide study of classroom practice in RE in today's Ireland has yet to be conducted and there are undoubtedly some well-informed, gifted, innovative and inspirational teachers involved in RE, but many pupils and some teachers

[7] This listing makes it clear that the Teaching Council regards "World Religions" and "Christianity" as quite separate categories. In our experience, Irish policymakers still use discriminatory categories, such as "other religions" and "non-Christians", in public discourse about RE.

[8] See the Teaching Council's PME Declaration Form (used by applicants) at http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/_fileupload/Subject%20Declaration%20Forms%20Updated%20December/Religious%20Ed%20-%20Form%20%28REVISED%29.pdf

will describe RE as a "doss" subject (i.e. not one requiring their time or attention) and experienced observers agree that there is a need for very significant improvement at all levels across the subject. A significant increase in the number of pupils taking the new NCCA RE curriculum to Leaving Certificate level may provide an effective driver for change, but while total numbers of Junior and Leaving Certificate students have risen in recent years, the proportions taking RE as an examination subject remain unchanged at 50 % and under 3 %, respectively. The question of Church control of primary education and most secondary education in an increasingly religiously diverse republic is a highly sensitive political issue. Although change seems to be afoot, Church-controlled teaching of RE and of education in general largely holds sway. Former Education and Skills Minister Ruairi Quinn aimed initially to have up to half of Ireland's 3100 primary schools "divested" (handed over from religious to secular control) within a few years. However, as of January 2015, not a single Catholic primary school had been handed over to another patron. As the *Irish Times* reported early in 2015, "UN human rights monitors have criticised 'the slow progress in increasing access to secular education' in Ireland and are warning the Government it faces fresh censure in the absence of reform" (Humphreys 2015b; for a detailed analysis see Mawhinney 2015).

In this increasingly fluid and unpredictable context, a pupil's experience of "RE" in Ireland depends on which school she or he attends, who within that school is teaching the subject, and how and where that particular teacher acquired her or his knowledge and understanding of religions.

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Chapter 9
Religious Education as a Compulsory Subject in Russian Public Schools

Vadim Zhdanov

Abstract Religious education in Russian schools, officially introduced in September 2012 after being approved by means of an 'experiment' over 3 years, remains a new and rather contradictory issue in the public perception. It is, therefore, of great importance for the study of religions in Russia. However, the empirical research on public debates done earlier (e.g. Willems J, Religiöse Bildung in Russlands Schulen: Orthodoxie, nationale Identität und die Positionalität des Faches "Grundlagen orthodoxer Kultur" (OPK). LIT, Berlin, 2006; Ovchinnikov V, O pravoslavnom obrazovanii v Rossii. In Alexej M & Filatov S (eds) Pravoslavnaya tserkov' pri novom patriarkhe. Rossiiskaia politicheskaia entsiklopediia, Moscow, 2012, 261–310.) has to be updated. Educational strategies and the formative experiences of pupils also await an accurate religious studies analysis. Since the practice of comparison is constitutive for the study of religions, it is evident that research has to be grounded on regional data comparing experiences in religious education from supporters of different religious traditions. In this chapter, I make some preliminary remarks about the legislative process relating to religious education in Russia and describe briefly the debates on its implementation. I proceed then with a short report on a pilot draft of a bigger research project in the field of religious education and its perception in regional Russia.

9.1 Legislative Quirks of Religious Education in Russia

As in other countries, religion and education were closely connected in earlier Russian religious history. However, as time went on, ties with the government began to change. Leaders such as Peter the Great introduced Western technology and culture to Russia and began to secularize educational institutions. In 1917, the Russian Revolution brought about an even greater change. The Soviet regime initiated total secularization of the state. Religious education of children was outlawed, all

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religious primary and secondary schools were closed and atheism was taught in all public schools (Glanzer and Petrenko 2007: 55–56).

Lenin's famous 'Decree on the Separation of Church from State and School from Church' was adopted on January 23, 1918. Clause 9 of the decree stated rigorously: "The school is separated from the church. Teaching of religion in all government and public as well as private institutions that teach general subjects is not allowed. Citizens may teach and be taught in religion in private." This document was declared expired on October 25, 1990, with the introduction of the new law 'On Freedom of Religion'. The new legislation lifted all restrictions on worship activities and simplified the procedure for registration of religious organizations. Not only did religious freedom become possible, but also religion was generally released from state control.

However, since another federal law, 'On Education', was passed in 1992, government agencies have interpreted it as still prohibiting the teaching of religion in state schools (Kozyrev 2002). That law did recognize the right of all churches to teach religion within their institutional structures and in private circumstances, but it established "the secular character of education in government and municipal educational institutions" as a matter of principle. The more conservative 1997 law 'On Freedom of Conscience' was actually the first legislation to address the issue of religious instruction in state schools. It was favourable to religious associations by allowing them the opportunity to teach in these same schools, as long as the courses remained "outside the framework of the education program" (Article 5, Clause 4) and were strictly voluntary (Basil 2007: 29).

It took another 2 years before the possibility to teach religion in state schools became a reality, i.e. shifted from the legislative to the executive level. The first success of the church was a letter from the Minister of Education, 'On Granting Religious Organizations the Opportunity to Teach Religion to Children Outside Educational Programmes in the Premises of State and Municipal Educational Institutions', issued on July 4, 1999 (Mitrokhin 2004). On April 24, 2001, a round-table meeting, 'Religious Education in Russia: Problems and Prospects', was held at the Parliament of the Russian Federation. The final document produced from this meeting was considered a breakthrough where the importance of spiritual education in schools was concerned. The participants agreed that spiritual upbringing and religious education in Russia's schools should be given priority. They agreed in principle that the secular character of Russia's state school system should not exclude education based on a religious outlook (Kozyrev 2002). Eventually an order from the Ministry of Education was issued, on July 1, 2003, that finally legalized the access of religious organizations to the state and to municipal educational institutions. However, teaching religion just outside the school curriculum was obviously not the ultimate goal of the church. It was only one of its first victories in the religious education legislative process.

The Russian Orthodox Church was actively lobbying for the full integration of religious instruction into the state school curriculum during these years. It took almost two decades to win state support for the teaching of religion, and finally President Dmitry Medvedev supported the idea of introducing religious classes at

general schools. Entirely unexpectedly, on July 22, 2009, in Barvikha, the President declared: “I have made up my mind to support… the idea of introducing a basic course of religious culture and secular ethics in schools.” The President offered the teaching of the foundations of religious culture, the history of religion and secular ethics as an experiment. Over 3 years, six types of religious courses were offered experimentally in 21 Russian regions. Four of the courses were religious—the basics of Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism or Buddhism—and the remaining two were the basics of world religions and secular ethics. According to the Russian Education Ministry’s data, the largest number (42 %) of students were interested in ethics, 30 % of students opted for the basics of Orthodox Christian culture, 18 % for the basics of world religions, 9 % for the basics of Islam and 1 % for the basics of Buddhism.

In February 2012, Vladimir Putin evaluated the experiment positively. He said that the pilot programme of religious classes in 2009–2011 had received a favourable response. The courses involved half a million children, 20,000 teachers and 30,000 schools across the country. Early 2012 was the time to legalize religious education in public schools for good and for all. The new law ‘On Education in the Russian Federation’, which includes a clause on religious education, was approved by the Federation Council on December 26, 2012, and went into effect on September 1, 2013.

9.2 Controversies Over the Issue of Teaching Religion in Public Schools

According to sociologist Roman Lunkin, this new law is “essentially a church law—for the support of Orthodox education has become one of its basic features”. According to Lunkin, “Consultations with the ministry [of education], the government and the deputies were conducted behind closed doors all the time, and on the eve of the voting… on December 7, representatives of the church met vice-premier Igor Shuvalov, after which all the secularist amendments were rejected” (Lunkin 2012).

These amendments concerned the controversial provisions of Article 87, ‘Features of Studying the Foundations of Spiritual and Moral Culture of the Peoples of the Russian Federation. Peculiarities of Theological and Religious Education’. Clause 3 of Article 87 provides that educational programmes should be “examined in a centralized religious organization for compliance of their content with the doctrine as well as the historical and cultural traditions of this organization”. Clause 6 suggests that “appropriate centralized religious organizations” will take part also in the elaborating of “teaching methodology support” for religious classes. Furthermore, Clause 12 of this article states that both an educational organization, i.e. a public school, and its teaching staff can be accredited by centralized religious organizations.

Interestingly, such a “centralized religious organization”, referred to in the law, can, in reality—according to sociologist Roman Lunkin—be only the Russian Orthodox Church (Lunkin 2012). The new law ‘On Education’ made religious

education in Russian public schools compulsory. President Vladimir Putin signed the law on the last day of 2012, just before the long winter vacation period. Public reaction was moderate, not only because of the date of signing but probably also because of the continual debating of this topic in the mass media over the previous years. Generally, two opposite views featured in public debates.

First, the church view says that the teaching of Orthodox spirituality is indispensable for the upbringing of a moral person and a conscious patriot of Russia. Familiarity with Orthodoxy is necessary even for the children of people who are not Orthodox (atheists, Muslims, etc.), because they are citizens of Russia and Orthodox Christianity is the foundation of the culture, mentality and condition of our country. This position refuses to recognize the ideological and religious diversity of Russia. Practically, it seeks to convert students into church attenders and evaluates all of the other ideological positions as marginal and alien to Russian interests (Filatov 2012: 40).

The second position is secular. It denies religion the right to be represented in the school in any form, because it would essentially be an indoctrination of children into a certain world view. Thus, the presence of religion in schools will seriously hinder the formation of independent and responsible citizens of the country. And, finally, this fundamentally contradicts the Constitution, which stipulates the absence of any official ideology in Russia (Filatov 2012: 40–41). Indeed, the official position of the Russian Orthodox Church concerning religious education, as reflected in the social doctrine of the church, sounds dogmatic: "From the Orthodox viewpoint, it is desirable that the whole system of education would be built on religious grounds and based on Christian values." In view of this, many parents—even Orthodox believers—are not likely to wish for their children to be indoctrinated in school in the spirit of Orthodox patriotism in a manner similar to indoctrination in Marxism-Leninism (Kozyrev 2002).

9.3 Religious vs Secular?

Perhaps this is the reason for statistics that must be disappointing for the church leaders. According to a public opinion poll by the Levada Center, 43 % of Russians consider religious education in schools as not necessary and only 22 % agree that children should attend religious classes in state schools. Only 9 % say that the church should be responsible for religious education, and more than half—54 %—consider that it is parents who should be in charge of the religious education of their children (Levada Center 2013).

The clergy is, naturally, concerned about these and other figures. According to church statistics, nearly 80 % of Russian citizens belong to the Orthodox tradition. The church, however, realizes that most Russians are Orthodox only in name. Thus, the policy aims to turn these nominal Christians into active members of the church.

This follows on from concerns expressed by Patriarch Kirill about the small number of students in schools in the capital who take lessons in the 'Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture'. According to the Patriarch, there are pressures on parents to

choose more 'neutral' modules, such as 'Fundamentals of Secular Ethics' or 'Basics of Religious Cultures in the World', rather than the module on Orthodox religion. In mid-January 2013, the Patriarch reported that only 23.4 % of the students in the Diocese of Moscow had chosen to study Orthodox Culture. This is the lowest level in the Central Federal District. Kirill raised the alarm also about the fact that parents are not free to pick and choose the religion course for their children. Some school principals, he said, have a mistaken view of the secular state and, therefore, encourage the parents of the students not to opt for the lessons on Orthodox Culture (Achmatova 2013).

It is interesting that the Russian President subsequently adopted the very same rhetoric. Vladimir Putin said on February 1, 2013, that although he supported a secular state in Russia, the society should avoid a "vulgar and primitive interpretation" of secularism. In his speech to the Bishops' Council, the President said: "We are a secular state of course, and cannot allow state life and church life to merge, but at the same time, we must avoid too, a vulgar and primitive interpretation of what being secular means." He added that as a response to people's "vital need for moral support and spiritual guidance", the Russian Orthodox Church and other traditional religions of Russia "must have all the possibilities for carrying out full and real service in important areas such as supporting families and mothers, raising and educating children, youth policy, resolving the many social problems we still face, and strengthening patriotic spirit in the Armed Forces" (Guneev 2013).

It is little wonder that civil society activists and critics mock the 'symphony of church and state', the 'orthodoxization of the country' and the 'missionary revenge of the church'. The problem, however, is that there is no generally applicable notion of what is 'secular': whatever 'secular' may mean in theory, the present praxis of its interpretation and implementation can be very different in each concrete case.

Nonetheless, Article 3, Clause 6, of the new law 'On Education in the Russian Federation' stipulates "the secular character of education in the state and municipal educational establishments". However, the tendency of teaching religions is often far from being secular by nature. Teachers mostly have very short training in the new school subject; additionally, they are often neophytes of the religion they teach. The drift away from a secular approach might accelerate if the church exercises supervision over teachers' training and textbooks. This supervision is now not only possible but also legalized by the new law 'On Education' (c.f. the above-cited Clauses 3, 6 and 12 of Article 87), which appears to contradict its own statement about the secularity of education.

9.4 Dimensions of Studying Religious Education, and a New Research Project

The issue of religious education is of growing importance for the study of religions in Russia. It now affects all strata of society, and its study might, therefore, be exemplary of the religious situation in Russia as a whole, for the matter of religious politics affects the interests of every family with schoolchildren.

I would like to stress three dimensions of studying religious education in contemporary Russia. First, historical work should be done. It should include analysis of religious education in Russia before and during the Soviet regime and in the early post-Soviet period. Furthermore, it requires a careful discourse analysis of meaning, negotiating processes that have taken place in the last two decades. There are plenty of contested meanings about what religious education should be and who is supposed to teach religion in state schools. These and related topics have been widely negotiated in Russian public discourse, especially over the last 10 years. While there are some analyses of public discourse in the central media, regional discourses on religious education are still widely ignored in academic research. Alongside the discourse analysis, I would like to emphasize also the importance of sociological research. There are many groups in Russian society whose opinion is hardly represented in public debate—for example, schoolteachers and parents of children attending religious classes.

A new research project I have been undertaking recently, in co-operation with colleagues from the University of Vladimir, aims to compensate for the aforementioned deficiency. We began in the autumn of 2013 with a questionnaire survey in the city of Vladimir. Vladimir is one of the oldest cities in central Russia, and its population (350,000 people) is still relatively homogeneous, for most inhabitants are Russian by nationality and reckon themselves among the Russian Orthodox believers. This research area was chosen as a pilot draft for a bigger research project, which is going to compare several different regions of the Russian Federation, dominated respectively by particular religious traditions—Orthodox Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. On the one hand, the focus lies on the perception of religious education by ordinary inhabitants (schoolteachers and parents of schoolchildren), who are dealing with or having to confront religious education. On the other hand, regional press media reports on issues of religious education will be analysed. Additionally, we intend to carry out some qualitative interviews and focus group interviews with representatives of local authorities and opinion formers as well.

The statistical survey of 2013 focused only on parents of children who attended religious education classes in six schools in Vladimir in the school year 2012–2013. Most of the respondents were middle-aged women (78.9 %) and middle-aged men (21.1 %), most of whom had received higher education (58.8 %) or specialized secondary education (31.8 %). Most of them acknowledged belonging to the Russian Orthodox tradition (86.3 %), very few (2.7 %) to Islam and 0.8 % to Buddhism. While only a relatively small group (12.6 %) actually participated in regular church services, most of the respondents (72.1 %) just occasionally dropped in at the church. Only a few of the respondents who participated in church services attended them on a regular basis once a week (3.2 %). The rest did it 'just sometimes' (41.3 %), on high religious holidays (21.9 %) or once a year or even more rarely (19.4 %).

This picture seems to reflect the religious situation in Russia in general, for its more than 80 % Orthodox Christians are often only Christian in name; they are the so-called 'nominal Orthodox believers' or opportunistic adherents of the Russian

Orthodox Church. Sociological surveys have shown quite paradoxical results: that there have recently been more Orthodox people than there are people who believe in God (c.f. Kaariainen, and Furman 2007: 41). These facts are probably reflected in the choice of modules that parents in Vladimir have chosen for their children in the new subject 'Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics'. Most of the respondents fixed on secular ethics (50.8 %) and the history of religions (23 %), while a minority (28.2 %) chose the religious modules: Foundations of Orthodox Culture (26.2 %), Foundations of Muslim Culture (1.2 %) and Foundations of Buddhist Culture (0.8 %).

For the majority of the respondents (74.7 %), the new obligatory school subject came as a surprise, as they were informed about it only by the leadership of the school. Nevertheless, some of them (18.4 %) had been very much aware of the issue by following discussions on religious education in the mass media during the last few years. These figures seem to correspond to those reflecting the attitude of respondents towards the new subject; roughly one fifth of respondents expressed having been either critical of the new subject (11.5 %) or disaffected with it (9.5 %), while the majority were rather positively minded (69.4 %) or indifferent (9.6 %). These figures again correspond to the degree of familiarity of parents with the content of the subject 'Foundations of Religious Cultures and Secular Ethics'. Around a quarter of the respondents confirmed their acquaintance with all six modules, while the others claimed to be unaware of the content of alternative modules (59.3 %) or were even uninterested in their content (8.3 %).

The ignorance or indifference of parents towards the content of the religious education of their children implies, however, a possibility of manipulating their choice. Although, in most cases, the respondents affirmed that they were given free rein to choose among all six modules of the new subject (73 %), some of them also received recommendations to choose one or another specific module (14.6 %) or even had to make their choice between only a few of the six modules (5.8 %). In some cases, parents had no free choice at all, being confronted with the fact that the school could offer only one module (5.3 %).

Some schoolteachers I interviewed did indeed confirm that, in some cases, it is considerably easier for a school to offer only non-religious modules, since there is a deficiency of trained teachers. A few of my respondents observed that truly religious parents often explicitly do not want religious education for their children in the school and, therefore, deliberately choose an ethics module or a history of religions module. This is because they are confident that the family or Sunday school are the proper places for religious enculturation. Interestingly, some religious parents even objected to the introduction of religious education as compulsory. In their opinion, it should instead be an optional subject in the state school system.

The pilot review shows, furthermore, that the decisions of parents and their choices among six modules are hardly motivated religiously: while 9.2 % of respondents believed that children should learn about their own religion in school, 35 % claimed that children should know about all of the religious traditions in Russia and another 35 % attributed great importance to the foundations of ethics. The general

attitude of parents towards the new subject can be described as rather uninterested or, in some cases, even indifferent, and the initially emphatic promotion of religious education in state schools by the Russian Orthodox Church seems to have stalled in the meantime as well.

However, I consider the study of religious education in the Russian regions as still a very promising endeavour and even dare to claim that religious education can be, to a large extent, exemplary of the religious situation in Russia. The issue of religious education allows researchers to focus on the grassroots level and also generate insights into the matters of religious pluralism and religious tolerance. Vivid debates on the implementation of religious education in Russia have been taking place in all strata of society for more than 10 years. However, previous analyses of the religious education discourse have mostly collected their data from the central media, while regional sources have been widely neglected. In view of this deficiency, the bigger research project mentioned above is intended to focus on developments in religious education in several Russian regions. Furthermore, besides the Russian Orthodox Church, the religious education discourses of Muslims and Buddhists in Russia, which also have not been sufficiently taken into account so far, have to be studied in a comparative perspective and in relation to Russian Orthodox Church discourses. This combination of discourse analysis and sociological surveys seeks to provide a broader religious and political contextualization of religious education and to contribute to better understanding of the sociopolitical role of religions in Russian society.

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Chapter 10
Citizenship and RE: Different Interpretations in Discourse and Practice: A Case from Denmark

Karna Kjeldsen

Abstract The fact that the public school is seen and/or used as an important tool for the nation state in its efforts to form good citizens, strengthen a national identity and promote particular values is not new. Religion education (RE) is in many countries linked closely to such efforts and is thus frequently subject to political, public and professional discussions. Supra-national processes such as globalization, pluralization and migration are now challenging individual European nation states and Europe as a whole, not least when it comes to ideas about social cohesion and coexistence, cultural identity and the function of the public school. Projects and discourses about "citizenship education," "intercultural education" and RE's potential contribution to this area can be seen as political educational responses to these challenges. However, there is far from any consensus as to what citizenship and RE are and should be, and the combination of citizenship education and RE is therefore not without problems when put into practice. In 2007 a new compulsory subject called *Kristendomskundskab/livs oplysning/medborgerskab* (KLM) (knowledge of Christianity/life philosophy/citizenship) was introduced into Danish teacher education for the elementary and lower secondary school, and was followed by many political, professional and public debates. This chapter outlines some of these debates as well as findings from my study of how KLM was profiled and planned according to national and local curricula and syllabi from the different university colleges.

The fact that the public school, besides contributing to an all-round, formative education (German *Allgemeinbildung*, corresponding to Danish *dannelse*),[1] is also seen and/or used as an important tool for the nation state in its efforts to form good

[1] The usage and connotations of the Danish term *dannelse* come very close to the usage and connotations of the German term *Allgemeinbildung*. The Danish term refers to a sort of general, all-round education obtained in formal or informal ways and also includes the senses of formation and development, thus referring to the ways in which a person and/or citizen is shaped or formed.

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citizens, strengthen a national identity and promote particular values, is not new. Religion education (RE) (Jensen 2008)[2] in Denmark, as in many countries, is often linked closely to these efforts and thus frequently becomes part of political, public and professional discourses and debates. Supra-national processes such as globalization, pluralization and migration, which in Europe have led to a steady increase of immigrants including from countries in which Islam is the majority religion, are now challenging individual European nation states and Europe as a whole, not least when it comes to ideas about national and/or European citizenship and identity, social cohesion and coexistence as well as the function of the public school and of RE (Willaime 2007). Since the 1990s, a new focus on citizenship in connection with issues of migration and human rights has been on the agenda in political science and philosophy as well as in state politics. At the European political level, educational responses to the above-mentioned challenges have appeared in different projects and discourses focusing on "citizenship education" and "intercultural education." In his extensive writing about these projects, Robert Jackson has pointed out that September 11, 2001, and the events that followed marked a turning point in European policies of security, citizenship and education (Jackson 2007, 2009). RE was now allotted an important role in solving political and social problems and in the promotion of human rights values, active democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue. Several RE scholars have proposed ways in which RE can contribute to these efforts and have also taken part in various cooperation projects involving the EU, The Council of Europe[3] and OSCE (e.g. Jackson 2003, 2008; Miedema and Bertram-Troost 2008; Weisse 2007, 2011), but critical remarks on this emphasis on RE in relation to political strategies are also offered (e.g. Jensen 2008, 2010, 2011).

However, there is far from any consensus as to what citizenship and RE are and should be, and the combination of citizenship education with RE is thus not without problems when the two come together in practice. In 2007, citizenship education was introduced into Danish teacher education for the primary and lower secondary public school known in Denmark as *Folkeskolen* (the People's School), taking the form of a new compulsory qualifying subject called *Kristendomskundskab/livsoplysning/medborgerskab* (KLM), (knowledge of Christianity/life philosophy/citizenship).[4] This combination of subjects prompted much political, professional and public debate, and KLM was also a hot topic in the political negotiations concerning a major reform of teacher education in 2012–2013. These debates relate to different political ideologies and public opinions on Denmark as a mono- or multicultural state, the concept of citizenship, cultural identity, the general purpose of

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[2] The term "religion education" as suggested by, *inter alia*, Tim Jensen is used instead of the term "religious education" to stress the nonconfessional character of the subject within the Danish public educational system.

[3] Connected to the European Wergeland Centre, an expert group including Robert Jackson is currently working on the implementation of recommendations from the Council of Europe concerning religion. See http://www.theewc.org/ and Jackson (2014).

[4] "Life philosophy" (German *Lebensphilosophie*) or "enlightenment of life" are different translations of the Danish word *livsoplysning* which refers to a concept developed by the Danish theologian N. F. S. Grundtvig.

public education and the status and function of the majority religion in these matters. This chapter will present some of the findings from my 2012 study that focused on how KLM was profiled in national and local normative curricula as well as in individual teacher syllabi used in courses offered at different university colleges where teachers in the Danish *Folkeskole* are educated.[5] These findings will be set in relation to some of the political, professional and public debates about KLM and recommendations for citizenship and intercultural education by the Council of Europe as well as the new national curriculum for KLM and various discussions connected to this.

10.1 The Design of the Study

The overall frame for the selection of data and structure for my 2012 study, as well as for this chapter, is based on Basil Bernstein's (1990) sociological model "the pedagogic device," which is a model for the structure and internal logic of communication in European educational systems. The internal logic is based on different regulative rules linked to three contexts or fields: (1) "the primary context" where knowledge and discourses are produced and modified; (2) "the recontextualizing field" which consist of both an official field (Ministries and authorities in education) and a pedagogical field (public, political and professional discussions, teaching material etc.) where knowledge and discourses are relocated, combined and transformed into a "pedagogic discourse," i.e. into strong or weak frames for teaching and the social order within; (3) "the secondary context" (higher, secondary and primary education). The model and the concept of "recontextualizing" stress that discourses/knowledge are transformed, negotiated and opened up for power struggles when recontextualized from one context to another (Bernstein 1990, 2000). The data for my 2012 study were collected from the various different contexts and consisted of political recommendations from the Council of Europe, UN and OSCE, the national normative curricula for KLM (*læreplan*), local normative curricula (*studieordninger*) from all university colleges,[6] political, professional and public discussions and 15 teachers' syllabi from 13 different campuses. The data were thus limited to written sources and what could be called "the intended contents" (Nielsen 2006) and do not include observed teaching in the classroom or reception by the students. National and local curricula as well as the teaching materials collected, used in the different classes, were analyzed with a view to defining how the subject was profiled as well as focusing on some of the most vehemently debated and criticized aspects of the subject.

[5] This study was carried out as a Master's Dissertation at the Department for Study of Religions, University of Southern Denmark (2012).

[6] Some university colleges have two or three campuses with teacher training, sometimes with different local curricula.

10.2 RE and KLM in the Danish Educational System

The Danish *Folkeskole*[7] is a comprehensive school covering both primary and lower secondary education (grades 0–9 and an optional tenth grade) for children between the ages of 6 and 16. The overall framework for the school's activities is regulated by *Folkeskoleloven* (the Education Act) and normative curricula frameworks and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education for the various subjects. From first to nineth grade, RE is called *Kristendomskundskab* (knowledge of Christianity). The subject can be classified as non-confessional or "integrative" RE (Alberts 2007: 347), although the Education Act states that the main field of knowledge is the evangelical-Lutheran Christianity of *Folkekirken* (the Danish People's Church) and an opt-out rule exists (Undervisningsministeriet 2013a, § 6). Teacher education aimed at *Folkeskolen* comprises a 4-year education taking place at a university college and consists of a number of compulsory subjects—now called the "teacher's foundational competences" [official translation], including KLM, and three elective main subjects, among them *Religion/kristendomskundskab* (religion/knowledge of Christianity). Teacher education underwent a major reform in 2013 in order to improve significantly the academic and professional level of the program, and it is now a stated goal that by 2020 teachers are only to teach within their main subjects (Østergaard 2012).[8] Recent statistics show that RE is the subject taught by the largest proportion of teachers (62 %) who do not have this as their main subject (Undervisningsministeriet 2013b). Following on from the *Folkeskole* the majority of students go on to the *Gymnasium* (academic upper-secondary school) where RE, here simply called "Religion," is taught as a compulsory subject with exams. Whereas the RE teachers in the *Gymnasium* are educated to MA level at university Departments of the Study of Religion(s),[9] the majority of university college RE lecturers have traditionally been recruited from the university Departments of Theology. There have therefore been strong links between RE in the *Gymnasium* and Departments of the Study of Religions on the one hand, and among theology, RE at university colleges and *Kristendomskundskab* (RE) in the *Folkeskole* on the other hand. This has resulted in very different profiles and approaches to the concept of "religion" and to the representation of religions in curricula, textbooks and didactics. Things are however changing and more RE teachers at the university colleges

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[7] For an English description of the Danish educational system, see http://eng.uvm.dk/Education/Overview-of-the-Danish-Education-System [accessed 18 Oct 2015].

[8] For an English description of the Danish teacher education system, see http://fivu.dk/en/education-and-institutions/higher-education/university-colleges/university-college-educations/bachelor-of-education/the-danish-initial-teacher-education-b-ed-programme-for-primary-and-lower-secondary-schools.pdf [accessed 18 Oct 2015].

[9] University departments in Denmark uses different names—in Odense the term "study of religions" is used. In English the terms "study of religion" and "study of religions" are both used—the latter sometimes based on methodological grounds. This chapter will use the term "study of religions" when referring to specific university departments, and "study of religion" when referring to the discipline.

now have an MA from a Department of the Study of Religions (Jensen 2009, see also Buchardt 2004).

The RE subject in the *Gymnasium* is based on the study of religion approach to RE, close to the kind of RE proposed by scholars in the study of religion, including Tim Jensen (2005, 2008, 2011), Wanda Alberts (2007, 2008), and Bengt-Ove Andreassen (2012). However, very different theologically based approaches to RE are dominant in the *Folkeskole* and in teacher education at university colleges. One of these could be called a "national–cultural–Christian" approach which stresses transmission of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity and biblical narratives as central elements of Danish (and European) cultural heritage. This has been on the agenda of Bertel Haarder, long-standing but now former Minister of Education (see Haarder 2006; for a critical analysis of this approach, see Andreassen 2013 and Jensen 2000, 2013). Another tradition, which holds an even more dominant position in the curriculum and guidelines for *Kristendomskundskab*, is a "life philosophy–existentialist" approach inspired by the theologians N. F. S. Grundtvig, K. E. Løgstrup and Paul Tillich. Through "existential questions and answers" and life philosophy as the overall approach to the syllabus, the pupils are to learn not only *about* but also *from* religion(s) (Böwadt 2007, 2009; Jensen and Kjeldsen 2013). This approach, which can also can be found in RE in Sweden and Norway, has been criticized by scholars from the study of religion for adopting a specific pro-religious and Christian-theological approach to the concept of religion and religions (e.g. Alberts 2007; Andreassen 2008; Berglund 2013; Jensen 1999, 2013).

10.3 Political Discourses on Citizenship and Citizenship Education

The English word "citizenship" has two synonyms in Danish and these reflect some of the different aspects and developments of the concept within political philosophy and politics. One is *statsborgerskab* (state citizenship), which denotes the understanding of citizenship as a political–juridical status allotted to a member of the state and which is accompanied by certain rights and duties. The other is *medborgerskab* (co-citizenship), which denotes the citizen's perception of his or her social "belonging" to or "identification" with a political collective (Korsgaard 2008). Most of the contemporary discussions of citizenship concern whether and how these different aspects might be combined and justified within liberal democratic nation states or "supra-nation" unions and how various social groups—particularly ethnic–cultural minorities—should be placed within these strategies. Some strategies, such as John Rawls' "political liberalism," stress the notion that citizenship and a democratic liberal state should be based only on an "overlapping consensus" about basic liberal rights (Rawls 1996) or, as is argued by Jürgen Habermas, that a democratic state cannot legitimize socialization on an ethical–cultural level as a requirement for obtaining citizenship, but only socialization into political–juridical principles based

on deliberative processes (Habermas 1994a, b). Others have in different ways argued for multiculturalism, such as Charles Taylor's promotion of a "politics of recognition" that secures the culture or religion of minority groups (Taylor 1994) or Will Kymlicka's "culturalist" position in which minority rights and restrictions are considered within a liberal frame (Kymlicka 2002: 339). These theories have been contested by those who argue the need for a more comprehensive collective national identity and citizenship. Many people, according to Anthony D. Smith, still find it important to have a shared national identity, defined by Smith as:

> the continuous reproduction, reinterpretation and transmission of a pattern of symbols, values, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of a nation, and the identification of individuals with the cultural elements of that heritage. (Smith 2007: 19)

Kymlicka points out that fostering liberal nationalism and nation building, *inter alia* by means of the educational system, are common strategies used by states to promote and secure their specific national identity, but states differ in terms of how comprehensive that promoted national identity is (Kymlicka 2002).

The Council of Europe also regards the educational system as a way of promoting and strengthening social cohesion, human rights, democratic societies, European stability and a European identity. The project "Education for Democratic Citizenship" was launched in 1997 and ran until 2009. This project recommended that all member states should implement citizenship education that included "the European dimension" at all educational levels, as well as provide teachers with the necessary competences and knowledge to fulfil these objectives (Council of Europe 2002: Appendix 1). Citizenship education aims to empower learners in order to:

> exercise and defend their democratic rights and responsibilities in society, to value diversity and to play an active part in democratic life, with a view to the promotion and protection of democracy and the rule of law. (Council of Europe 2010: Appendix 2)

Some of the key competences identified are the ability to settle conflicts in a nonviolent manner, to listen, understand and interpret other people's arguments and to develop a critical approach to information. The kind of citizenship promoted here can be seen as linked to political liberalism and is in line with Habermas' approach in terms of stressing socialization into political–juridical aspects and a duty to participate as active citizens within the society, especially in deliberative processes. The Council of Europe also ran another project on "The new Intercultural Challenge to Education: Religious Diversity and Dialogue," which explicitly included recommendations about RE. In its *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue* (2008), the Council of Europe argues for a new intercultural strategy based on intercultural dialogue as a replacement for multiculturalism and assimilation, which have been found inadequate as policy approaches (Council of Europe 2008a). Intercultural competences should, according to the Council of Europe, form part of citizenship education, human rights education and teacher training as well as all subjects, especially history, language and RE.

It is recommended in the *White Paper* and in CM/Rec (2008)12 (Council of Europe 2008b), that education should include teaching on "the major world religions and nonreligious convictions and their role in society," and should reflect diversity and

complexity at local, regional and international levels (Council of Europe 2008a: 44). According to the Council it should also be recognized that "different religions and humanistic traditions have deeply influenced Europe and continue to do so," and therefore a balanced approach to "the role of religions and other convictions in history and cultural heritage" should be promoted (Council of Europe 2008b: Appendix 6). The above-mentioned projects focusing on citizenship and intercultural education can be seen as "supra-nation" building strategies aiming to strengthen a European identity, but based on the universal and fundamental values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law as well as the appreciation of the cultural, religious and historical diversity of a "common heritage" (Council of Europe 2008a: 3,14).

According to political sociologist Christian Joppke, European states have undergone a development in the direction of a more inclusive and universalistic policy of citizenship, but with nuances of a more restrictive immigration policy in some countries, including Denmark, and a "re-ethnicization" of citizenship (Joppke 2010). The Danish education scholar Claus Haas (2007a, b) has criticized the fact that citizenship and citizenship education in Denmark were linked almost from the start to immigration and identity politics by the new center-right government elected in 2001. With reference to different political statements and publications about citizenship and RE, Haas argues that KLM is intended as a way of regulating and educating particularly young Muslims into Danish citizenship and a democracy closely connected to evangelical-Lutheran Christianity. One example is a statement from Bertel Haarder in which he connects citizenship education to his concern regarding a growing number of young people who show "blindness towards democracy," some of them because "many young people think their religion is inconsistent with democracy" (Undervisningsministeriet 2006b: 26 [my translation]). This line of thinking should, as pointed out by Tim Jensen and Christian Joppke, be seen in the context of the popular notion that a Lutheran way of being religious, i.e. that religion is a matter of "personal belief" that belongs to the private sphere, has paved the way for a secular democracy and culture wherein religion and politics are separated from one another. In this way, liberal universal values are attached to what Joppke refers to as "national particularism" (Jensen 2013; Joppke 2010: 136).

10.4 Recontextualizing RE and Citizenship in National Curricula[10]

When KLM was introduced, it replaced two other subjects: *Kristendomskundskab/Livsoplysning* (knowledge of Christianity/life philosophy) and *Skolen i samfundet* (school and society). The content of the latter subject was integrated into KLM as well as *Pædagogik* (pedagogy). According to the political preparatory work, the aim of the former subject *Kristendomskundskab/Livsoplysning* was to ensure that future

[10] A resume of some of the debates and the findings of the project can be found in Jensen and Kjeldsen (2013).

teachers live up to one of the general aims in the Education Act, stating that Folkeskolen shall “familiarize the pupils with Danish Culture and History” and “contribute to their understanding of other cultures” (Undervisningsministeriet 2013a§ 1.1 [my translation]). In an earlier memorandum to this paragraph from the Education Act of 1993, it was stated that Danish culture includes Christianity and that “other cultures” means “other non-European cultures and cultures that have influenced immigrants” (Juul 2011). The citizenship aspect was to supplement this by also preparing future teachers for the implications of §1, 3 in the Education Act: “*Folkeskolen* shall prepare the pupils to take an active part and to accept responsibility, rights and duties in a society characterized by freedom and democracy” (Undervisningsministeriet 2013a § 1,3 [my translation]). It was also to include knowledge specifically about the differences between politics, culture and religion and about the political and societal framework of the Danish public school (Undervisningsministeriet 2006b).

When these political discourses and frameworks were recontextualized in a national curriculum shaped by an expert committee, it became clear that different interpretations of citizenship, citizenship education and the KLM’s profile existed. One of the members of the committee argued for a political–legal definition of citizenship in line with Jürgen Habermas’ approach, wanting to construct it as a political *bildung* akin to citizenship education in England (Undervisningsministeriet 2006a: 16). Another member, however, saw KLM as also including aspects of national culture and national identity, stating that it should clarify: “[w]hat it means that Denmark is a cultural Christian country” (Sommer 2007: 10–11). The draft by the expert committee was criticized by RE teachers for “reducing” religion to political and sociological aspects as well as reducing the life philosophy tradition, and the Executive Committee for the Association of RE Teachers (*Læreruddannelsens Religionslærerforening*) subsequently formulated a new suggestion for the national curriculum which was sent to the Minister of Education, Bertel Haarder, who accepted some of the changes. One of these changes was a preamble stating that the three knowledge areas of KLM—religion and culture, the history of philosophy and ethics, and democracy and citizenship—are to be integrated into teaching in such a way that they mutually shed light on one another. Another change consisted of the inclusion of “cultural, religious and existential” aspects of citizenship. The minister also added his own imprint by changing the order of the stated aims for KLM so that Christianity was placed first as an indication of its importance (Koed 2007; Riis 2006, 2007a). These struggles over the curriculum also reflect a disagreement between RE teachers and social science teachers. The latter had argued that citizenship was a political concept; they wanted to teach courses focusing on matters related to democracy and citizenship and they criticized the curriculum for “de-politicizing” citizenship (e.g. Bretlau 2008; Rasmussen and Christensen 2007; Riis 2007b, 2010). According to the head of the executive committee, Michael Riis, the above-mentioned changes made to the final curriculum signal that KLM cannot be seen as social or political science, but is to be taught only by RE teachers (Riis 2007a).

The final national curriculum, in force from 2007, stated that the aims of KLM are that the students must obtain competences which enable them to:

(a) Relate to the impact of Christianity (in the singular definite form: *kristendommen*) and other world views (*livsanskuelser*) on the fundamental values found in a European and Danish cultural context
(b) Relate to the school's task as regards the *bildung* of the pupils as individual citizens of Denmark and of the world
(c) Prepare the pupils to take an active part in a society characterized by equality, freedom and democracy
(d) Develop the critical faculty of the pupils and the capacity of the students to relate to and handle new challenges as well as to learn to live together with respect for one another's norms and values

The contents of Religion and Culture are:

(a) Christianity, its central stories, concepts, history and impact with a focus on Denmark
(b) Judaism and Islam as European minority religions
(c) Religion and human rights considered in the context of the meeting of cultures and school
(d) The contemporary relation between religion, culture and politics
(e) The impact of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity on democracy, the welfare state and the school in Denmark (Undervisningsministeriet 2007 [my translation])

As can be seen from these excerpts from the curriculum, there seem to be (at least) two separate discourses present when it comes to the general profile of KLM. The subject is supposed to qualify future teachers to handle their job in a culturally and religiously pluralistic school and to educate pupils in active democratic citizenship, which includes respect for cultural and religious differences. At the same time, a national–cultural–Christian discourse can be detected, whereby future teachers are expected to understand and transmit the impact of Christianity, and especially evangelical-Lutheran Christianity, on democracy, welfare, the school system in Denmark and fundamental values within a Danish/European cultural context.[11]

The paragraphs concerning the above-mentioned topics were particularly disputed. A report made after the first year of implementation, based on a number of students' exam papers, found that many students expressed only a noncritical "secularized culture–Christian" perspective, seeing democracy, the welfare state, human rights and "Danish values" as elements inherited exclusively from Christianity, sometimes in opposition to Islam. The authors therefore recommended that the above-mentioned paragraphs should be changed in order to indicate that these relations are complex and still being discussed by scholars of political science (Brandt and Böwadt 2009).[12] Although this report was criticized, *inter alia* for not being statistically representative and for overestimating the influence of the curriculum on

[11] Geir Skeie (2003, 2006) has shown how similar, maybe conflicting, strategies are combined in Norwegian religious education.

[12] For political science research into these issues, see Petersen and Petersen (2009). See also the publication from the Ministry of Education (Udvalget til udarbejdelse af en demokratikanon 2008) *Demokratikanon* ("Democracy Canon") and the critique of this in Haas (2010) and Herbener (2010) (18.12.2010).

the actual teaching and learning outcomes, reports from external examiners also highlighted the risk of ending up with simplified views when students were asked to integrate the various content areas (Censorformandsskabet for Læreruddannelsen 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; Larsen 2010).[13]

10.5 Recontextualizing RE and Citizenship in Local Curricula and Syllabi

University colleges have the right to draft local curricula (*studieordninger*) for their teacher education programs and for various subjects as long as they are in accordance with the national curriculum. As Basil Bernstein has stressed, further changes and resistance are possible when a pedagogic discourse is recontextualized from one context into another, as becomes evident when analyzing the local curricula for all the university colleges as well as the individual teacher syllabi used in 15 classes during the academic year 2010–2011 (the latter from 13 of the university colleges, covering some 25 % of the total number of students). The teachers included in this study have their educational backgrounds within the fields of theology or the study of religion, while three classes were taught in part by social science or pedagogically educated teachers. Some of them also had further training within citizenship education. In some cases, the different profiles, structures, approaches and teaching materials used in the syllabi reflected these different educational backgrounds.[14] In the following, some of the findings from my study will be presented, focusing on (1) profiles; (2) the representation of Judaism, Islam and Christianity; and (3) approaches to citizenship education and the impact of (evangelical-Lutheran) Christianity.

10.6 KLM Profiles in the University Colleges

The local curricula differed in profile and in terms of how weakly or strongly the subject was framed. These varying profiles were reflected in the teachers' individual syllabi, although differences between the profiles given in the local curricula and syllabi also exist. Based on the analyzed syllabi and the application of Wolfgang Klafiki's general categories of "material *bildung*" (taking the study materials as the point of departure) and "formal *bildung*" (focusing on developing the learner's competences and skills) (Klafki 2011), three different profiles emerge. In six colleges the students' material *bildung* was given priority in the form of teaching focused on

[13] Discussion can be found in Gade and Busk (2009) and a periodical published by the association for RE teachers in teacher education, *Medlemskommunikation* (2006,1; 2007,1; 2007,2; 2009,2). Retrieved from http://www.lurf.dk/mk/2006-11/2010_1.html

[14] These possible connections will, however, not be discussed in the present chapter.

politics, religions, ethics and/or European/Danish history of ideas. Three of these six also stressed the teaching of the Danish life philosophy tradition or used it as an overall approach. In six other syllabi from four colleges, KLM was given a problem-oriented profile whereby the students were introduced to different discussions and to knowledge about religion, citizenship, politics and pedagogical–school issues relating to their future as teachers. Two of these syllabi stressed an explicitly critical approach to the contents and to KLM as a subject. A formal *bildung* profile was found in the local curricula of three colleges, one focusing on developing the students' analytical and intercultural competences, the other two on their didactical competences in order to give the pupils an intercultural active citizenship education.

10.7 Representation of Judaism, Islam and Christianity

It was not a specified clause in the national curriculum that theoretical and methodological approaches to the study of "religion" or religions be included and nor was this a priority in the majority of the syllabi. Ten syllabi did include literature providing a short introduction to, mostly older, study of religion–based approaches or theories. In three classes, approaches specific to the study of religion were used. In many syllabi, however, priority was instead given to theoretical literature about the concepts of culture, the meeting of cultures and minority-identity studies. Judaism was, in the majority of the syllabi, represented with a focus on its foundation, central stories and ideas and the contemporary lived religion, while in the rest of the syllabi it was mainly represented with a focus on minority issues or as a part of the history of Christianity. The knowledge areas from the national curriculum about "culture meetings" were thus treated mainly in relation to Islam. Half of the colleges predominantly included literature representative of this perspective and with a focus on sociological and political issues, while the other half focused also on basic knowledge of history, central stories, ideas, and Islam as a contemporary lived religion. Most of the secondary literature on Islam was written by teachers who held an MA or by scholars from the study of religion, giving an outsider perspective (albeit including insiders' voices, too) based on contemporary studies and methodologies within the study of religion. All of the syllabi presented a nuanced picture of Islam, stressing diversity and different Muslim views on democracy and human rights,[15] and thus not reflecting the earlier situation of students' simplified reception of Islam, as found in the above-mentioned report(s).[16] However, a "culture meeting" between "Islam" or "Muslim culture" and "Danish/Western culture" seemed to be a focus in most of the syllabi.

[15] This indicates a development in how textbooks represent Islam when compared with the (Danish) results from the European research project "Islam in Textbooks" (1989–1993); see Jensen (1994) and (Simonsen 2008).

[16] Brandt and Böwadt point out that students' reception of Islam may reflect stereotyped pictures presented by public media rather than as part of their teaching (Haugaard 2009).

When it comes to the representation of Christianity, a different approach and type of literature are employed in a majority of the syllabi than is the case for Islam and Judaism. The secondary literature used does not represent Christianity from a study of religions perspective, but rather in a language more indicative of familiarity with this religion as well as insider knowledge and it is written by theologians or teachers with a theological, pedagogical or philosophical education. According to the syllabi, the representation focuses on the foundation and historical development of Christianity, on its central stories and ideas and on different (Danish) evangelical-Lutheran theological traditions. The great variety of different denominations or other traditions of Christianity within Denmark and the world are not given priority and, in general, diversity, innovation or lived religion are downplayed or even absent.[17] This prioritization is in line with the profile of the national curriculum where Christianity is seen predominantly in a Danish (and European) context with a focus on its impact. These differences in how Christianity, Islam and Judaism are represented in curricula, syllabi and textbooks can also be found in studies of RE across Europe (e.g. Hayward 2006; Jackson et al. 2010).

10.8 Citizenship Education and the Impact of Evangelical-Lutheran Christianity

The ways in which the much-discussed paragraphs that mention the impact of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity on fundamental Danish/European values, the welfare state and democracy have been recontextualized in the syllabi is a complicated matter. A majority of the syllabi include literature representing different views on whether or not Martin Luther's ideas about the relation between religion and state have caused a separation of politics and religion in Denmark, and on whether this separation really exists. Eight classes were introduced to theologians, all but one of whom saw Christianity as consistent with human rights and humanism, while only three classes were presented by way of literature introducing a critical perspective on "the Christian church" as a powerful institution. The paragraph on the impact of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity on democracy and the welfare state was explicitly treated from a critical perspective in four classes. Two syllabi did not include any literature on this, while the rest of the classes (nine) included literature wherein the (Scandinavian) welfare state model was seen in a close relation with evangelical-Lutheran Christianity. While some of this literature could be read in an analytical and critical way, and while some of the literature does show more nuances, it seems that the majority of the classes only read literature presenting a positive take on evangelical-Lutheran Christianity and its impact on Danish culture, including the welfare state and democratic values. When it comes to literature on citizenship and citizenship education in the school, a national–cultural–Christian citizenship

[17] Particularly, three colleges digress from this.

discourse was, however, not recontextualized without criticism. All the syllabi included literature that explicitly or implicitly gave a critical perspective on essentialized and nationalistic discourses on culture and on “Danishness.” All classes likewise read literature promoting a citizenship education based on intercultural dialogue/pedagogy and/or the politics of recognition. Thus, in many of the classes, KLM was, according to the syllabi, transmitting (mainly theologically based) knowledge/interpretations of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity and its positive and crucial impact on Danish society, culture, democracy and the welfare state, but was at the same time also presenting a critical view on nationalistic immigration policy and discourses intimately connecting “Danishness” to Christianity while promoting the need for intercultural dialogue and education.

10.9 KLM: Once Again Part of Cultural and Educational Struggles

When a new teacher education program was negotiated in 2012–2013, KLM once again became the topic of hot debate. This time, it was discussed whether KLM should be abolished, as recommended by an expert committee, but political parties from opposite ends of the political spectrum managed to form a majority in favor of keeping the subject. This debate was part of a greater struggle about different views on education and the general aim and function of the Danish *Folkeskole*, but also part of a so-called culture war. The new draft curriculum was criticized by KLM teachers, politicians and theologians partly for watering down life philosophy and knowledge about Christianity and its impact on cultural heritage, which was central to what these critics considered the main function of the subject and of the *Folkeskole* in general, namely *dannelse* (*Allgemeinbildung*) and citizenship education. They saw this as part of a development toward an educational line of thought that stresses qualification/competences and testable knowledge (e.g. Kemp 2013; Mikkelsen 2012; Vihøj et. al. 2013). A number of priests also saw the proposal to remove KLM as one of several attacks aimed at the relation between the nation state and the Danish evangelical-Lutheran Church and at Christianity as *the* constitutive aspect of Danish culture (e.g. Brøgger 2012; Olesen 2012). Another interpretation of the aim and function of KLM and the *Folkeskole* was formulated by the Organization of Teacher-Students (*Lærerstuderendes Landskreds*), university college teachers and scholars of pedagogy as well as some left-wing politicians. They were critical of the use of the concept of *Allgemeinbildung*, so closely connected to evangelical-Lutheran Christianity and to “Christian *bildung*.” Instead, they stressed the idea that KLM should provide intercultural competences and/or knowledge *about* religions, history of philosophy, democracy, etc., to prepare future teachers for a religiously, ethnically and culturally pluralistic school, Danish society and world (e.g. Aisinger 2013; Korsgaard 2013; Simonsen et al. 2013). In the end, a political compromise was reached whereby “evangelical-Lutheran Christianity” and “life philosophy”

(*livsoplysning*) were both explicitly mentioned in the new national curriculum. The new curriculum, which came into effect in August 2013, reads (Uddannelses-og Forskningsministeriet 2013 [my translation]):

Competence area: *Allgemeinbildung* (*Almen dannelse*) (KLM) concerns the interpretation of the general aim of *Folkeskolen*, the development of "professional ethics" (*professionsetik*) and the handling of complex challenges as a teacher in a global society characterized by plurality of cultures, values and religions.

Competence aims: The student is able to reflect in a nuanced manner on ethical, political, democratic and religious challenges connected to teaching, cooperation with parents and the school in a globalized society.

Knowledge aims: the student has knowledge of:	Proficiency aims: the student is able to:
Central stories, concepts and the history of Christianity's impact on different time periods' views on humanity and educational formation (Danish *dannelse*, German *Allgemeinbildung*)	Evaluate relations and conflicts between Christianity, secularization and school in a historical and current context
Christianity, Judaism, Islam and other worldviews (*livsanskuelser*) in the contemporary context	Enter into dialogues with pupils and parents who hold different religions and worldviews
The relation between religion, culture and politics in evangelical-Lutheran Christianity and other worldviews, different types of secularization and their consequences for school	Handle religious and cultural aspects within the school
Life philosophy (*livsoplysning*), ethical traditions and their backgrounds within the history of ideas	Use different types of ethical argumentation
Rituals and interpretation of human existence within selected philosophical and religious traditions	Organize professional cooperation on complex ethical and religious challenges within the school
Human rights, children's rights and the background of these rights within the history of ideas, including the relations between human rights, religion and democracy	Make suggestions for the organization of teaching, cooperation with parents and colleges and a "school-culture" (*skolekultur*) based on freedom of conscience, equality and democratic *bildung*
Different types of citizenship within the history of ideas, historical and current perspectives, and the philosophical and pedagogical–philosophical background for concepts such as tolerance, authority, equality, freedom and solidarity seen in relation to plurality and integration within the school	Develop links between the school's function of providing citizenship education and cultural all-round formation and organize integrative teaching within fields of tension (*spændingsfelt*) between the individual and the wider community (*fællesskab*)

As can be seen, there are still differences with regard to the ways in which Christianity, Judaism, Islam and other worldviews should be represented, but the national–cultural–Christian discourse on the impact of evangelical-Lutheran Christianity seems now to be toned down or at least to be more nuanced than

previously. KLM is now directed toward the future work of teachers of a school and in a society where a multitude of cultural and religious differences each present their challenges. In this way, the new national curriculum is more in line with recommendations concerning citizenship education and intercultural education in the international field, *inter alia* from the Council of Europe.

10.10 Citizenship Education and RE: Implementing a Political Discourse

As Bernstein (1990, 2000) has stressed with his model of "the pedagogic device," educational systems are not to be seen as trickle-down models, but rather as models in which discourses and knowledge are transformed, combined and negotiated. At the same time, national/local curricula as well as dominant political, professional and public discourses and traditions are strong frames when it comes to the functions and aims of educational programs and their different subjects. How new international discourses, such as citizenship education, are recontextualized in national discourse and practice depends on the character of these frames, not least if these discourses are combined with existing models of RE shaped by strong traditions and political interests. As this chapter has shown in the case of Denmark, different interpretations of citizenship education and RE can be linked to different political and ideological ideas on what constitutes good public education, a citizen, society and a supra-national or national identity, and it can also be linked to different political strategies toward migration, plurality and globalization. Several interpretations of how citizenship and RE can contribute to these strategies figure in different contexts within and outside the educational system. One stresses the transmission of a national identity based on a national "heritage" and societal values seen as intimately connected to the majority religion. Another stresses intercultural dialogue, supra-national values, and knowledge about diversity in Denmark, Europe and the world, while a third way of thinking stresses analytical–critical competences and "meta-knowledge" about religions, politics and society and the ways these relations are discussed. These sometimes opposed discourses can be combined in different ways when they are recontextualized, and there are thus many nuances when it comes to pedagogical discourses and teaching about citizenship education and RE.

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Chapter 11
"They Aren't Holy": Dealing with Religious Differences in Irish Primary Schools

Yafa Shanneik

Abstract Ireland's demographic landscape has changed enormously in recent years. Primary schools however have remained predominantly denominational. The Catholic Church in Ireland owns and manages the majority of primary schools. By taking the example of the First Holy Communion ritual, this chapter examines how the sacrament is regarded not only as a "rite of initiation" into the Catholic Church but also as an initiation into an idealized notion of a white, Catholic, homogeneous Irish identity. It discusses the various educational, religious and consumerist factors that influence the children's understanding of religion and religious practice not only by examining these social spaces but also by analyzing the children's own views and participation in the discussion. In addition, it examines how the Catholic school's communities of teachers, priests and parents deal with religious difference as it becomes apparent in the preparations for the sacrament and during its celebration and how the children perceive and respond to this difference. Based on extensive research with 7- to 8-year-olds, this chapter demonstrates the complexity of children's learning (about) and making sense of religions across urban, suburban, town and rural contexts. This complexity is revealed by examining the situatedness of children's religious beliefs and knowledge within Catholic primary schools. This chapter is part of a research project conducted in 2013 and funded by the Irish Research Council, entitled *Making Communion*: *Disappearing and Emerging Forms of Childhood in Ireland*. The ethnographic material is based on children's participatory activities, children and adult-level interviews and focus groups.

Researcher:	"Anyone knows what *Christian* is?"
Child:	"I know what Christian is but *I can't remember*."
Another child:	"Meee! *Someone who believe in God and someone who doesn't live in public*."
Researcher:	"Someone who doesn't live in…?"

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Child: "*Public*."
Researcher: "And what's *public*?"
Child: "Em, *around our area*."
Researcher: "Oh, *this place. So people who don't believe in God don't live here*?"
Child: "Yeah."

Arjun Appadurai argues that particular ceremonies that mark the "rites of passage" of an individual, like First Holy Communion, define who belongs to a particular community. Rites of passage, according to Appadurai, produce "*local subjects*" and are "complex social techniques for the inscription of locality onto bodies" (Appadurai 1996: 179). These rites are not only an expression of social aggregation, as he argues, but social techniques for the [re-]production of "natives" (Appadurai 1988). According to the findings of the 2009 *Growing Up in Ireland* study, 87 % of 9-year-olds in Ireland were identified as Roman Catholic (Williams et al. 2009). In the latest 2011 Census, 84 % of people in Ireland identified themselves as Roman Catholic (CSO 2012). Tom Inglis argues that this Catholic identification has become "more a matter of belonging to a cultural tradition and heritage, to a shared collective memory" (Inglis 2007: 207). This shared collective memory highlights a national Catholic-centered identity that is preserved and kept alive throughout generations, mainly through the Irish education system, in which over 90 % of Irish primary schools are governed and run by the Catholic Church (Darmody et al. 2012; see Hyland and Bocking [Chap. 8, this volume]). Part of the Catholic Church's doctrine entails the performance of particular rituals such as the First Holy Communion sacrament among children at the age of 7 or 8 years. The preparation for this central Catholic sacrament is part of a year-long faith development program that takes place during school hours in Catholic primary schools across Ireland. In the 1970s, a new school type emerged in Ireland that claims to be more inclusive of children of various religious backgrounds and none, called Educate Together schools, which are multidenominational in nature (Darmody et al. 2012). The majority of these Educate Together schools allow for faith formation classes within the school's premises after school hours which prepare children for up to 2 years for their First Communion sacrament. We observed an attempt, in both the Irish Catholic primary schools and in faith formation classes in Educate Together schools we visited, to produce "local Catholic subjects" who share a particular collective identity. These are spaces within the Irish education system that support an understanding, whether "real" or "imagined," (Jenkins 2008: 133) of a homogenous group identification highlighting who "we" are and who and what "we" identify with or not. They encompass notions of similarities and differences—notions of "us" and "them."

The First Holy Communion is the reception of the Eucharist, the consecrated bread and wine also believed to be Jesus' body and blood, for the first time in one's life. This ritual is believed to unite the 7- to 8-year-old First Communicants with God and initiate them into the Catholic Church. The scope of this article does not allow for the examination of the children's performance of the practices, gestures and symbols required to receive the Eucharist, such as making the sign of the cross while

going up to the altar or bowing in front of the altar before returning to one's seat in the pew. It rather investigates the children's perception of this "rite of initiation" through analyses of their understanding of religions and religious concepts in general embedded within the various educational, religious and consumerist contexts.

First Holy Communion is regarded by scholars as a "rite of passage," as children are believed to be moving from one stage of their life to the other (see for example Van Gennep 1960; Duffy 1984; Ridgely Bales 2005; McGrail 2007). This reflects Arnold Van Gennep's understanding of rites of passage as "ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally well defined" (Van Gennep 1960: 3). How do parents, teachers and priests define these stages of life; how far do these definitions reflect the children's own understanding of the stages; and what effect does this understanding have on children not participating in the ritual? Children's understanding of religious rituals cannot be analyzed without considering the children's own views. These child-centered interpretations of rituals are analyzed in this article in conjunction with adults' attempts, at school, in church and at home, at shaping the child's understanding of the sacrament. In taking children's interpretations into account, I am arguing against the perception of some of the adults interviewed in this study that children are unable to understand religious concepts, beliefs and rituals, and who see therefore a need for constant religious nurturing, particularly in school and church (see also Punch 2002). Neither the children whose parents have decided for them that they will participate in this ritual nor those whose parents have decided against it are mere recipients accepting uncritically and unquestioningly their parents' decisions and the subsequent consequences. Children engage in various levels of "active self-involvement" (Hemming and Madge 2011: 44) in their own identity formation, religious understanding and ritual participation (see also Bell 1992, 1997) and do not merely repeat adults' definitions but rather, as Ridgely Bales argues, "reinterpret value-laden symbols" (Bales 2005: 7). My argument in this chapter resonates with Peter Hemming and Nicola Madge's research finding in which they argue that "Families, schools, friendship groups, communities, localities and the media do not merely impose religion upon individuals. Rather, children and young people are actively involved in the negotiation of competing influences in the construction of their religious identities" (Hemming and Madge 2011: 45).

The focus in this article is thus on the children's own views, articulated through their responses to our questions but also expressed in their own interactions with each other in their classrooms, through drawings and other activities, during their rehearsals in the church and during our focus group interviews. By combining these views and our observations of the children's performances and actions in school and church with the adults' instructions, perceptions and expectations, I intend to illustrate the racialized nature of the First Holy Communion ritual in Ireland which is not only seen as a "rite of initiation" into the Catholic Church but also an initiation into an idealized notion of a white, Catholic homogeneous Irish identity.[1] The

[1] In our interviews with various priests in Ireland and a number of African Catholic parents, Karl Kitching and I observed issues around the acceptance of black Catholic children in the First Holy

intensive engagement with the preparation for the sacrament in school and church is only one of a range of external factors that influence the children's perceptions of the ritual. In Ireland, First Holy Communion has developed into an industry or a market whose season starts in April and lasts until June each year, during which time the celebration of the sacrament is extensively expressed, mainly through material goods such as fashion and through entertainment services such as hiring bouncy castles for children, up to Communion bank loans to finance these expenses. This consumerism-centered time of the year is supported by advertisements on the streets as well as via various communication media such as television shows and internet sites (for a comparison, see Berger and Ezzy 2009). Seven to 8-year-old children are surrounded, willingly or unwillingly, by a rigorous First Communion atmosphere that manifests itself within their various social spheres, influencing their understanding of and their participation in the ritual, as well as their perception and attitude toward those not practicing in the sacrament. In the following, I wish to discuss how these various factors influence the children's understandings of religion and religious practices by not only examining the various social spaces in which they are articulated but also by analyzing the children's own views and participation in the discussion. In addition, I will discuss how the Catholic school's communities of teachers, priests and parents deal with religious difference as it becomes apparent in the preparations for the sacrament and during its celebration, and how the children perceive and respond to this difference.

11.1 Child-Centered Research

This chapter represents part of a larger study that examines both the role of religion, as seen in family, community, school and popular culture, in constructing childhoods, and the role of children therein. The study does not focus only on religious and non-religious practices within child culture, but also on "the generational ordering of social relations" (Alanen 2003) among children, young people and adults through religious and non-religious practices. Given the significance of schools as settings where the majority of children in Ireland either learn through religion or witness such learning (Coolahan et al. 2012), primary schools were prioritized as the basis for accessing children and families. For this, my colleague Karl Kitching and I invited young people in local second-level schools and more senior citizens

Communion preparation. Very often, African parents need to prove their allegiance towards the Catholic Church and their long membership therein. According to the priests and parents we interviewed, black Catholic children usually have a longer preparation time (around 2 years) before they are admitted to do the sacrament. I argue elsewhere that due to the recent demographic, socio-cultural and economic transformations in Ireland, the priests feel that the cohesion and homogeneity of local Catholic subjects are threatened. Catholic priests in Ireland have therefore become custodians of the Church and of the nation and use the sacrament of the First Holy Communion to decide to whom to give entrance to the Church (and the nation) and to whom not.

(including some children’s grandparents) to participate in our study, through contacts established through the primary schools.

Three case study sites were accessed, namely a Catholic primary school located in a small village, a multidenominational school located in a large suburban area, and a Catholic school located in a large town. Each site was visited for a week in January/February 2013, and returned to for another week in April of that year. The variety of communities that were accessed offered the study a mix of school patron,[2] class, gender, ethnic profile, school size and local population density. The different settings provided opportunities to look at the construction of childhoods, religions and communities from both spatial and temporal perspectives. These sites gave us the opportunity to analyze the variety of meanings and feelings embedded in the construction of different generations (children, young people, adults, senior citizens, priests and nuns) and articulated in particular notions of each place.[3] We also attended religious education classes, as well as faith formation classes in Educate Together schools, to observe teachers’ and children’s teaching and learning time about religion.

We conducted in-depth interviews and/or focus groups with 170 participants whose ages ranged between 6 and 92 years. Children aged 7 or 8 years made up a significant percentage of the participants as they witnessed, or participated in, the preparation for the culturally significant sacrament of Catholic First Holy Communion throughout their second class.[4] We introduced a variety of child-centered activities in order to examine the children’s definition of religious concepts, beliefs and rituals as well as their understanding of religious diversity in general through various drawings, photography, story-telling and role play activities (see also James 2001). These activities were used in each school to encourage children to participate meaningfully. Focus groups of two to three children in self-selected friendship groups were also conducted.

We not only sought the parents’ permission but also distributed consent forms every day to children to fill out in order to inform us whether they wished to participate or not in our daily activities. These consent forms use symbols (smiley/sad/unsure face) to indicate children’s desire to participate/desire not to participate/not sure whether to participate in the research activities. Those children who indicated that they were not sure whether they wanted to participate were given time to think while the first activity went ahead and were allowed to join in, or not, at any time

[2] In the Irish system every school has a patron who in effect ‘owns’ the school, hires its staff, sets the curriculum, etc. In 90 % of Irish schools the patron is the local Catholic Bishop.

[3] There was a concern that few Traveller students were part of the profile of these schools. Efforts were made to access Traveller children and families through services and NGOs in the Cork region, but came to no avail due to pressures on these services. In order to make up for this shortfall in representation, six Traveller children, young people and adults were accessed through a personal contact in a Traveller-led community organization in another small city in Ireland.

[4] However, there has been a shift toward greater parish involvement in preparing children in Catholic schools for Communion outside school time in Dublin since the Archdiocese of Dublin launched a policy document in 2012. Retrieved from http://www.catholicbishops.ie/2012/10/01/archbishop-launches-guidelines-communion-reconciliation/ [accessed 1 March 2015].

they desired to do so. Children were also asked to nominate two friends whom they would like to work with in the activities and to be grouped with in the focus group discussions. The use of the data, the right to withdraw and assurances of anonymity were discussed with all participants.

11.2 The "Self" and the "Other" in Irish Primary Schools

Researcher:	"What about people who don't do this [baptize their child after birth]?"
Child:	"They aren't holy. Birth from the devil."
Researcher:	"What was that?"
Child:	"Birth from the devil."
Researcher:	"What was the first word?"
Child:	"Birth."
Researcher:	"Do you think it's a good thing to be blessed or is it also OK if you don't?"
Child:	"It's good if you do it, it's bad if you don't."
Researcher:	"What will happen if you don't?"
Child:	"You will get that look."

The Irish education system provides a space for Catholic primary schools in particular to place children in a controlled, observed and measured environment that directs them toward a specific set of learning and behavioral codes. These pre-set codes are simplified, dichotomized and polarized worldviews that move between essentializing and totalizing beliefs and belief systems as well as exoticizing everything that is different.[5] It is through these three trajectories (to essentialize, totalize and exoticize), I argue, that the Irish education system tries to produce local subjects that feed into the narrative of a shared, homogeneous, collective, white Irish Catholic identity. In the following, I will illustrate how these trajectories are expressed in our interviews with principals, teachers and priests and how these three trajectories influence the adults' instructions in and perceptions of religion and religious practices. This will be interwoven with the children's interview responses, as well as with some of our observations within the children's classrooms.

On the question of how far other beliefs and religious practices are considered to be part of the school community and how far their religious events can be taken into account within the school's Catholic environment, one of the priests we interviewed for this study was reassuring: "[N]o child feels that they are not being acknowledged because of their faith, or because they have no faith or they have a different culture, it doesn't really matter." He continued by saying: "I have always felt that

[5] Arjun Appadurai uses these three trajectories to summarize Louis Dumont's conceptualization of Western hegemonic thought on non-Western societies in his ground-breaking book *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980). For a discussion on Dumont's understanding of these trajectories, see Appadurai (1988).

you can accommodate these things, and should accommodate them." One of the examples raised by this priest was the celebration of the Diwali festival which is a religious festival celebrated by Hindus, Jains and Sikhs. The priest had a very essentializing and exoticizing attitude toward describing this festival, ignoring its religious significance and historical context and rather highlighting its cultural aspects, saying: "it's like folk music, every country and every culture has its own take on it and festivals, regardless of their cultural background they have, should be accommodated because it has something we can learn from. The valley (is that how you say it?) I found that enthralling. I have always felt that you can accommodate these things, and should accommodate them. You can certainly learn from them, it's a different culture admittedly, but at base, like music or dance, there is a common denominator, *Riverdance* when they went to China, in essence there is no difference, they got Chinese dancers and Chinese musicians, and there was no difference." By comparing the religious festival of Diwali with a neo-traditional theatrical Irish music and dance production, the priest exoticizes it, reducing it to a merely cultural event and diminishing the religious importance of this celebration. The priest's attitude toward other religions and religious practices resonates with the opinion of one of the non-Catholic parents in the same school, who says: "Well, I mean the reaction of the priest to learning about other religions, is, there *are* no other religions that matter.…If you're not a Catholic, you're not a Christian. That's the strict interpretation." His wife described an incident between her and one of the school's teachers one day after the First Holy Communion celebration in the school hall, saying: "I was talking to the teacher then and she said, 'you know, it's good for the children to see that there are other religions out there.' And I said (wryly here), 'yeah yeah, mm mm it's good yeah.' And she said, '[in] one of religion classes I'm going to go through the different religions that there, em you know Hinduism, Buddhism, Protestantism, Muslim,' and the priest, who was across the hall talking to somebody else, was obviously listening to what we were saying, and he shouted over, in all seriousness, 'no you're not, you are not doing that. You will not teach that.' So, the teacher went (nonplussed), made a face, and I went 'OK.'" The priest's interference in the conversation illustrates his influence in the school not only in terms of the preparation for Catholic sacraments during school time but also what is taught within the school.

The Irish education system is based on both the Irish Constitution (1937) and the Education Act (1998a) (Rougier and Honohan 2015: 73). The family in the Irish Constitution is defined as "the primary and natural educator of the child" (Art. 42.1). Both Catholic and Educate Together schools reflect this right in the Constitution in their open attitudes toward the inclusion of other faith groups within their school premises and through emphasizing the freedom parents and their children have to articulate this faith within the school community. In this particular Catholic school, for example, the priest has had the experience of non-Catholic parents approaching him to ask whether their children are allowed to participate in

the First Holy Communion sacrament preparations, in order to feel part of the class,[6] particularly as it is taking a great amount of their school day.[7] One of the non-Catholic parents described how her daughter would like to be: "part of the community [and] to be involved with friends on the day." The priest expressed his willingness to allow these non-Catholic children to participate in the preparation, describing it as a step toward "accommodating" other beliefs within the school community, saying: "I find, sometimes, people misunderstand the Catholic approach, to things sometimes, Catholic is universal. It isn't a specific 'thing,' it's universal, it accommodates everyone. Most Catholic schools accommodate different religions, or different whatever." The principal of the same school also refers to the freedom parents have to decide whether their non-Catholic children would like to participate, saying: "Well, I think it very much depends on the parents of the child involved, I mean each case is different, there are parents who opted out but at the same time they want their children, maybe, for example to learn the prayers and to be part of this. Last year we had a little girl who…dressed up in white dress and she was really part of it." The principal here describes the positive experience parents of non-Catholic children have in her school in terms of choice and inclusion. This has been acknowledged by the mother of the girl the principal was referring to, saying: "Yeah. They were very welcoming in the process, even though we weren't Catholic, and the priest…included her as if she was doing it [the sacrament]". She continues, saying: "On the day we did feel that we had been part of the community."

There is a tendency in Catholic primary schools we visited to totalize classes by treating children in the classroom as homogeneous subjects all believing in the same religious tradition—thus ignoring religious plurality in the class. This explains the harsh reaction of the priest toward the teacher's suggestion of including a discussion of other religions and beliefs in the classroom. For the parents of the girl who participated in the sacrament they highlighted how important it was "[t]o be seen…to be viewed"; as the mother explains: "I wanted people to understand that *we* understood, that we were participating and not just *doing it*. We were involved on the day, she very much was part of the whole ceremony." The mother emphasizes that: "we are not making Communion, we are *participating* in the Communion." Even if the priest and the school in general totalize the school community, particular parents express an urge to be visible and to be recognized as members of that community, whether of a different religion or of none.

These totalizing tendencies enacted on a daily basis in a school environment exercise huge pressure on children (and their parents) who are different in their worldviews and religious beliefs (if any) from those of the school, particularly on parents deciding where they want their children to stand in terms of religious participation and where the boundaries are in compromising their own beliefs or

[6] For more about inclusion and exclusion of children opting out of the RE classes, see Mawhinney (2006), (2007), (2012), and (2015).

[7] Research conducted in 2013 by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO, the main trade union body in Ireland for primary schoolteachers) reported that preparation for sacraments takes more time than the allocated 30-min religious education class per day. See INTO (2013).

disbeliefs for the sake of the school's dominant ethos. As the mother of the girl mentioned above who participated in the Communion explained: "you have to weigh up that risk against the children being different. And…you don't really want every day for your child to be *different*. It's harder for them to be different. Although I do tell them all the time that being different is good. It's very boring if we are all the same. But, sometimes, you have to choose. It's a very personal thing and you have to decide how far you want to let your child in, it would be easier if they *were* Catholic…and we could just—buy into the whole, buy into everything [smiles]". She continues in describing the importance of this year in the preparation for the First Holy Communion sacrament, highlighting that it is "the big year." The mother was concerned about her daughter's social inclusion in the class and weighed it above her own religious beliefs, saying: "yeah, you just have to come to an internal compromise and say I'm doing this for my child. And eh, I can't eh—I shouldn't impose my beliefs too much on her, and we are doing this to be part of the community." The mother emphasized that "there really isn't much choice" and that "[t]here is a lot of pressure out there in the end" as her daughter, as we were told, refused to go to school any more when her parents, at the beginning of the year, did not at first allow her to participate in the Communion preparation. The father saw the problem in the amount of time spent for the preparation, saying: "if that was only the day then that would be fine, but it's not just a day.…It's 9 months of [sigh] preparation."

To what extent parents adhere to the dominant religious ethos of their children's school, as well as when and how they show that their religious beliefs or worldviews are different, varies. In this particular example, the parent who decided to allow her daughter to participate in the preparation for the sacrament nevertheless insisted on showing that they were different in the kind of dress their daughter wore on the day. Originally, the parent's compromise included only the daily participation in the preparation over the 9-month period and not being present on the day of the sacrament itself. The girl, however, as we were told, was very upset about not being allowed to be present on the day, to the extent that she was affected by it emotionally and behaviorally, which drove her parents to give in and attend on the day of the sacrament (for similar findings on the emotional impact of children opting out, see Richardson et al. 2013 and Niens et al. 2013). This then led to the question of dress and appearance. The mother criticized the development of the First Holy Communion sacrament into an increasingly consumerist event shaped by global market and consumer culture. As a response to this development, she suggested to other parents wearing a school uniform on the day but as she explained: "they were shocked, someone said: 'that is child abuse, you can't make a child wear a school uniform on Communion day.' And I said 'but we are not making Communion, we are *participating* in the Communion.'" The mother decided in the end, despite her daughter's complaints, to buy a white party dress: "[S]he was very simple," as she explained, "no tiaras, veils or umbrellas." The mother opted for a party dress and not for a traditional Communion dress to express to the community on that day that her daughter was different and was only taking part and not doing her Communion. The mother explained to her daughter: "We bought this dress, this is *our* dress. You know

we don't all have to be the same." Here the mother tried to break the essentializing and totalizing tendencies within the community by dressing her daughter differently. The Communicant children on the altar generally all dress in formal traditional white Communion dresses for girls and black or brown, sometimes white, suits for boys. The bodies of the children here act as a symbol of an essentialized and totalized Catholic entity, expressing a unified community of homogeneous, white Catholic subjects. The mother, who had to endure enormous pressure for over 9 months and who was forced to compromise her own religious beliefs for the sake of her child's feelings of inclusion in the Catholic school's community, insisted on dressing her child in a different kind of dress in order to express visibly her being different. The girl's body on the altar is presented in front of the community in a way that counters the narrative of a homogenous collective identity.

Similar to this village school, a teacher in another Catholic school in a larger town argued that it was the parents' choice to decide which school to send their children to and highlighted the importance of ensuring the Catholic ethos of her own school, saying: "you do have a choice of schools, that is what I feel as a parent, this is a Roman Catholic school, that is the ethos of the school, there is going to be religion daily, there is going to be. There is a lot of choices out there now that weren't there years ago. I just feel I'm saying that as a parent as well as a teacher, if I didn't want my children to be Catholics I wouldn't send them to a pure, something we're really proud of here. We are, Roman Catholic school, it's not that we're wishy-washy about it." Another teacher in the same school described some children opting out of religious classes as "very annoying" raising a plea to these parents by saying: "just don't come to us because it is very frustrating." Unlike these teachers we interviewed, parents we interviewed do not see much choice and highlight the lack of enough different primary school types in Ireland. Particularly in rural areas, parents would only have a choice of one denominational school, either Catholic or Protestant, or at least an hour's drive each day if they opted for a multidenominational type of school. As one of the mothers explained: "It was just because it was around the corner. There is a nondenominational school in [the neighboring city]… but I didn't want to commit the children travelling half an hour each way twice a day. So it's a good school, it's up the road, and you have to weigh the positives and negatives. Because I work part-time, I can walk the children up to school, and I think that's very important, it's a nice start to the day. We can talk and I think if you are going in the car in the mornings, '[C]ome on…come on, we have to go. We have to go. We have to go.' It was simply because it was local. If there had been a local nondenominational school, we would have gone to that." Some parents will thus go against their own religious beliefs for the sake of their child's comfort and wellbeing. In addition, as the mother continued, living in the countryside where the community was so small and bound together, if the family had decided against the local school they would become isolated from the local social environment they had decided to live in (see also Ouseley 2001 and Richardson et al. 2013). Playmates for children would have to travel an hour for playdates. Parents' school choice involves more than just deciding which school to send one's children to—they consider the

quality of life, family time and social integration, in addition to religious beliefs and the academic performance of schools.

In general, we noticed that more parents decide for children to opt out from religious classes or subjects with a religious tone, as well as from any religious event such as the preparation for the First Holy Communion sacrament in Catholic schools. Children opting out have not been given much thought in terms of how they should be dealt with, either in the classroom or elsewhere (for similar observations, see Mawhinney 2006, 2007 and 2015). As the responses of teachers show, these children do raise a challenge to teaching staff as they need to be given a task or just be sent to the back of the class to do additional homework. The additional work that these children are asked to do is, however, according to our own observations, in most cases not monitored or inspected (for similar observations, see Mawhinney 2015: 293). Not giving children credit for what they are doing could give them the feeling of not being seen, of being left out and their effort not being valued, whereas the rest of the class is receiving full attention. In the Communion year, children spend a lot of their time during school hours in the preparation for the sacrament, as one of the parents explains: “[I]nstead of having all the Communion sessions, did things like maths and English or French or German at the same time, but they don’t, they just sit around and do nothing. You’re not forced to take part, but the time taken out of the curriculum to do it. It’s a bit old-fashioned. It belongs to an age when religious instruction to the Catholic Church was very important in the nineteenth century. But not in the twenty-first I don’t think, no. It’s a bit overdone.”

How do children opting out of religious discussions and practices in a dominant religious school environment feel? What impact do these religious preparations have on the child’s social world in the classroom? How far can a 7- or 8-year-old child deal with being different and how do other classmates understand this difference and how is it discussed between themselves? These are questions I would like to engage with in the following, in which I argue that the Irish education system provides a space to construct a collective homogeneous Catholic identity through essentializing, totalizing and exoticizing worldviews among children (see Appadurai 1988).

One of the teachers in a rural Catholic school described a boy in her class with no religion, saying: “I have a child in my class with no religion and em, I’d respect that completely as well like and he doesn’t feel in *any way separated*, he doesn’t take part in the prayers or religious songs or anything that we do but *it doesn’t*, *it doesn’t bother* him and he *doesn’t feel like an outcast* or anything because of it. Even though it is a Catholic school.” Identities are multifaceted constructions that change over time through the interaction with particular social structures and other social factors that influence our distinctive and unique understanding of ourselves (see Bradley 1996; Hall on “sociological subject” 1992). Such influences could come from core family and extended family members, school type, friends and peers, community leaders, neighbors and media, etc. (Hemming and Madge 2011). Identities can articulate how we understand ourselves and refer to what we are. However, they can also relate to what we are not, by highlighting differences (see

Payne 2000). Identities can also be assigned to us by others, expressing how others see us in ways that do not necessarily agree with our own understanding of our selves (Hemming and Madge 2011: 40), as the example of the boy who is understood not to be believing in God illustrates. In one of our focus group interviews in a Catholic village school, children were referring in our discussion to that particular boy as an example of someone not believing in God:

Researcher:	"We talked in the class about people who don't believe in God."
Child 1:	"Ya there is a boy in our class who doesn't believe in God that, so he is not having his Communion."
Child 2:	[names the child].
Researcher:	"Do you think they get to talk to someone, or what do they do? Because you guys all talk to God apparently, what do they do? Or do they need to…"
Child 1:	"They don't *like* God so they em…don't pray to him, and talk to the *devil*."
Researcher:	"So they just don't talk."
Child 1:	"No."
Researcher:	"Did you say that they don't *like* God?"
Child 1:	"Yeah."
Researcher:	"And they talk to the *devil* then?"
Child 1:	"I suppose, I'm supposing. Like if they don't believe in God they obviously don't talk to him."
Child 2:	"What do you mean by 'they talk to the devil'?"
Child 1:	"Obviously they probably believe in the devil so?"
Child 2:	"Devil [makes a face of a devil]!"
Researcher:	"So they have to believe in something, is it?"
Child 1:	"Yeah."
Child 3:	"I don't believe in him [referring to the devil]!"
Child 3:	"They can't believe in God, they can't believe in nothing."

Catholic primary schools we visited avoid discussing religious plurality with the children—as the reaction of the priest cited earlier shows. Non-Catholic children are allowed to opt out of religious instruction but their beliefs and worldviews are not discussed within classrooms but rather ignored. Children, however, are not silent and passive recipients but interpret and participate in discussing the world around them. As this focus group interview shows, children try in their own way to make sense of their peer being different and not believing in God. Being in a Catholic school, children are taught about the existence of God and the way of communicating with Him through prayer. In addition, according to our observations within religious instruction classes, children are assured that because they are Catholics they are loved by Jesus Christ whom they can always refer to whenever they are sad or have a problem. It is not therefore surprising to see that these children would assume that their peer, who does not believe in God, would also need to talk to someone and believe in something. A simplified, totalized and essentialized understanding of religion generally characterizes these religious instruction classes

and highlights dichotomous and polarized worldviews. This explains why the children assumed that since their peer did not talk to God he would 'obviously' talk to the devil. Hemming and Madge argue that schools "may play an important role in influencing how religious difference is perceived and constructed" (2011: 42). Not providing a space within school hours to discuss with the children different religions and worldviews can have an enormous influence on social cohesion, particularly peer relations (see also Hemming 2011; Smith and Denton 2005). Children themselves question the Church's and school's construction of a homogenous collective Catholic identity by continuously referring to that boy in our interviews. Discussions about differences among their peer groups cannot be avoided by totalizing and essentializing a school's identity. Not providing information about different religions or about people who do not believe in any religion, as well as not offering a space in which the needs of minorities within schools are catered for, affects children's understanding of the normality of differences.

In line with Hemming and Madge's research findings (2011), I argue that children are active role players in constructing their own complex and multifaceted identities that are influenced by social spaces and contexts which change over time and location. As Giddens (1991) argues: "The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choices as filtered through abstract systems" (Giddens 1991: 5). In our first encounter with that particular boy in the Catholic village school, he tried as much as possible to appear in control of the situation of his worldview being different from that of the rest of the class. When talking about his religious beliefs or opinions on religion, he consequently described himself as not believing in God. When we met him again in our second round of research few months later, when preparations for the First Holy Communion had intensified with the day of the ritual performance approaching, we observed a change in the boy's self-confidence. Whereas before he had referred to his *own* conviction of himself not believing in God, at this point he refers more to his parents not believing in God, saying: "Cause I just really…well my family doesn't really believe in God. I didn't know that until I was in seniors." Whereas a few months ago the boy believed he had a particular and secure identity position and religious set of (un)beliefs, now his identity understanding was based on his parents' and he appeared to be in a more in-between position, not knowing where he himself stood (compare Marcia 1980). He now seemed to detach himself every now and then from this view and relate it back to his parents' ideas rather than his own. This time, he appeared to be more vulnerable and aggressive toward religious topics discussed in the classroom. One of the classroom activities with the children was to color a picture of a church building in any way they liked. This particular boy put a lot of different faces on the windows. When asked about the reason he said: "cause I just like to have a bit of fun with other people." Asked whether through these faces the church would turn into a funnier place he said: "Yeah, besides just always always always always always always always being holy." To the question of what "holy" was, he said: "It's where people *have to* believe in God but I don't do it." Here he referred again to his own beliefs rather than his parents'. As Hemming and Madge

argue, “children and young people may attach their own value and importance to particular concepts, ideas and practices in their religious and spiritual lives” (2011: 44). The boy’s opinions about religious beliefs and worldviews were strongly affected by his relationship with his peers and their environment as well as the influence of the denominational school context. His motivation and tendency in changing his views on religious beliefs had less to do with a sudden religiosity than with his wish to integrate into the school’s community, as the discussion below illustrates:

Researcher: “If you would go back a year and I would ask you, would you do your First Holy Communion again, would you do it?”
All: “Yeah.”
Boy: “Well, I would if I could.”
Researcher: “Why?”
Boy: “Well, *I just wanna get my Communion. I feel left out. I’m literally the odd one out in second class*.”
Another child: “You don't believe in God, you didn’t get your Communion, you haven’t been baptized.”
Boy: “I *know*, that's the whole point of not getting, when you’re a baby you don’t get baptized.”
Researcher: “So if you had a choice, would you baptize yourself and go and do your First Holy Communion?”
Boy: [nods].
Researcher: “And why would you do that?”
Boy: “I just wanna get my Communion so I won’t be the odd one out.”

This was part of a conversation we had with the children in the village school, a few days after they had received their Communion. During this conversation, all the children had things to share. They all had positive if competing experiences of their “big day,” except this one child who, despite his parent’s beliefs, wished he had done the Communion too in order to feel included and part of his class.

11.3 Conclusion

By taking the example of the First Holy Communion ritual, this chapter has examined how the sacrament is regarded not only as a “rite of initiation” into the Catholic Church but also as an initiation to an idealized notion of a white, Catholic, homogeneous Irish identity. The Irish education system provides a space for the construction of this collective identity through a behavioral instructional approach that controls, monitors and pre-sets learning and behavior codes. These codes are embedded and articulated within a simplified, dichotomized and polarized worldview that essentializes and totalizes belief systems and exoticizes difference.

I argue in this chapter that, despite Catholic primary schools’ attempts to encapsulate children within this notion of a collective homogeneous Catholic Irish

identity and despite not providing a space within the school to engage with religious plurality among their peers, children are active in making sense of the world around them in their own way. However, as the examples of the children discussing religious difference among their peers illustrates, they are affected by the terminology used within their Catholic religious instruction classes that reflects their schools' binary ethos of good/bad, God/devil and so forth.

Through the bottom-up approach to research that focuses on children's views on religious differences as well as their religious concepts, beliefs and practices, this study has shown that because of the intense preparation for Catholic religious rituals during school hours, children who do not participate in these sacraments and who opt out of religious instruction in Catholic primary schools are affected by it, both emotionally and behaviorally. This effect or anticipated effect on children leads some of their parents to set aside their own religious beliefs and worldviews to enable their children to connect to and feel part of their school community. For other children, however, as the example of the boy above illustrates, the only compensation for being the "odd one out" in the class is to escape in fantasies. The boy wished to be a chameleon—a kind of lizard that is known to have the ability to change its skin color in order to adapt to its environment and to camouflage in order to protect itself from others it fears.

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Chapter 12
Christians First. The Politics of Inclusion, Interreligious Literacy, and Christian Privilege: Comparing Australian and English Education

Cathy Byrne

Abstract When Europe became the destination of millions of desperate refugees in 2015, Australia's Government leader in the Senate urged preferential resettlement for Christians. Justification for Christian privilege is present in many areas of Australian social policy, including in education. This article examines the contentious nature of religion in relation to questions of interreligious literacy. It connects the concept of cultural tolerance to a particular interpretation of religious literacy in the education environment, and examines religion-related education governance structures. I draw on examples from state-funded Australian government schools, against a backdrop of social inclusion policy. Firstly, two different, ideologically based styles of "inclusion," and their variant styles of governance, will be defined. These two styles can be described as "passive" (economically focused and inherently limited) inclusion, and "active" (socially focused, and critically, consciously broad) inclusion. The article explores the political basis of these two styles of inclusion and how they encourage or discourage minority voices within democratic processes. The article then analyzes how these styles of inclusion affect contributions from minority voices to policy development and practice in relation to religion in state schools. Inclusive policies in education in the past few decades have targeted socioeconomic (often racial and location based) and ability differentials. A lack of inclusion policies that specifically address cultural (particularly religious) barriers highlights the limitations of an economically focused social inclusion agenda.

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12.1 The English and Australian Contexts for Religion in State Schools

Both Australia and the UK have become religiously diverse societies, largely as a result of immigration, but each has dealt with state school religion in a variety of ways.[1] It is important to note that there is no single model for religious education in either the UK[2] or Australia (nor is there a parallel definition of a "state-funded"—in Australian parlance, "public"—school), and so this article does not provide a direct comparison. Rather, it reviews Australia's limited application of the 1990s English (Blair New Labour) platform of "social inclusion" and highlights major differences between these two nations' approaches to religion in state schools. England's approach to religion in state education has become more pluralist since the mid-1960s, in response to an increasingly secularized and religiously diverse society. In 1988, the English Education Reform Act officially replaced non-denominational Christian Bible-based "religious instruction" (RI) with a more inclusive approach to learning *about* religions through what it referred to as "religious education" (RE). Other English policy and curriculum initiatives have continued the trend toward an inclusive approach to teaching religion. In addition, European developments regarding the principles by which religion might be taught in the state school environment have furthered the cause in England for including non-religious worldviews in school programs. The combination of these influences has resulted in a cumulative effect, pluralizing approaches to RE in England. Denise Cush (Chap. 4, this volume) notes that this phenomenon has created "a new paradigm" for RE.

In comparison, and despite its "relatively liberal Protestant church" (see Cush, Chap. 4, this volume), Australia has largely avoided complex public discussion related to state school religion; its legislative and policy amendments since the 1950s have been minor. Rather, Australian government education agencies protect an excluding Christian privilege via nineteenth-century-style segregated RI classes for learning *into* a single tradition. All Australian states prioritize segregated RI over RE, and some states offer no inclusive RE at all. Although this segregated approach can ostensibly be seen to further multiculturalist aims (if many traditions participate, as they have done in New South Wales (NSW) since the 1990s), governance mechanisms often work against pluralist intentions. This article examines generic issues of principle about religion in education in liberal democracies, drawing on European developments and exploring the application of such principles in English and Australian contexts.

[1] Australian Government officials urged preferential treatment of Christian refugees in 2015 (Medhora 2015).

[2] More detail on the wider UK approaches can be found in Jackson 2012.

12.2 A Note on the Terms "Religious" and "Literacy"

In some jurisdictions, the term "religious" in "religious education" means education *into* religion, not education *about* religion. This term has overtones of indoctrinatory instruction (Jackson 2011a) and can exclude non-religious perspectives. The plural term "religions" is used here to reflect a plural approach—an inclusive, secular study (meaning state-devised and -delivered, not anti-religious) of many religions and non-religious ethical perspectives—Wanda Alberts' (2007) "integrative RE." From here on, RE refers to "religions education" in this sense, except when quoting from English documents, which use "religious education" in a similar sense.

The term "religious literacy" is also used variously—for example, by Diane Moore (2007), as the aim of learning about many religions and worldviews so as to "sharpen critical thinking skills and advance deep multiculturalism" (p. 33); by Wright (2007), who sees religious literacy as a way to enhance students' moral development through debate and analysis of conflicting truth claims, but within a largely Abrahamic framework (p. 108); and by those who mean a deep familiarity with their own (singular) tradition—an approach not supported or discussed here. I use the term "interreligious literacy" to make explicit the intention implied by Moore, since "inter" addresses the relationship "between" and carries responsibility for mutual, reciprocal understanding of religious concepts applied in more than one religious tradition. However, Australian education institutions often conflate RI with RE. Most Australian states refer to enfaithing, to instructional classes as "Special Religious Education" (SRE) and Australian Catholic schools run what they refer to as "RE" programs, but which can be narrow and catechetical, depending on the school. Some Catholic school programs include interfaith activities but the generally understood use of RE in that context is confessional, or at least tradition specific.

12.3 RE, Intercultural Tolerance and Interreligious Literacy

Many Western nations are religiously diverse. That fact alone does not make them interculturally tolerant or interreligiously literate. The shift from a simple *awareness* of faith diversity in society to an understanding of how plural society might benefit from such complexity and, further, to an attempt to act on this understanding, relies on a reflective process that is ultimately enacted as policy. One obvious sector for such practical effort is state education.

The largest research project in this field, Religion Education as a factor of Dialogue or Conflict (2007), examined RE in eight nations (including England) and found that children with some education *about* different religions showed greater respect for different opinions and cultural practices than those without, and that students who participate in RE want to know about different worldviews. The

REDCo project found that children who undertake RE support democratic principles and see the classroom as a rare potential "safe space" for interreligious dialogue (Jackson 2011a). There is significant debate in England and elsewhere in Europe regarding the instrumental rationale for RE—its potential positive influence on democratic citizenship (Council of Europe 2014; Marian de Souza et al. 2006; Jackson et al. 2007). While such debate is not my focus here, it is clear that the Council of Europe views the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue as significant (Council of Europe 2014: 14). In England, Adam Dinham and Robert Jackson (2012: 280) argued that, in the context of changing social policy in areas of "community and 'race' relations, citizenship and community cohesion," the 1990s Blair era brought an interest in "promoting democratic citizenship in schools…which influenced religious education…and led to a discourse of social inclusion in place of welfare" and that government policy "promoted a multi-faith approach to social cohesion" (2012: 272). England's political rhetoric defended the connection between learning about multiple worldviews and social stability, even while that connection may be inadequately researched.

In education, as in many areas of social policy, the political limits of inclusion are often driven "top-down" rather than up from "grass roots." Education policy, pedagogy and outcomes depend on political institutions and their ideological motives and habits—often unstated or unexamined. Australian social analyst Kevin Dunn (2011a: 8) noted the importance of political leadership when considering the choice between "welcoming in" and "defending from" others, since "social norms are considerably powerful and can legitimise poor [excluding] attitudes." For this reason, it is important to examine social inclusion as a political idea—since its assumptions and ideological carriage have implications for how religious diversity might be given voice, ignored or even silenced.

12.4 Types of Inclusion

At face value, "social inclusion" appears intuitively friendly—a welcoming, nice notion. As a moral, ethical concept with political nuances, however, "inclusion" can be applied and measured in different ways. We welcome a stranger differently from how we might welcome a guest or family member (Komter 2005). A critical perspective suggests there is value in exploring this difference.

Social inclusion has two distinct (though not necessarily binary) styles (Byrne 2014). One style focuses on equal *opportunity*, passively allowing members to benefit from (and assuming they are able to benefit from) existing structures and institutions—invited participants adapt to the system. This kind of inclusion is passive since the structures and institutions do not change to better enable participation. An alternative style focuses on equitable *outcomes* and the system itself seeks to broaden access to enable maximum participation. This style involves power sharing,

to enable the systems to be remade, to reflect the needs and capabilities of the broader membership. Both styles of inclusion reflect different ideologies, which are expressed differently in democratic processes. Passive inclusion developed alongside ideals of a free-market economy, while active inclusion emerged with discourses on social equity. Both styles can be expressed in policy, so it is helpful to examine the evolution of these styles.

12.5 Passive Inclusion in a Conservative (Classical Liberal) Economy

Social *in*clusion emerged as a remedy for social *ex*clusion—a problem in Europe in the mid-1970s. British and European exclusion focused on material deprivation and its consequences. During the late 1990s, "social inclusion" became a buzz phrase for the then British Prime Minister Tony Blair. As a policy platform, New Labour's social inclusion recognized some of the broader implications of limited access to political systems, services and arenas for public comment. However, Blair retained the economic emphasis that had been established in earlier welfare programs. Political theorist Ruth Levitas (1998) argued that Blair's inclusion efforts were based on largely economic (not cultural) considerations, targeting workforce participation as a way of reducing poverty and minimizing welfare. And so "inclusion" had little impact on the cultural aspects of social policy.

Levitas noted three distinct discourses on exclusion in England and Europe. These were all focused on the commodity that was perceived as lacking in those who were excluded; money, paid work, and morals. This commodity approach anchors the idea of inclusion to financial capability in economic transactions and encourages moral judgments of those on the margins—since, under the paradigm of "opportunity," individuals are responsible for their economic situation. Levitas highlighted the limited analysis of systemic or institutional obstacles—that having and keeping a job may not necessarily lead to other important (though not simply economic) forms of inclusion. According to Levitas (2003: 4), policies of social inclusion can fruitfully take a "more comprehensive approach to the 'social' in social inclusion" by measuring inclusivity in terms of people's power to construct, and effectively contribute to, policy and practice. In this way, social inclusion may offer benefits beyond mere economic participation. However, such benefits require more flexible, open, and critical systems: "The idea of an inclusive society potentially forces onto the agenda this larger question of what kind of society we want to live in—and indeed, the question of who 'we' are" (Levitas 2003: 5).

Following Levitas, John Gray (2000) argued that the use of the term "social inclusion" by Blair's government was associated with a conservative right shift in center-left politics—partly to accommodate "powerful political movements of religious fundamentalism and…a resurgence of the radical Right" (Gray 2000: 20).

This neoliberal shift meant the traditional working class's social democratic vision of an egalitarian society was replaced with a more market-driven ideal. As Dinham and Jackson (2012: 272) put it, "market ideology came to challenge a statist one." Arguments regarding justice and fairness were, once again, unyoked from government responsibility and became more demanding of individual potential. New Labour's social inclusion did not advance "an ideal of equality…[or] of egalitarian justice" (Gray 2000: 22). Rather, New Labour's inclusion emphasized state interventions to assist individuals' access to *existing structures*: "every member of society should participate fully…no one is denied access" (Gray 2000: 23). However, not being denied is not the same as being enabled. Minority voices participate, but usually without the power to deliberate on, or affect, policy. Despite inclusion being narrowly defined, English Religious Education had already undergone significant reform and was already being tailored for a religiously diverse population (see Cush, this volume). In some respects, the rhetoric of social inclusion and community cohesion were retrofitted nicely onto a pre-existing pluralizing trend in English RE.

12.6 Passive Inclusion in a Progressive (Modern Liberal) Economy

Modern liberalism urges the state to assist in enabling capacity. In this vein, progressive, multicultural models of democracy acknowledge an un-level playing field and promote "celebrating differences" and "equal opportunity." In Canada, the term "reasonable accommodation" is part of this discourse. Along these lines, Will Kymlicka (1995: 6) argued that an individual's rights and freedoms are best protected by considering the wellbeing and capacity of the groups from which they draw their identity and by assigning "group-differentiated" rights. Such an approach, however, is still subject to majority rule. Charles Jenks et al. (2001) critique modern liberalism because it naively "pays little attention to the role of the dominant culture in preventing equality" (2001: 92). While progressive in intent, this stance "masks the conflicts and contradictions inherent in our society, ignoring…divisive identity issues revolving around race, class, and ethnicity. Moreover, insufficient consideration is given to power constructs…which stand in the way of achieving equity" (2001: 92). The approach sometimes "sidesteps, or is ignorant of, the root causes of racism and inequality" (2001: 93). In both classical and modern forms of liberal governance, participation is a notion constructed by those controlling or managing the system and social inclusion might be considered passive, paternal, and corporate.

12.7 Active Inclusion in a Critical Liberal Society

An alternative style of inclusion relies on explicitly critical governance models, which confront "the way social power is situated" (Luxton 2005: 91). By addressing unequal resources, status and capacities, active inclusion relies on the possibility that society can be reconstructed by its members. Beyond "participation" in existing systems, "active inclusion" demands and empowers transformation of the systems themselves. The policy target is not opportunity, but equity. Such egalitarian inclusion contributes to what Amy Gutmann (1999) described as "deliberative democracy." In this model, applied to education, authority is shared between parents, citizens, and professional educators, which enables "conscious social reproduction in its most inclusive form" (1999: 42). Gutmann noted that deliberation "helps secure both the basic opportunity of individuals and its collective capacity to pursue justice" (1999: xiii). Gutmann argued that limiting possibilities in education in any way (for example by limiting religious instruction to evangelical Christianity or restricting decision making to a majority religious group with token non-majority participants) consequently limits the ability for children to cultivate skills of discernment.

Active inclusion emphasizes the idea that structures should enable participative transformation without majority dictates. This idea, from feminist political theory, requires thinking first from the outside, from the margins. For example, Iris Young argued that inclusion is "a powerful means for criticizing the legitimacy of nominally democratic processes" (2002: 52). The aim is "effective" rather than "proportional" representation, with political and moral legitimacy reliant on power equity. In Young's model, outcomes are only legitimate "if those who must abide by them have had a part in their formation" (2002: 53). Where citizens (with ostensibly equal rights to participate) "have little or no real access to the fora and procedures through which they might influence decisions" (2002: 54), or where "their claims are not taken seriously" or "they are not treated with equal respect" or they feel they must show grateful deference for their mere presence in the process, this might be described as "internal exclusion" (2002: 55).

An additional perspective on inclusion has come from Amartya Sen's (2000a, b) work in human development. In Sen's model, "exclusion" acknowledges social hierarchies and systems of domination. Sen notes that proportional representation can lead to systemic exclusion due to a minority group's inability to effect change. In addition, minority groups may have insufficient assets or inadequate preparedness. Unregulated activities (such as outsourced RI without state oversight) can "allow the powerful to capitalize on their asymmetric advantage" (Sen 2000a: 33). The rhetoric of inclusion can cover "unfavorable," "inequitable" or "unacceptable" inclusion and "adverse participation" (2000a: 29). Sen's argument may reasonably be applied to the involvement of minority faith groups who have limited resources to deliver RI effectively and who are "allowed" to participate but may feel not fully enabled. The residual resources of colonial Christianity, and the financial and perceived political power of some groups, means that some Christian churches, through

faux representational groups, have significant educational access and gatekeeper influence in Australian government schools (Byrne 2012b).

12.8 Importing English Social Inclusion into Australia

When Labor's Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister of Australia, he imported both the commitment to social inclusion that had developed a significant profile in England and the economically limited ideological framework in which to apply it. Rudd established an Australian Social Inclusion Board (ASIB) in 2008 and entrusted its direction to his deputy, Julia Gillard, who also held the Education Ministry. Australia focused on economic inclusion and tended to avoid cultural factors such as religion in its policy application. Cultural inclusion, in Australian RI, has been limited to idealized commitments to "respect for diversity," but little in the way of structural analysis to determine cultural sources of inequity or barriers to effective participation.

Echoing Blair's economically focused "equal opportunity" approach, at the 2008 launch of the ASIB, Prime Minister Rudd noted that "too many Australians remain locked out of the benefits of work, education, community engagement and access to basic services" (Rudd and Gillard 2008: 1). The economic focus continued, with the 2010 ASIB Annual Report noting that "opportunities and capabilities to participate…reduce the costs to the economy" caused by "lower productivity and workforce participation" (ASIB 2010: 3). The report lists pathways into disadvantage as the housing market; labor conditions; the cost and availability of transport and infrastructure; financial and non-financial disincentives to work—such as high effective marginal tax rates; the cost, availability and quality of child care; and low levels of computer skills (2010: 19). "Inclusion," says the report, "needs to consider a basket of services," and these "should be calculated" (2010: 25). Social inclusion sounds here like a Treasurer's budget speech—addressing market issues but avoiding socio-cultural norms. Maddox (2011) noted that Australian notions of inclusion are limited: "To be included is to finish school, find and keep a job, and to know how to use social services…[but this] economic model fails to capture the full range of ways in which people may experience inclusion or exclusion" (2011: 172).

Only later (and out of office), in 2009, did Blair argue that interreligious literacy was a "vital skill," essential for English education, and establish his Faith Foundation—focused on interreligious dialogue and education. No equivalent notion or high-profile investment of time or resources for interreligious literacy has emerged in Australia. This situation echoes ongoing differences in the approaches to religion in state schools between the two nations. Australia has not followed England, which has, in recent decades, significantly reformed RE to enable a pluralist approach.[3]

[3] For details on reforms to British RE, see Jackson (2003, 2004, 2011b) and Gates (2007).

12.9 Pluralist RE Governance in England

England's RE has undergone significant changes since the mid-1960s. Jackson (2012) highlights the influence on this trend of Edwin Cox[4] and Ninian Smart.[5] The 1988 Education Reform Act (UK Parliament 1988) officially removed Christian "religious instruction" and prohibited indoctrinatory teaching. The act changed the name and pedagogical focus from RI to RE, aiming for pupils to learn *about* religion. Since then, as specified in the act, all students, from entry through to senior high school, learn about Christianity and several other religions. This shift took account of an increasingly secularized and plural society "both in terms of diversity of religions and theological and cultural diversity" within Christianity and other traditions (Jackson 2012: 41).

This pluralist trend was given further institutional legitimacy with the 1994 publication by the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) of two model syllabuses (SCAA 1994). These syllabuses were produced in consultation with faith communities (given formal representation through locally based Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education—SACREs) and included material on six religions in Britain (Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism). In addition, in 2004 the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) produced a National Framework for Religious Education which "intended to increase public understanding of religious education" (Jackson 2012: 41) and "to ensure that all pupils' voices are heard and…that there are opportunities for all pupils to study other religious traditions such as the Baha'i faith, Jainism and Zoroastrianism and secular philosophies such as Humanism" (QCA 2004: 12). According to Brian Gates (2005), the National Framework was approved by all education professional organizations and faith communities.

England's National Framework is used by Local Education Authorities, which draw on local advisory councils and conferences. Despite the fact that this non-statutory National Framework carries no legal force, it does enable minority voices in many regions to participate in the development, review, and update of local syllabuses. This local engagement of government educators with religious community leaders to develop the curriculum is a significant differentiator of the English system (Braaten 2009). Dinham and Jackson (2012) pointed out that an Agreed Syllabus Conference includes four committees, representing teachers, the Church of England, other denominations and religions, and local politicians. These committees can further co-opt members from non-religious organizations. Today, in England, many local syllabuses cover non-religious perspectives such as Humanism.

The English framework recognized the need for "community cohesion and the combating of religious prejudice and discrimination" (Alberts 2008: 12), and includes a study of "global issues of human rights, fairness, social justice and the importance of the environment" (2008: 27). The framework notes that areas of

[4] Cox, Edwin. 1966. *Changing aims in religious education*. London: Routledge.

[5] Smart, Ninian. 1968. *Secular education and the logic of religion*. London: Faber.

study will include Christianity, at least two other principal religions, a religious community with a significant local presence, and a secular worldview (QCA 2004).[6] The National Framework recognizes a broad responsibility to "establish an entitlement" for all students "irrespective of their social background, culture, race (or) religion" to develop their "understanding and attitudes…as active and responsible citizens" (QCA 2004: 9). Moreover, it extends the reach of this type of pluralist RE by promoting "public understanding of, and confidence in, the work of schools in religious education" (2004: 9).

Alongside (though different from) RE, the Education Reform Act appears to retain a Christian focus with its obligation for attendance at a daily act of collective worship that is "wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character" (Education Reform Act (England) 1988, section 7). However, individual schools can apply for a change in the balance of collective worship and the local authority has the power to grant or refuse it. There is considerable latitude in the interpretation of the expression "broadly Christian." Material from other religions, or moral and ethical material from outside religion altogether, is commonly regarded as appropriate. In many secondary schools, the legislation about collective worship is flouted anyway, in light of the ethnic and religious makeup of the area. The worship obligation may be the last obstacle to an actively inclusive approach for English RE.

The onus for participation in English RE is two-way, with the ethnically diverse communities participating with local authorities, and schools encouraged to "strengthen an inclusive approach to the subject by developing links with faith communities in their local areas" (Dinham and Jackson 2012: 283). In addition, funding was provided by Blair's government for pluralist RE teacher training and research was commissioned by the then Department for Children, Schools and Families on RE teaching materials (Jackson et al. 2010). In addition, Cush (this volume) outlines work done in 2013 by the Religious Education Council to review English curricula and critique RE implementation strengths and weaknesses. This effort, undertaken without government support, highlights the commitment, cooperation and coordination capabilities of religious and non-religious groups to ensure the relevance and professionalism of RE in English schools.

It is fair to say, from evidence provided above, that English RE uses a mostly actively inclusive governance model. In his assessment of the pluralizing trend for English RE, Jackson concluded that "there has been agreement that the National Framework is an important tool in facilitating forms of religious education that are outward looking and inclusive of learning about the main different religions represented in Britain" (Jackson 2012: 53). Of particular note, Jackson pointed to evidence from England's Office for Standards in Education, which indicates a positive change in student attitudes to the "importance of learning about the diversity of religion and belief in contemporary society" (2012: 54). In England, the "cumulative effect of changes in educational policy toward [pluralist] religious education in

[6] I disagree with this use of the term "secular," which implies a "non-religious" worldview, rather than the secular principle of neutral governance by the state. For more on the secular principle, see Byrne (2014).

schools has been to remove the process of Christian socialisation from state-funded [education]" (Dinham and Jackson 2012: 290).

In comparison, Australia's institutional approach to public school religion is anachronistic. Some state legislation and policy dates back more than a century. Although it is very religiously diverse, Australia had no equivalent to England's "paradigm-shifting" 1960s Shap Working Party (see Cush, this volume). Australian efforts to pluralize RE in the 1970s and 1980s were limited and largely unsuccessful (Lovat 2002). Today, minimal government engagement with faith communities and non-religious groups (frequently antagonistic toward each other, or internally divided), means that minorities have little input into the curriculum and few effective channels to contribute to changing policy needs. Consequently, a colonial Christian socialization is still embedded in Australian education.

12.10 Christian-Centric RI Governance in Australia

Australian social policy suffers from a contradictory ideological position regarding multiculturalism—aiming for welcoming, egalitarian inclusion on the one hand, while protecting hierarchical, Anglo-Christian privilege on the other (Byrne 2014; Maddox 2014). The 2015 example of allowing in Syrian Christian refugees while blocking Rohingya Muslim refugees (both from equally desperate situations) is a clear example of this contradictory and discriminatory position, enacted in the immigration sphere. Some Australian states offer limited RE in social science classes, but comparative religion as a separate subject is not mandatory as it is in England. Instead, all Australian states continue to favor Christian-centric RI and Christian-dominated chaplaincy. This focus is maintained through forms of governance that might be described in policy documents as "multicultural," but can be understood in practice as being non-inclusive (Byrne 2012b).

Each Australian state manages religion differently, though most have similar policies, which prioritize RI over RE. In New South Wales, General Religious Education (GRE) is poorly supported, offered only in grades 3 and 4, and receives less than one sixth of the class time given to RI (NSWDET 2010). In contrast, RI begins at enrolment and can legally be allocated up to an hour each week. All state school children, at both primary and senior schools, are pre-enrolled in Anglican RI and parents must write to the school to opt out of the programs, though few schools provide information to parents about how the opt-out provision works. Parents must choose a faith denomination (or "no religion") for a weekly RI class, commonly called "scripture." Some schools offer a wide choice of traditions but most have limited (largely Christian) options. The New South Wales Education Act 1990 provides RI access to "approved religious persuasions." More than 90 % of New South Wales RI providers are Christian (NSWDEC 2013). Against policy, some schools do not offer a non-Christian option (Byrne 2012a).

In 1980 a review of religion in New South Wales public schools was undertaken, producing what is referred to as the Rawlinson Report.[7] The report recommended the establishment of a Consultative Committee for RI.[8] The Rawlinson Report noted that "it is important that this [Committee] should represent the major religious groups in the community" (1980, section 6.97). However, until 2009, a conservative Christian organization, ICCOREIS, dominated the Committee. Only in 2011 was a multifaith approach taken, when Committee membership was extended to include eight Christian representatives and seven from minority faiths (two Jewish and one each of Baha'i, Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu, and Indigenous representatives and a newly recognized, though at the time of writing yet to be filled, Sikh position). In addition there were six representatives from organizations of undeclared affiliation—some of which represent Christian schools. Two NSWDET representatives (of undeclared religious allegiance) had the role of Chair and Executive Officer of this neat Christian stack.

The New South Wales Department of Education and Communities NSWDEC (previously NSWDET) defended the Committee membership as reflecting the religious makeup of Australian society.[9] Using mathematics to determine religious representation is problematic. It reinforces current social inequities if used accurately, and severely reinforces cultural biases if used with prejudice. Although officially recognized as religions, and with more numbers than the 11th-ranked (and represented) Baha'i tradition, Sikhism and the nature religions, ranked ninth and tenth in size, had no representation. More stark was the lack of representation on the Committee for the non-religious perspective which, according to the 2011 census, is held by 22 % of Australians (ABS 2012). In 2011, a hotly contested Education Amendment (Ethics) Bill enabled, for the first time, a non-religious ethics alternative to RI—which led to such intense public debate that a State Parliamentary Inquiry was undertaken. The inquiry supported the ethics classes using the same weekly timeslot and the same volunteer access mechanism. However, the organization that delivers the ethics program was not represented on the Committee and not allowed the same fundraising tax concessions given to religious organizations for the same function, limiting its ability to recruit and train volunteers. Another indication of inequity is that the ethics curriculum underwent significant departmental and public scrutiny, while religious curricula are not usually available for review. In addition, ethics volunteers underwent full police checks, while this obligation was put off for religious organizations until 2016. This inequity may explain the assumed right of religious groups to restrict what non-religious children were allowed to do in the RI period for the past 130 years—silent reading or homework only, nothing that could be seen to be competing with RI (Byrne 2012a). This discriminatory policy situation—where children not taking RI are not adequately supervised or not allowed to learn new or structured curriculum material—continues in the Australian

[7] Only section numbers are provided.

[8] Referred to in New South Wales as "Special Religious Education" but understood to be indoctrinatory-style RI.

[9] Notes from author meeting with NSWDEC Officers, Strathfield, October, 2011.

State of Queensland, and in New South Wales schools where ethics volunteers are not available.

Each state education agency determines who can deliver RI. The New South Wales Education Act 1990 provides RI access to "approved religious persuasions." Approval processes and requirements are not defined in legislation and the criteria for approval are not available on the Department of Education website. So, "approval" is left to the interpretation of policy. In New South Wales, interpretation and implementation advice for the Education Minister is provided by a policy contact officer—who may or may not have particular religious leanings. The approval process considers a checklist for applicants, which requires "a statement of your church's doctrine or beliefs, details regarding the appointment of clergy and the role they perform, and details of the places at which your church conducts its business and services" (ICCOREIS 2011: 28). The language is distinctly Christian and, in this way, among others, excluding.

The claim that RI access supports multiculturalism assumes that all traditions are given the same opportunity. This is not the case. The New South Wales Humanist organization has been denied RI access because it is "not a religion." In Victoria, (along with Queensland) the Humanist Society was blocked from offering an ethics course because the organization "cannot be defined as a religion" (Bachelard 2010, np). The term "religion" is not defined in Australian legislation, but limiting interpretations have effectively blocked non-religious access applications. In most Australian states, non-religious groups are excluded. Also currently denied access are Pagan groups, despite these groups being officially listed as religions in the Australian census.

For those applicants deemed acceptable to "participate" in RI, there are other hurdles. Equal opportunity does not demand that all those "approved" are "able." While some non-Christian organizations in some states make use of RI access, lack of resources can limit their possibilities. The approval process does not consider the capacity of approved groups to sustain a state-wide volunteer network. By mid-2012, after a highly debated preliminary trial, a positive review and 18 months of operations, Primary Ethics (the organization established to deliver the philosophical ethics RI alternative) was delivering classes to only 1 % of NSW children.[10] The voluntary New South Wales Buddhist Council had 60 schools on a waiting list for Buddhist RI but has limited ability to deliver in some regions (NSW Buddhist Council 2012). By way of contrast, many Christian groups have access to established church networks and government paid chaplains who are able, through loopholes in chaplaincy legislation, to deliver RI classes. Additionally, in Queensland, Christian Bible classes and Christian RI can be delivered by the school principal. If a state-paid teacher were to offer Islamic instruction, there would be public outcry, but Christian privilege remains largely uncontested.

In Victoria, three parents of children at three public primary schools brought proceedings in the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, arguing that the state-funded, exclusively Christian, RI program directly discriminated against their

[10] Primary Ethics Teachers Survey, results sent to author, June, 2012.

children due to their being "identified as different and separated from their class mates" and also due to the lack of regular curriculum instruction during this time (Aitkin and Ors 2012). Their claim, that the RI program is in breach of the Equal Opportunity Acts of 1995 and 2010, was not successful. A similar claim of discrimination in Queensland, by a mother whose child was allegedly shown violent crucifixion material and told he would "burn in hell" (Hurst 2014), which resulted in nightmares, and who is calling for an alternative program in world religions and ethics, was "unresolved"[11] by the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Commission and is yet to be taken up at the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal. At the time of writing (July 2014), another parent, in a different Brisbane school, is submitting a similar claim of discrimination.

The inconsistencies in Australian RI access indicate that the process is not transparent. Decisions appear to be made on criteria that are not publicly stated. A clear definition of who ought (or ought not) to be approved to deliver RI, and why (or why not), is unavailable. State policies are ostensibly multicultural but the exclusion of some minority religions or non-religious belief systems is discriminatory. The focus on access "opportunity" instead of "equity" avoids an analysis of the structural obstacles and cultural prejudices, which may restrict, create or sustain inequitable outcomes. As Terry Wotherspoon (2002: 11) noted:

> Children's interests may be selectively served when parents and community members from minority backgrounds feel ill-equipped, lack confidence, or encounter language, social, class, fiscal, or cultural barriers in approaching teachers and school officials. Patterns of political representation on school boards, legislative assemblies, and other key educational decision making bodies also reveal significant under-representation, and therefore absence of effective voice.

The New South Wales Rawlinson Report found that most earlier studies into religion in Australian public schooling "recommended that General Religious Education, given by public school teachers, should progressively replace the traditional church-oriented [RI] programs" (1980, section 5.68). Despite these recommendations (made by similar reports in each state), no such iterative reform (as has happened in England) has been undertaken in Australia. In fact, in 2011, the then head of the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) reported that there was "no problem" with the operation of Special Religious Instruction (Bachelard 2011: np). Hopes of religious educators were further "dashed" when a secular Studies of Religion component included in a newly devised Civics and Citizenship course was allocated only 20 h a year (Zwartz 2012). ACARA has suggested that religions might be taught as part of the cross-curriculum priorities of "engagement with Asia, sustainability, and indigenous histories and cultures" or via the general capabilities of "ethical understanding" and "intercultural understanding" rather than the English approach of a dedicated curriculum time slot.

A 2014 review of ACARA's national curriculum by two right-wing religious educators noted that, although the curriculum might teach "the major forms of

[11] From parent interview—author's post-doctoral research project, August, 2012.

religious thought and expression characteristic of Australian society…Christianity has had a far greater positive influence on Western Society than any other religion" (Donnelly and Wiltshire 2014: 157). One reviewer had already commented that Christianity should not be treated "as one religion among many, alongside Buddhism, Confucianism and Islam" (Donnelly 2013: 1). Rather, Donnelly suggested Australia's Christian heritage should be more strongly emphasized (Greene 2014), and the Bible should be included "for an appreciation of Western literature" (Donnelly and Wiltshire 2014: 159). Aside from the Christian privileging (reminiscent of Australia's twentieth-century racist immigration policy), ACARA's aim to embed inclusive teaching of religions, without ensuring curriculum time, is not feasible. The cross-curriculum priorities are not useful for all subjects and the general capabilities need only be taught where appropriate, and by teachers who are trained to develop their own resources. In any case, by September 2015, the Civics and Citizenship curriculum had still not been endorsed for use.

A critically democratic and actively inclusive approach might, at the very least, seek further information on the issues, problems and possible solutions to balance RI with RE and entail broad consultation with minority groups about what form of religion Australians want in schools—without being swayed by powerful vocal minorities.

12.11 Australian Interreligious Intolerance and Illiteracy

According to the 2014 Mapping Social Cohesion report (Markus 2014), religious racism is still prevalent in Australia. Earlier, this national survey found a majority (53 %) of Australians felt it was "important that the main religion in Australia continues to be Christianity" (Markus 2010: 35). After several years, the survey still finds Australian levels of intolerance and rejection of cultural diversity at 25–30 % of the population, compared with 4 % in the USA and 3 % in Sweden (Markus 2014: 58). The 2014 survey found 18 % of Australians were discriminated against because of their skin color, ethnic origin or religious beliefs—9 % higher than levels recorded in 2007. The 2014 survey also found more than 40 % of people from Asia suffered from racism—especially Malaysians, Indians and Sri Lankans—and that Australians are most likely to be prejudiced against people they believe to be from the Middle East. Hindus and Muslims experience discrimination significantly more than Christians.

Earlier research painted a more nuanced picture. For example, Challenging Racism, a research project of the University of Western Sydney, found that although 41 % of Australians have a "narrow view of who belongs in Australia" (Dunn 2008: 2), only one in ten outwardly express racist views, as opposed to one in three in Europe (Dunn 2011a). Dunn claimed that results were "promising but contradictory…one-third of Australians supported (both) multiculturalism and assimilation at the same time" (Dunn 2011b: 4). Dunn argued that although "separatists and supremacists are a destructive vocal minority…the silent majority of Australians are

open-minded and accepting" of diversity (Dunn 2011a: 8). This comment raises the questions: Why do Australian education systems[12] continue to pre-enroll students in Anglican RI? What responsibility does a secular system have to uphold anti-discrimination policies? Do all Christian families want the same type of evangelical RI that is currently provided?

In mid-2015, an anti-Muslim political party held rallies in Australian capital cities and drew attention to the support of mainstream political figures, including Australia's Attorney General, who had declared their "right to be bigots" (Brandis 2014). At the same time, lawyers in the State of Victoria released a statement claiming that the practice of religious instruction in that state breached the Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the state's own Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (Vic). The statement noted that the RI program contravenes international law by "ignoring the rights of parents and guardians," "offering religious dogma," and segregating and discriminating against particular groups of children" (Victorian Council for Civil Liberties 2015: 2).

Bucking an international trend toward efforts to improve interreligious literacy, Australian educational institutions remain Christian-centric and Australian students are religiously and interreligiously illiterate (Rymarz 2007; Cahill et al. 2004). Pat Loria (2006) pointed out that the average Australian public school student cannot distinguish between the Buddha and an ayatollah, that "Jesus Christ" is known mostly as a profanity (citing Zwartz 2003), and that most teenagers are generally unaware of the story or significance of Good Friday (citing Atkinson 2005). Stereotypical views, often developed through media misrepresentation, negatively construct the "Muslim other" for many young people as "un-Australian" (Maher 2009).

Increasing intercultural and interreligious difference is part of an international dynamic born of global mobility. This social reality will only intensify; it will not go away. For Australia to respond adequately to this dynamic, it may benefit from a more international outlook on RE policy.

12.12 International RE Principles

The Toledo Guiding Principles is a framework for the teaching of religions and beliefs, developed in 2007 by a panel of RE experts "to contribute to an improved understanding of the world's increasing religious diversity and the growing presence of religion in the public sphere" (Jackson 2008: 163). The basic human right of respecting "freedom of religion or belief" is central to the document, which was acknowledged publicly by the 56 European foreign ministers represented in the Office for Security and Cooperation in Europe (Jackson 2011a: 17). The

[12] Victoria switched to an opt-in system in 2014 (the only Australian state to do so). This initiated the removal of the RI program in 50 schools, religious group outrage and political back-pedalling (see Cohen 2014; Bouma 2014).

already-occurring pluralist trend in English RE was supported by the release of these principles. In addition, the engagement of government agencies, scholars, and public personalities who discussed and debated these principles extended the public discourse on pluralist RE, particularly on the inclusion of non-religious worldviews. In contrast, in Australia, debate about school religion generally leads to divisive debate and is often avoided (Byrne 2009).

Following on from Toledo, in 2008 a Council of Europe Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation regarding the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education. The recommendation (CM 2008/2012) states that:

> Education for democratic citizenship is a factor for social cohesion, mutual understanding, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and solidarity…[which] requires recognising and accepting differences, and developing a critical approach to…philosophical, religious, social, political and cultural concepts…[and that] member states should…pursue initiatives in the field of intercultural education relating to the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions in order to promote tolerance and the development of a culture of "living together". (Council of Europe 2008a: np)[13]

The recommendation highlights the state's responsibility to provide spaces for intercultural dialogue and to deliver combined religions and ethics teaching "in order to prevent religious or cultural divides" (Council of Europe 2008a: np).

In further developments, a 2009 Council of Europe exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue noted the challenge for education regarding "how to prepare young people to live together in a diverse sociocultural context and to actively participate in creating a mutually supportive society" (Schreiner 2009: 2). The exchange noted that for social inclusion, national and international stability and security, "religions should be studied in all nation states as part of intercultural education" (Jackson 2011a: 9). In Europe, "knowledge about religions, as a matter of democratic citizenship, has become a priority in the field of education" (Council of Europe 2009: 38). The Council noted that inclusion in education is associated with principles of "equity and social justice, democrative [sic] values and participation and a balance between community and diversity" (2009: 44). It argued that "an inclusive culture insists upon valuing diversity…by actively mixing students of different cultures, social backgrounds, gender and abilities" (2009: 43).

In its White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (Council of Europe 2008b), the Council noted that inclusion "requires the protection of the weak, as well as the right to differ, to create and to innovate" and that democracy thrives because it helps individuals not only "to identify with the society of which they are members" but also because it "provides for their legitimacy in decision-making and in the exercise of power" (2008b: 20). This disposition "requires a democratic architecture characterised by the respect of the individual as a human being, reciprocal recognition of equal worth, and impartial treatment" (2008b: 20). The Council of Europe urged governance models that "reconcile majority rule [alongside] the rights of persons belonging to minorities" (2008b: 25). The White Paper noted that inclusive societies,

[13] Accessed online. No page numbers.

and thus education, must take a critical approach to governance as well as participation. It also noted that the rules of a—real or imagined—"dominant culture" cannot be used to justify discrimination and that inclusive societies cannot operate by a majority ethos. This position emphasizes the role of proactive state interventions to address structural obstacles to cultural and religious equity.

Building on this work, the Council released *Signposts—Policies and Practices for Teaching about Religions and Non-religious World Views in Intercultural Education* (Council of Europe 2014), addressing the challenges of citizenship in religiously plural democracies. *Signposts* aims to stimulate community and school-based action to "promote dialogue, learning from one another, deepening understanding of one's own and others' background and traditions" (2014: 99). *Signposts* provides analyses of research findings and pedagogical frameworks, principle-based policy guidance, implementation recommendations and prompts for discussion. The document shows how the Council of Europe sees inclusive education about religions and non-religious worldviews as a "crucially sensitive area for the political, social and educational future of Europe" (2014: 8), producing "greater empathetic understanding" and "nurturing of democratic culture" through the development of "civic competencies" (2014: 9). *Signposts* makes specific requests for Council of Europe member states' education policies. The governance position presented is one of active inclusion to support diverse engagement.

12.13 Conclusions

Social inclusion provides a platform for policy to encourage interreligious literacy and intercultural understanding through school Studies of Religion programs. However, consideration must be given to the ideological motives for two differing styles of "inclusion"—active and passive. These different styles result in varying governance mechanisms and varying degrees of involvement by minority groups. Passive inclusion, which promotes opportunity, is enacted in either classical or progressive liberal democratic models. It appears incapable of addressing structural inequity and barriers to participation that arise through the cultural dominance of particular faith groups. Active inclusion, which aims for equity, is inherently suspicious of majority rule. As a result, active inclusion policy mechanisms incorporate socioeconomic, cultural, religious, and political diversity, and the procedures for participation are regularly reformed. This allows the spaces for institutional and public conversation (which previously may have contributed to marginalizing, or "tokenizing," minority voices) to be opened and reshaped, to encourage critique and checks and balances.

In England, social inclusion policy initially emphasized limited economic state intervention but developed a multifaith agenda with the aim of "community cohesion." However, inclusive pluralist reform of RE had been underway in England and Wales since the mid-1960s. This reform was given further impetus by government initiatives in policy and curriculum development and by public attention (including

government funded research) on issues of religious diversity and international principles in RE. Although "social inclusion" was dropped by the post-Blair UK Coalition government, an inclusive approach to RE governance and implementation was already well established. This actively inclusive approach continues in England, partly due to a broader European agenda.

In stark contrast, Australian school religion operates under excluding or, at best, passively including governance models. Passive inclusion does not generate transformative power. The difficulty of mounting any argument to defend against vocal conservative Christian minorities appears to be compounded in Australia by the position of education agencies, which tend to run with the idea that "majority justifies privilege" and by the disorganization of splintered stakeholder groups. If taken seriously in Australia, the application of active inclusion to RE (such as the adoption or adaptation of internationally recognized principles) might see an end to unnecessary and limiting Christian privileging in public schooling. The benefits of addressing Australia's conflicted position on multiculturalism and its resultant interreligious illiteracy—through an active, critically inclusive religions education policy—are yet to be explored.

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Chapter 13
'Geertz vs Asad' in RE Textbooks: A Comparison Between England's and Indonesia's Textbooks

Satoko Fujiwara

Abstract In past decades, it has increasingly been argued that the concept of religion is a modern Western construct and that there are dangers in employing it when 'translating' other traditions—Islam, in particular. In the case of textbook analysis, this critical awareness poses two questions. First, do Western textbooks describe Islam with any Western bias; how are they different from textbooks used in Muslim countries in their representation of Islam? Second, if there is a noticeable difference, what should be done with the Western textbooks? Should Western textbooks follow the Muslim way in describing Islam? This chapter attempts to answer these questions by comparing English religious education (RE) textbooks with Indonesian RE textbooks used in public education. It focuses on textbooks produced by WRERU (the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit), which is known for its ethnographical method and has supposedly attempted to describe Islam from the Muslim point of view. It shows that the juxtaposition of WRERU's RE textbooks with Indonesian RE textbooks strikingly parallels the contrast between the approaches to religion of Clifford Geertz and Talal Asad. The main challenge is to decide which way to proceed on the basis of such a finding.

13.1 Introduction

In past decades, it has increasingly been argued that the concept of religion is a modern Western construct and that there are dangers in employing it when translating other traditions—Islam, in particular. One of the prominent critics is the anthropologist, Talal Asad. In the first chapter of *Genealogies of Religion*, he criticizes the anthropological concept of religion as represented by Clifford Geertz's definition of religion. He argues that what Geertz considers to be a universal definition of religion is, in fact, a mere reflection of the modern liberal Christian view of religion,

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which is centred upon inner belief, as opposed to practice, discipline and power (Asad 1993).

In the case of religious education (RE), especially that which stresses intercultural understanding as its goal, this critical awareness allows us to raise some questions. Is Islam represented in Western RE classes from the modern Western perspective, as defined and criticized by Asad? How is it different from the way in which Islam is represented in Muslim countries? Furthermore, if there is a remarkable difference, what should be done with the Western teaching/learning of Islam? Should it follow the Muslim way to describe and understand Islam?

This chapter uses materials from RE textbooks to consider these questions. It is quite common in textbook analysis to examine whether or not a textbook is biased against a certain religion. The uniqueness of this chapter lies in its epistemological reflection upon the fundamental concept of religion that shapes the structure of a textbook, rather than this or that characteristic of a particular religion (for example, whether a certain religion is depicted as inherently violent). Here I compare the descriptions of Islam in Western RE textbooks and those in non-Western Islamic RE textbooks, both used in public education. More specifically, I analyse a series of RE textbooks that are guided by a Geertzian methodology and concept of religion. I compare them with RE textbooks circulated in Indonesia, a country where Geertz conducted his first fieldwork. The former textbooks are used in non-confessional, multifaith RE classes; the latter are designed for confessional, Islamic RE classes. Whereas comparing textbooks with such different aims is unusual, this does not affect the validity of my arguments, because I limit my scope to the problem of representation and do not make practical pedagogical suggestions. In what follows, I first introduce each textbook along with background information, and then give a comparative analysis.

13.2 WRERU's RE Textbooks and Its Geertzian Method

From the numerous RE textbooks used in England, here I have chosen to focus on textbooks produced in the late 1990s by Warwick University's WRERU (The Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit), headed by Robert Jackson. Warwick's textbooks are known for their Geertzian ethnographic method and, more than any other European textbook, have supposedly attempted to describe Islam from the Muslim point of view. England is also a representative of non-confessional, multifaith, integrative religious education. Warwick's textbooks were originally designed as a contribution to 'secular' religious education in publicly funded schools in England and Wales, though they have been applied within faith-based education as well. Warwick's textbooks are based upon unique materials developed from fieldwork conducted by member scholars of the project team in and around the county of Warwickshire. Those scholars interviewed children and their families from various religious communities. The children's vivid voices as first-hand sources are quoted abundantly throughout the textbooks.

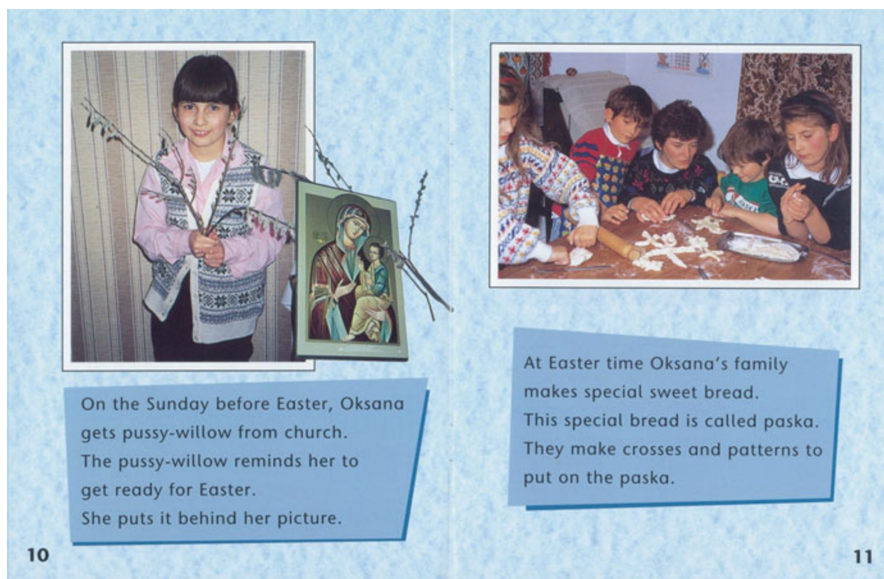


Fig. 13.1 Excerpt from Warwick's Key Stage 1 religious education textbook *An Egg for Babcha* (focusing on a Ukrainian Catholic family) [Bridges to Religions series] (Barratt 1994b)

The aim of this ethnographic method is to avoid a so-called 'world religions' approach, which represents each religious tradition as a schematic and homogeneous belief system whose essence can be expressed through a series of propositions or doctrinal statements. In other words, it attempts to overcome the older phenomenological approach in RE by employing the Geertzian ideas of 'thick description' and 'local knowledge'. Warwick's textbooks share a view of religions that acknowledges their complexity and internal diversity (Jackson 2006). In addition, the personal element in religions is emphasized, so that religion is presented as a lived human experience.

In particular, each of Warwick's Key Stage 1 (ages 5–7 years) textbooks focuses on a single child from one religious group. The real stories of two Christian girls (Fig. 13.1), a Buddhist boy (Fig. 13.2), a Muslim girl (Fig. 13.3) and a Jewish boy (Fig. 13.4) illustrate how children learn through participation in religious activities, such as festivals and services within the family and the religious community (Jackson 2006: 8).

Key Stage 2 (ages 7–11 years) textbooks spotlight several young people associated with various Christian membership groups, and the emphasis moves to learning and reflection in groups associated with the family's religious practice (Jackson 2006: 9).

For Key Stage 3 (ages 11–14 years), the emphasis is on the actual comments and reflections of young people linked to various groups within three religions: Christianity, Islam and Hinduism. Each textbook features four British teenagers: two girls and two boys. The volume *Muslims* focuses on young Muslims with a Pakistani family ancestry; *Christians* introduces young people with Church of

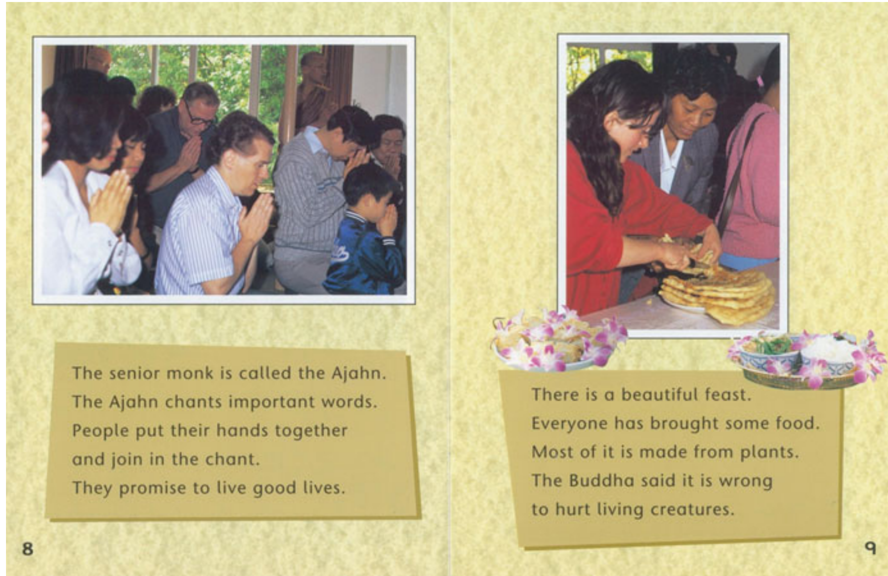


Fig. 13.2 Excerpt from Warwick's Key Stage 1 religious education textbook *Buddha's Birthday* (focusing on a Cambodian Theravada Buddhist family) [Bridges to Religions series] (Barratt 1994a)

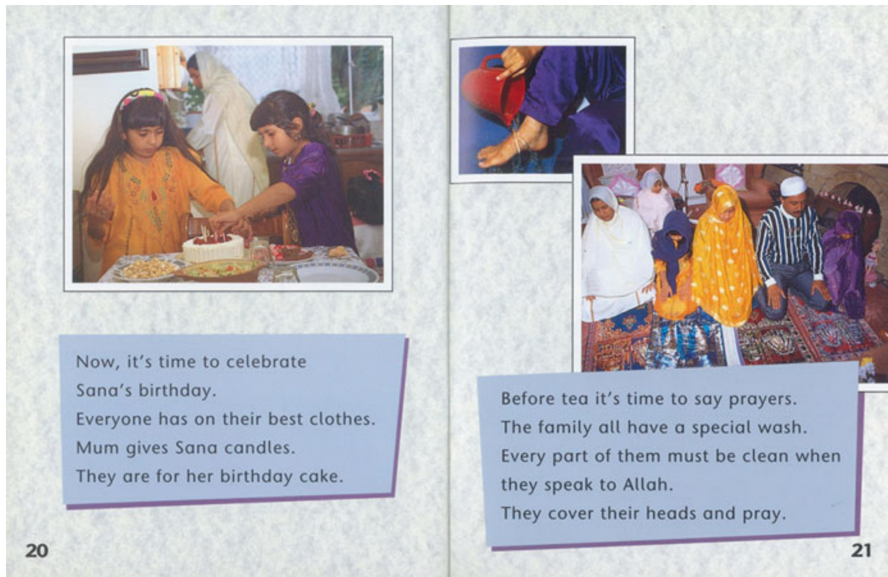


Fig. 13.3 Excerpt from Warwick's Key Stage 1 religious education textbook *Something to Share* (focusing on a Muslim family from India/East Africa) [Bridges to Religions series] (Barratt 1994e)

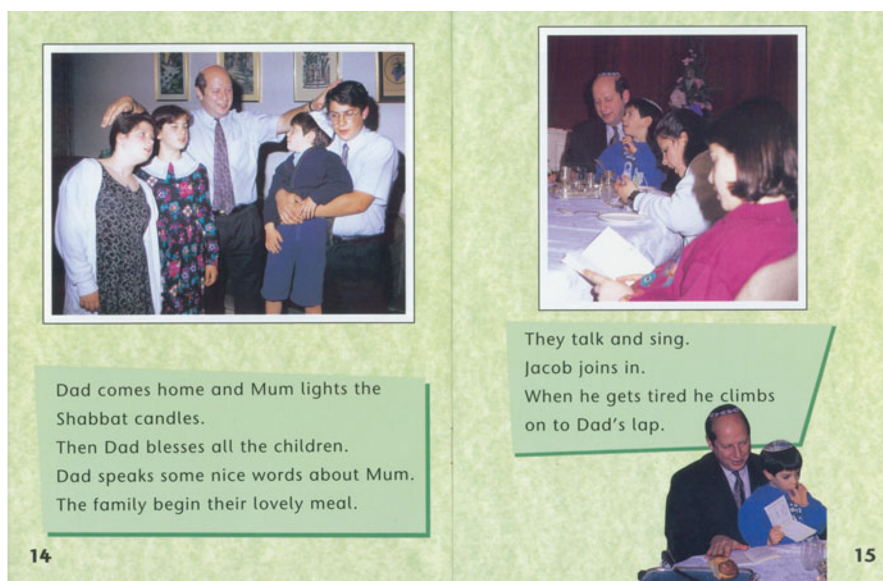


Fig. 13.4 Excerpt from Warwick’s Key Stage 1 religious education textbook *The Seventh Day Is Shabbat* (focusing on an Orthodox Jewish family) [Bridges to Religions series] (Barratt 1994d)

England, Greek Orthodox, Quaker (Religious Society of Friends) and ‘New’ Church backgrounds; *Hindus* introduces young people whose lives relate to various aspects of Hindu tradition and whose familial ethnic background is Gujarati Indian. As well as providing general information about the young people and their interests, each textbook concentrates on aspects of their religious life and includes extracts from interviews with them and photographs taken during fieldwork (Jackson 2006: 9).[1]

Tables 13.1 and 13.2 show the range of topics covered by the Key Stage 3 textbooks.

13.3 Indonesian RE Textbooks

One of the reasons I have chosen Indonesia among predominantly Muslim countries is practical: as a part of a collaborative research project,[2] I have had a chance to have Indonesian textbooks translated into Japanese and to gather some related materials.

[1] Warwick’s textbooks have several more traits that derive from what Jackson calls an ‘interpretive approach’, composed of the hermeneutical circle of interpretation, reflexivity and edification (Jackson 2004, 2006). Since this chapter concentrates on the concept of religion underlining the descriptions of textbooks, I refrain from going into that pedagogical aspect here.

[2] From 2006 to 2008, I conducted a collaborative research project, ‘Comparative Study of Textbooks on Religions in Public Education’, in which the other members and I translated and analysed RE textbooks from 11 countries—namely, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, India, Turkey, Germany, France, the UK and the USA.

Table 13.1 Contents of Warwick's *Muslims* religious education textbook for Key Stage 3 [Interpreting Religions series] (Mercier 1996)

Contents	
1.	Introduction
2.	Introducing Kamran and the Qur'an
3.	Introducing Shazia and belief in Allah
4.	Introducing Nusrat and the Prophet Muhammad
5.	Introducing Naseem and the five pillars
6.	Daily routines
7.	Salah
8.	Du'a
9.	The mosque
10.	Jumu'ah prayers
11.	Reciting the Qur'an: Naseem
12.	Studying the Qur'an: Shazia
13.	Learning to be Muslim: Nusrat
14.	Training to become hafiz: Kamran
15.	Family, responsibility and relatives
16.	School and education
17.	Friends and foes
18.	Roots, language and identity
19.	Influences and making decisions
20.	Work and leisure
21.	Thinking about the future
22.	Marriage
23.	Food
24.	Ramadan and Id-ul-Fitr
25.	Three holy places
26.	Hajj and Id-ul-Adha
27.	Zakah
28.	Fears and concerns
29.	Life after death
30.	The good life

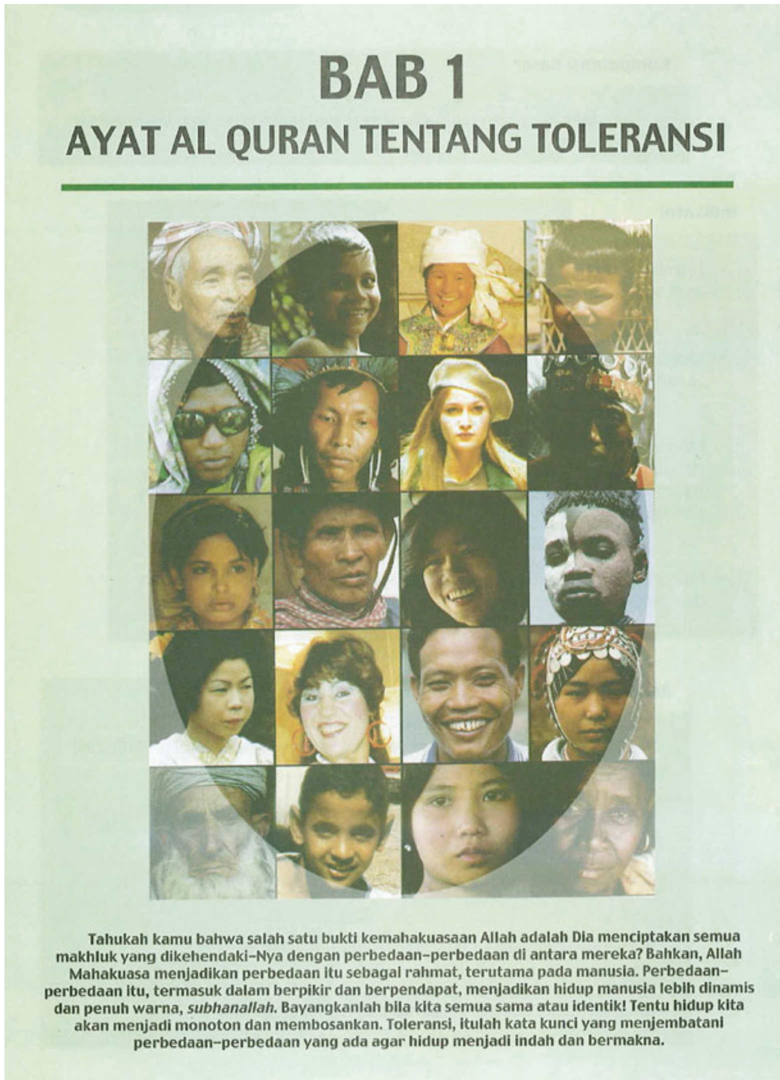
But there is also an analytical reason for this choice: since Indonesian Islam is often regarded as 'non-typical Islam', having been influenced by South Asian meditative–mystical religious traditions (Geertz 1968), it would make a strong case for this chapter's thesis if I could show that even Islam in Indonesian textbooks is action (practice) oriented rather than mind (belief) oriented.

Indonesia has six approved religions instead of a single state religion. Religious education is compulsory from primary to secondary education in all schools. Its classes are single faith and separatist. That is to say, Muslim and non-Muslim children take RE classes in different rooms, as opposed to the integrative classes common among England's state-funded schools. Moreover, Muslim children's RE

Table 13.2 Contents of Warwick's *Christians* religious education textbook for Key Stage 3 [Interpreting Religions series] (Robson 1995)

Contents	
1.	Introduction
2.	Andrew and the Church of England
3.	Alice and the Religious Society of Friends
4.	Stacy and the Greek Orthodox Church
5.	Abigail and the Coventry Christian Fellowship
6.	Weekday activities
7.	Reading the Bible: what and why
8.	Reading the Bible: how
9.	Ways of praying: school and home
10.	What is prayer: a personal link with God?
11.	Sunday worship: Andrew
12.	Sunday worship: Stacey
13.	Sunday worship: Abigail
14.	Sunday worship: Alice
15.	Christmas and Epiphany
16.	Lent and Easter
17.	Other special occasions in the year
18.	People and ideas which influence us
19.	Christian beliefs: creation
20.	Christian beliefs: salvation
21.	Christian beliefs: holiness
22.	Christian beliefs: service
23.	Growing up: expectations
24.	Growing up: challenges
25.	Commitment: possessions
26.	Commitment: food and drink
27.	Commitment: responsibilities
28.	Belonging: our country
29.	Belonging: our Church
30.	Belonging: our experience

is nearly entirely on Islam, whereas non-Muslim children have the right to take RE classes on their own religion. To apply the Western dichotomy of confessional and non-confessional, Indonesian RE classes are clearly confessional and include moral education. To quote from the Ministry of Education's core curriculum, issued in 2004, the purpose of Islamic RE is to "foster and enhance the faith of learners through providing and cultivating knowledge, appreciation, practice, and experience of Islam to become Muslims who keep developed in terms of piety to Allah and morality" (Pusat Kurikulum 2003: 8). These RE textbooks thus mention little about other religions, but they are not exclusivistic and teach the importance of tolerance.



BAB 1

AYAT AL QURAN TENTANG TOLERANSI

Tahukah kamu bahwa salah satu bukti kemahakuasaan Allah adalah Dia menciptakan semua makhluk yang dikehendaki-Nya dengan perbedaan-perbedaan di antara mereka? Bahkan, Allah Mahakuasa menjadikan perbedaan itu sebagai rahmat, terutama pada manusia. Perbedaan-perbedaan itu, termasuk dalam berpikir dan berpendapat, menjadikan hidup manusia lebih dinamis dan penuh warna, *subhanallah*. Bayangkanlah bila kita semua sama atau identik! Tentu hidup kita akan menjadi monoton dan membosankan. Toleransi, itulah kata kunci yang menjembatani perbedaan-perbedaan yang ada agar hidup menjadi indah dan bermakna.

Fig. 13.5 Chapter cover of *Islamic Education*, an Indonesian third-grade high school religious education textbook for Muslims (Latifah et. al. 2004)

For example, the third-grade high school textbooks start with a chapter on tolerance, in which diversity is highly valued (Fig. 13.5).

A member of my research team has collected and translated one of the most widely circulated Islamic RE textbooks for first graders, *Religion Islam*: *The Treasure of Characters Inside Education*, published by a private publisher in 2004 (Fig. 13.6). The book's composition is shaped by national curriculum guidelines. It comprises nine chapters (Table 13.3).

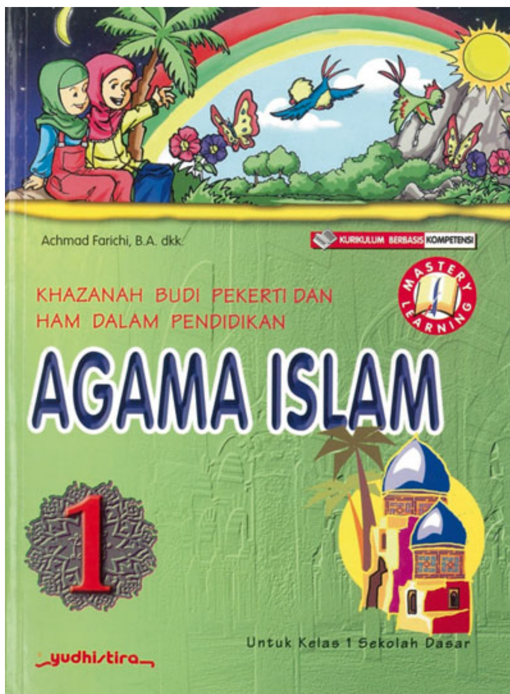


Fig. 13.6 Front cover of *Religion Islam*: *The Treasure of Characters Inside Education*, an Indonesian first-grade primary school religious education textbook for Muslims (Farichi et al. 2004)

Table 13.3 Contents of *Religion Islam: The Treaure of Characters inside Education*

Contents	
Chap. 1	Suras of Al-Fatifa (the Opening) and Al-Ikhlas (Purity of Faith)
Chap. 2	Sura of Al-Kawthar (Abundance)
Chap. 3	Articles of faith
Chap. 4	Two articles of faith
Chap. 5	Admirable characters
Chap. 6	Admirable characters
Chap. 7	Polite rules
Chap. 8	Islamic rules
Chap. 9	Ritual purity

What is perhaps most striking about this textbook for Westerners, as well as for Japanese people, is that the Prophet Muhammad does not appear in any part of the book. The Islamic prohibition against depicting the Prophet's image is not the reason for this omission. His life story is not mentioned at all in the textbook. It seems that the most common style of a confessional RE textbook for small children in Western countries is story-telling of the life and the teachings of the founder of a religion. For example, for Christian children, Bible stories about Jesus are usually the first things they are familiarized with. The Indonesian style is certainly very

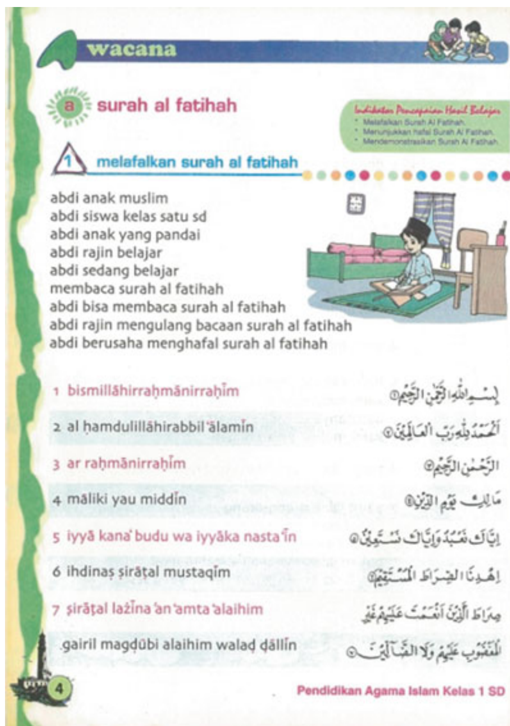
Fig. 13.7 Excerpt from Chap. 1 of an Indonesian first-grade primary school religious education textbook for Muslims [see text for translation] (Farichi et al. 2004)

different in this respect. Instead of telling stories about Muhammad, the Indonesian Islam textbook is composed of Arabic Qur'an phrases for recitation and drills in the Muslim code of conduct.

Taking a look at some pages, Figs. 13.7 and 13.8 show the first two pages of the first chapter. It is said that the basic competency for this unit is to recite the two Qur'an Suras.

The text of Fig. 13.7 says:

Chap. 1 Suras of Al-Fatifa (the Opening) and Al-Ikhlas (Purity of Faith)
Basic competency = to recite Suras of Al-Fatifa and Al-Ikhlas
Agis is going to pray.
When praying, Agis reads the Sura of Al-Fatifa.
After finishing the Sura of Al-Fatifa, he reads the Sura of Al-Ikhlas.
Anis is going to school.
Before going to school, Anis offers a prayer.
Before offering a prayer, Anis reads the Sura of Al-Ikhlas.
Note:
What do you think of Agis's and Anis's attitudes? How about you?
Have you already recited Suras of Al-Fatifa and Al-Ikhlas?
If you diligently worship, saying zikir (dhikr) and offering a prayer, you will master the recitation of Suras of Al-Fatifa and Al-Ikhlas.



wacana

a surah al fatihah

Indikator Pencapaian Hasil Belajar
* Melafalkan Surah Al Fatihah.
* Menunjukkan hafal Surah Al Fatihah.
* Mendemonstrasikan Surah Al Fatihah.

1 melafalkan surah al fatihah

abdi anak muslim
abdi siswa kelas satu sd
abdi anak yang pandai
abdi rajin belajar
abdi sedang belajar
membaca surah al fatihah
abdi bisa membaca surah al fatihah
abdi rajin mengulang bacaan surah al fatihah
abdi berusaha menghafal surah al fatihah

1 bismillāhirraḥmānirraḥīm	بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۝١
2 al ḥamdulillāhirabbil 'ālamīn	اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ رَبِّ الْعٰلَمِيْنَ ۝٢
3 ar raḥmānirraḥīm	الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِيْمِ ۝٣
4 māliki yau middīn	مٰلِكِ يَوْمِ الدِّيْنِ ۝٤
5 iyyā kana' budu wa iyyāka nasta'īn	اِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَاِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِيْنُ ۝٥
6 ihdinaṣ ṣirāṭal mustaqīm	اِهْدِنَا الصِّرَاطَ الْمُسْتَقِيْمَ ۝٦
7 ṣirāṭal lażīna 'an 'amta 'alaihim	صِرَاطَ الَّذِيْنَ اَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ غَيْرِ
gairil magḍūbi alaihim walaḍ ḍāllīn	الْمَغْضُوْبِ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا الضَّاۤلِّيْنَ ۝٧

4 Pendidikan Agama Islam Kelas 1 SD

Fig. 13.8 Excerpt from Chap. 1 of an Indonesian first-grade primary school religious education textbook for Muslims [see text for translation] (Farichi et al. 2004)

The text of Fig. 13.8 says:

Abdi is a Muslim child.
Abdi is a first grader.
Abdi is a smart child.
Abdi works hard.
Abdi is practising reading the Sura of Al-Fatifa.
Abdi can read the Sura of Al-Fatifa.
Abdi reads it over and over again.
Abdi is trying hard to recite it.

It is followed by the Arabic text of the first Sura. Then the textbook explains the meanings of the Arabic text. It tells children to practise with their teacher's and parents' help until they can recite it.

Activities for the unit follow the section for recitation practice. The first activity is titled 'Practising Good Deeds'. Pupils are asked what good Muslims are supposed to do in each of a number of specific situations: what to do if, for example, children are chatting with each other in class, or a friend entices you to steal a mango from a neighbour's garden, or you see someone falling down on the street or you see someone cheating while taking an exam. The second activity asks pupils to act out a

drama using illustrations as a guide. The drama is about a Muslim family with two children. One of the children shows reluctance to go to a Qur'an class after school, and his father encourages him to go with his sister.

After the activities, the textbook introduces the story of a follower of the Prophet Muhammad: Bilal Bin Rabbah. The story is about how Bilal, a slave, was severely beaten by his master when it was found out that Bilal had been converted to Islam, and how Abu Bakar, a companion of Muhammad, set Bilal free. Bilal is depicted as a faithful model for Muslims, while Muhammad himself is not part of the story.

The unit ends with a self-check sheet and exercises. Half of the questions are on knowledge ("What is the Sacred Scripture of Islam?", "How many Suras are there in the Qur'an?", "What is the Sura of Al-Ikhlas about?", etc.). The other half are on rules of conduct ("What is a good attitude to take when someone is reciting the Qur'an?", "Which attitude or action do Islamic teachings recommend?", etc.). A small game is added, which teaches pupils the pronunciation of Arabic letters.

In short, this textbook presents Islam as a religion of practice, instead of belief and creeds. It stands in contradistinction to the modern Western notion of religion. Even the units on faith (Chaps. 3 and 4) reflect this view of religion. The learning goals, activities and exercises for the units are expressed in terms of practice. That is, the learning goal for Chap. 3 is described as "Showing that you can recite the Six Articles of Faith". The activity "Practising Good Deeds" for this unit is composed of five questions—namely, "What should I do when someone tempts me to cut school?", "What should I do when my sister does not do her schoolwork?", "What should I do when I hear *azan* while watching a football game?", "What should I do when I find out that my sister has not finished her homework?" and "What should I do when I see my sister studying at the desk?". The second activity of drama-playing asks pupils to play the role of a boy who is tempted by a friend to cut school to play a PlayStation game. He is to refuse the enticement, saying that Allah is always watching. The self-check sheet for the unit consists of five points: first, performing Salat prayer five times a day; second, giving zakat to a beggar; third, apologizing after doing something wrong; fourth, thanking Allah for his blessings; and fifth, saying thank you when someone gives you a gift. It is hard to see—maybe looking with non-Muslim eyes—if there is any difference between the learning outcomes of the units on the Six Articles of Faith and those of the units on the Five Pillars of Practice.

Another example that shows that this textbook does not fit the modern Western view of religion is the unit on *taharah*, ritual purity. Although *taharah* is usually translated as 'ritual purification', cleansing practices included in this unit are not confined to religious ones in the Western sense. The unit also describes in detail how to clean oneself after going to the toilet or after playing barefoot on the ground. In other words, what Westerners call 'hygiene' is also taught and promoted in this unit, which says that Allah loves people who keep themselves clean.

13.4 Comparing the Textbooks

Let us return to Warwick's textbooks. It is true that the textbooks are free from negative Western stereotypes of Islam, such as that Muslims are violent or that Muslim women are oppressed. However, when compared with the Indonesian textbook, it can be said that the modern Western concept of religion, shared with Geertz and criticized by Asad, underlies Warwick's textbooks. As can be seen from Tables 13.1 and 13.2, the structure of the chapters is basically the same, no matter whether the book is about Christians, Muslims or Hindus. Each textbook first introduces four children who have faith, and then shows how their faith appears in various aspects of their lives—that is, how they build faith by reading holy scriptures and how they express faith by performing religious services and rituals or by observing religious precepts. Faith precedes practices. Life is an expression of faith. On the other hand, what is coherent in the Indonesian textbook is 'disciplining'. Starting with Qur'an recitation and ending with physical washing, it makes children go through a set of model performances and practices over and over again. Such daily practice forms their lives as Muslims. This coincides with what Asad says in *Genealogies of Religion*:

> We can learn something from this paradox which will help us evaluate Geertz's confident conclusion: "The anthropological study of religion is therefore a two-stage operation: first, an analysis of the system of meanings embodied in the symbols which make up *the religion proper*, and, second, the relating of these systems to social-structural and psychological processes". How sensible this sounds, yet how mistaken, surely, it is. If religious symbols are understood… as vehicles for meaning, can such meanings be established independently of the form of life in which they are used? If religious symbols are to be taken as the signatures of a sacred text, can we know what they mean without regard to the social disciplines by which their correct reading is secured?… Is the concept of religious training entirely vacuous? (Asad 1993: 53; emphasis by Asad)

It should be noted that this difference between the textbooks also partly derives from the difference in the purpose of education, but this also corresponds to different expectations of how to approach religion and, therefore, different conceptualizations of what religion is. Warwick's textbooks are designed for intercultural understanding, whereas Indonesian textbooks serve to nurture good Muslims. It seems to be only natural that Warwick's textbooks are 'meaning-interpretive', while the Indonesian textbooks are 'practice-training'. Nevertheless, what the Indonesian textbooks suggest is that if Warwick's textbook on Muslims had absorbed Muslims' own views, its whole structure would have been quite different from that of their textbook on Christians. Besides, their textbooks would have mentioned sanitary washing when referring to ritual cleansing, without giving the impression that Muslims cannot distinguish between a hygienic or scientific idea of cleanliness and religious or imaginary cleanliness.

My point will become clearer by looking at, so to speak, a 'reverse figure'. In Indonesia, RE classes are offered separately for Muslims and Christians, but the RE curricula for public education have much in common, and so do the textbooks—that is, the practice-based, Islamic concept of religion seems to shape Christian RE

Fig. 13.9 Front cover of an Indonesian first-grade primary school religious education textbook for Christians (Lalu et al. 2004)

textbooks in Indonesia to some extent. Figures 13.9 and 13.10 are excerpts from a Christian RE textbook for first graders.

Although it focuses solely on Christianity, it does not refer to Jesus at all, except for the cover page, which bears his image. In place of the Biblical stories of his life, the textbook mostly consists of hymns and prayers. It seems that singing hymns and reading prayers aloud are considered to be the equivalents of Qur'an recitations, according to the practice-based notion of religion. In addition, the word 'Allah' appears throughout the textbook because Allah is the translation of 'God' in Indonesian.

13.5 Further Reflections

As for the Geertzian way of representing cultures, Jackson, the leader of WRERU, is now well aware of James Clifford's and other anthropologists' criticisms against it, first given in the 1980s. While admitting that his 'interpretive approach' has been influenced by Geertz, Jackson says, "However, some aspects of Geertz's work are criticized, such as his lack of direct involvement of insiders in editorial roles and his sparing use of quotation from his interviewees—examples of Geertz's lack of

Pelajaran 1

AKU MEMILIKI RUPA-RUPA ANGGOTA TUBUH

1. Doa Pembukaan

Allah, Bapa di surga
kami mengucapkan
selamat pagi kepada-Mu.
Terima kasih, ya Bapa
Engkau telah mengatur supaya kami
dapat mengikuti pelajaran agama ini.
Amin.

2. Menyanyikan Lagu "Anggota Tubuhku"

Kalau anak belum sanggup belajar menyanyi sendiri, diharapkan orangtua atau anggota keluarga lain mengajarkannya menyanyi lagu berikut.

ANGGOTA TUBUHKU

1 = G 4/4 Ringan/Riang

3 . 1 1 / . 5 6 5 . / 3 4 . .
1) Li - hat-lah du-a ma- ta- ku
2) Rambut-ku hitam dan le- bat.

Menjadi Murid Yesus – Siswa 1a 7

2 . 7 7 / . 5 6 5 . / 4 3 . . /
1) tangan ju - ga te- li - nga- ku
2) geleng-kan- lah ke-pa - la- mu,

3 . 2 1 / . 1 1 2 . / 3 4 . . /
1) sa - tu mu- lut dan hi - dung-ku
2) a - yun-kan ka-ki ka - nan-mu,

6 . 6 5 / . 4 3 2 . / 2 1 . . //
1) se- mua a - nu- grah Tu - han-ku.
2) lenggok leng- gokkan ba- dan-mu.

(Syair dan lagu oleh Kak Eva)

Kalau anak-anak sudah bisa menyanyi sendiri, mintalah dia menyanyi sambil menunjukkan anggota tubuhnya.

3. Cerita 'Tangan yang Sombong"

Kalau anak-anak belum bisa membaca, diharapkan orangtua atau anggota keluarga lain menceritakan kisah berikut ini.

TANGAN YANG SOMBONG

Pada suatu hari kedua tangan berkata, "Akulah yang paling berjasa di antara anggota tubuh. Jika mau mengambil sesuatu, pasti minta tolong padaku. Apalagi kalau mau makan, tentulah aku yang memasukkan makanan di mulut." Kemudian si mulut menyahut, "Apa katamu hai tangan yang sombong? Biarpun kamu mengaku berjasa, tapi … kalau tidak

8 Menjadi Murid Yesus – Siswa 1a

Fig. 13.10 Excerpt from an Indonesian first-grade primary school religious education textbook for Christians (Lalu et al. 2004)

attention to issues of power" (Jackson 2006: 4–5). This chapter has employed another criticism against Geertz given by Asad regarding writing religion, rather than 'writing culture' (Clifford and Marcus 1986) in general.

I hasten to add that my overall evaluation of the pedagogies proposed by WRERU is far more positive than negative. I myself have adopted a part of them in developing educational materials for Japanese people, having found them effective in approaching 'lived' religious traditions while avoiding essentializing or stereotyping them (Yamanaka and Fujiwara 2013). Let me introduce an episode that shows how eye-opening these pedagogies are in Japanese educational contexts as well. In my graduate school seminar, having compared Warwick's textbooks with Japanese textbooks used in public education, one of the graduate students from a Buddhist university in Tokyo—who was quite sensitive to the 'lived' tradition of Japanese Buddhism[3]—said that she found the descriptions of Buddhism in Japanese textbooks problematic. She argued that the Buddha for Japanese Buddhists is not what Jesus is for Christians, although all Japanese school textbooks self-evidentially

[3] Although she had not been born into a Buddhist priestly family (to note, Japanese Buddhism is hereditary; Buddhists priests get married and are usually succeeded by their children), she had been surrounded by such families and was absorbed in Japanese Buddhist culture much more deeply than nominal Buddhists, who are more common among Japanese people.

centre a chapter about Christianity on Jesus and a chapter about Buddhism on the Buddha. According to her, a typical religious figure whom Japanese Buddhists admire and worship in their daily religious practices is not the Buddha but their respective sectarian founders—for example, Kukai (*Odaishi-sama*) in the case of the Shingon sect. It is not that they do not revere Shakyamuni Buddha, but that they do not pray to him as regularly as Christians do to Jesus. Therefore, the Japanese textbooks are misleading for anyone who wants to understand the real life of practising Japanese Buddhists.

Her remarks impressed me because it was clear that she had obtained a critical awareness of her own, having been inspired by Warwick's textbooks. Precisely, the volume on Buddhism among Warwick's textbooks is centred on the Buddha as the object of worship, because it is about a Buddhist boy from a South East Asian Theravada Buddhist country. This example shows that my student—far from accepting Warwick's textbooks superficially—understood the heart of the Warwick method and successfully applied it to the Japanese Buddhist contexts. Using this method, she was able to provide a radical critique of the ever-so-familiar pattern of descriptions of Buddhism in Japanese textbooks.[4]

Accordingly, there is no doubt that Warwick's textbooks are innovative and have advanced the pedagogies of multifaith, "RS-based RE (i.e., religious education based on the academic study of religion, as opposed to theology)" (Alberts 2008). However, even such textbook series, which appreciate 'local knowledge', tacitly presuppose common denominators for all religions. These common denominators, in turn, reflect the modern Western concept of religion and structure all of the textbooks in the series.

On the other hand, Indonesian RE textbooks tell children to recite the Qur'an and discipline them by providing a set of clear-cut rules that are meant to be followed, rather than by cultivating children's faith through stories, encouraging imagined experience and empathy with the founder's life. In light of the Indonesian textbooks, it can be said that even Warwick's textbooks could not eliminate Western bias on the fundamental level, just as the Geertzian view of religion was typically modern Western in Asad's eyes. It should also be recalled that Geertz, in *Islam Observed*, characterized Indonesian Islam with such terms as 'aestheticism', 'inwardness' and 'radical dissolution of personality', in contrast to Moroccan Islam's 'activism', 'moralism' and 'intense individuality'. Remarkably, the current Indonesian RE textbooks present Islam as active, moralist and individualistic. Needless to say, that is how the Indonesian Ministry of Education wants to represent Islam, and it is not necessarily an accurate description of ordinary people's Islam in Indonesia. However, my point is that the textbooks are good actual examples to show what Asad means in his criticism of Geertz.

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[4] As for how Buddhism is 'constructed' in Japanese school textbooks, or how Buddhist teachings in the textbooks differ from those shared in local Buddhist communities, see my previous chapter (Fujiwara 2014), which intensively analyses the descriptions of religions in Japanese civics textbooks.

This finding leads to the question, "Should Warwick's or other Western textbooks aiming at intercultural understanding follow the Muslim way of describing Islam?" Admitting that there is no single Muslim way, we can still be aware of the danger of imposing the modern Western notion of religion onto Islam in any country or region in textbook descriptions. On the other hand, from a pedagogical perspective, removing all of the common denominators among various religions from textbooks—saying that there is no universal definition of religion—might not be a good device. It would make textbooks look too complex and amorphous. If there should be an entirely new way to structure textbooks for all religions, what would it be like? Would it be something "created for the scholar's [in this case, educator's or textbook writer's] analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization", as Jonathan Z. Smith suggests in *Imagining Religion* (Smith 1982: xi; parenthetical addition by Fujiwara)?

More questions can be raised that are not easy to answer. Let me end this chapter by emphasizing that the problem of the representation of Islam in Western textbooks is more complicated than what the term 'Orientalism' usually evokes. Even the most unbiased scholars and educators might not be free from the modern Western concept of religion. On the other hand, one may ask whether they should or even could really be free, insofar as they teach within Western countries. Whereas Western academic controversies on religious education tend to revolve around the dichotomy of religious studies and theology (most typically in the form of the question: Which should orient religious education—theology [churches] or religious studies [secular scholars]?), my arguments above suggest that the recent academic critique of the concept of religion (along with that of the secular) has presented another challenge to religious education in Western countries, which is rooted in everyday Western languages and concepts, including 'religion'.

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Chapter 14
Religious Education in Quebec's Ethics and Religious Culture Curriculum: A Cultural Approach

Stéphanie Gravel

Abstract The presence of diverse religions in Western pluralistic societies raises the following question: how can religion be taught while respecting the different religions and cultures represented in the school environment and in society? Since 2008, the province of Quebec has addressed this issue by suggesting a new type of non-denominational religious teaching: a cultural approach to religion in the "Ethics and Religious Culture" (ERC) program (Mels 2008. *Éthique et culture religieuse* [Online]. Québec: Ministère de l'éducation du loisir et du sport). In this article, we will explore the basic components of this cultural approach to religion and thereby grasp its uniqueness. This analysis will offer a new and contextualized perspective of the issue of non-denominational religious teaching in the Western world. In order to understand the issues of this specific educational context, we will first take a brief look at the history of the ERC program, showing how the secularization of the Quebec education system gradually gave birth to a non-denominational cultural religious curriculum for the entire academic path of Quebec students. Next, we will analyze the cultural challenges of the program; its place in the Quebec education program, the student's vision, the teacher's role and the concept of being cultural mediators, and the professional stance of impartiality, as well as program goals and skills. We will focus particularly on the skill described as "demonstrate an understanding of religion," since it is at the heart of cultural religious teaching in the program. Therefore, we will examine in detail the program components, its concepts of religion and religious expression, its themes, the time dedicated to studying religious heritage, and the time allotted for each religion.

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14.1 Introduction

The presence of diverse religions in Western pluralistic societies raises the following question: how can religion be taught while respecting the different religions and cultures represented in the school environment and in society? Certain Western countries address this issue by suggesting a non-denominational program of religious education. Several teaching approaches have been developed for this type of curriculum, based on the context.

In Holland, Wim Wardekker suggests a post-modern approach to the teaching of religion "that emphasize[s] the life-world related questions of young people rather than the abstract 'grand narratives' of religious systems" (Jackson 2004: 58). American Diane Moore analyzes the idea of a religious cultural vacuum, suggesting the teaching approach known as "situated knowledge": students are taught only objective and factual universal knowledge, which is available by virtue of the cultural studies approach or the scientific method used by social sciences (Moore 1995). Robert Jackson of England has developed the interpretative approach (Jackson 2012) "that takes account of the diversity that exists within religions and allows for the interaction of religion and culture, for change over time and for different views as to what a religion is. It can begin with examples from religious traditions, or it can begin with students' questions and concerns."[1] In France, religious content is integrated into other subjects covered over the course of a student's academic journey. In such a context, Mireille Estivalezes advocates a scientific approach that guarantees objectivity in religious teaching (Estivalezes 2005). Dominique Borne, Jean-Paul Willaime and Céline Béraud support this "scientific" approach in which teachers must only present reasonable religious facts backed up by scientific explanations, so as not to fall into the trap of subjectivity based on religious beliefs (Borne et al. 2007).

As for Quebec, the province has opted for non-denominational cultural religious education with its "Ethics and Religious Culture" (ERC) program (Québec (Province). Ministère de l'éducation du loisir et du sport 2008). Since 2008, the curriculum has been compulsory in all elementary[2] and secondary[3] schools in Quebec, and it offers a new type of non-denominational religious teaching—a cultural approach to religion. What exactly does religious culture mean? And what is the cultural approach to religious education in the ERC program? In this article, we will explore the basic components of this cultural approach to religion and thereby grasp its uniqueness. This analysis will offer a new and contextualized perspective of the issue of non-denominational religious teaching in the Western world.

[1] Excerpt from Robert Jackson's summary of his interpretative approach at the following website. Retrieved from: http://www.theewc.org/uploads/content/The%20Interpretive%20Approach%20%20in%20Brief%20EWC%20library%20May%202011-1.pdf [accessed 4 February 2014].

[2] Elementary schools teach students from age 6 to 12.

[3] Secondary schools teach students from age 12 to 16.

In order to understand the issues of this specific educational context, we will first take a brief look at the history of the ERC program, showing how the secularization of the Quebec education system gradually gave birth to a non-denominational cultural religious curriculum for the entire academic path of Quebec students. Next, we will analyze the cultural challenges of the program: its place in the Quebec education program, the student's vision, the teacher's role and the concept of being cultural mediators, and the professional stance of impartiality, as well as program goals and skills. We will focus particularly on the skill described as "demonstrate an understanding of religion," since it is at the heart of cultural religious teaching in the program. Therefore, we will examine in detail the program components, its concepts of religion and religious expression, its themes, the time dedicated to studying religious heritage, and the time allotted for each religion. In order to contextualize our analysis of this cultural approach to religion, we will start with a brief look at the program's history.

14.2 History of the ERC Program

While denominational education had been the responsibility of the Catholic Church since the founding of New France (1608), in 1963–1964 the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Teaching[4] (known as the "Commission Parent") resulted in the clergy losing its role as manager of the educational system. Despite this significant action, the denominational educational system and curriculum remained in effect in Quebec. However, huge changes took place in Quebec's educational system when freedom of conscience and religion as constitutional social values came into effect with the Quebec and Canadian Charters of Rights and Freedoms in 1975[5] and in 1982[6]. It is important to note that these two charters state that discrimination occurs when a distinction, exclusion or preference for religious reasons destroys or compromises the right to religious freedom. In order to respect the charters and yet protect the historic rights and privileges of Protestants and Catholics in Quebec, the National Assembly voted on an exemption clause (1984: a way to legally avoid a law). This provided for curriculum options; until that time the only possibility was an exemption from denominational teaching. Parents could now choose from a Protestant religious education program (MEQ 1999), a Catholic religious education program (MEQ 1994) or a moral education program (MEQ 1986). Over and above these specific teachings, the three programs offered common mandatory training in

[4] This gave birth to the Ministry of Education of Quebec (Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec) and the Higher Council of Education (Conseil supérieur de l'éducation http://www.cse.gouv.qc.ca/), compulsory education until the age of 16, the CEGEP system, intensive training of teachers, easier access to university education for all social classes and the creation of 64 regional school boards in Quebec, of which 55 were Catholic and 9 were Protestant.

[5] Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms, L.R.Q. c. C-12, art. 10.

[6] Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, art. 15.1 (Canada Act 1982, Schedule B).

moral development with a goal of developing cultural points of reference that were open to diversity. Whereas denominational programs taught faith from a Protestant or Catholic religious viewpoint (Lucier 2008a), non-denominational moral teaching did not favor any particular religious belief, and presented religion as an object of cultural knowledge. It was through this moral education program that the first cultural religious curriculum in Quebec began to take shape.

Secondly, the recommendations of the Proulx report (Québec (Province). Groupe de travail sur la place de la religion à l'école and Proulx 1999)[7] inspired the adoption of Bill 118 (2000),[8] which abolished the Ministry of Education's denominational system, while maintaining the exemption clause and therefore the optional curriculum. In 2005, the National Assembly terminated this exemption clause by passing Bill 95[9] which repealed the Education Act. By updating one of the recommendations from the Proulx report (1999), this bill made cultural religious education

[7] Recommandations 2, 3, 5 and 8: 230.

Among other things, the task force recommended that the government establish a secular public school system at the preschool, elementary and secondary levels; revoke the status of denominational public schools; require the elementary and secondary educational systems to replace Catholic and Protestant religious teaching with a compulsory cultural religious education program; and amend the Education Act to authorize every school to provide a religious and spiritual guidance program for students from various denominations—all publicly funded.

[8] Loi 118 (Loi modifiant diverses dispositions législatives dans le secteur de l'éducation concernant la confessionnalité, 2000) Loi sur l'instruction publique, c. I-13.3, 1988. This bill includes the following elements: creation of the Secretariat on Religious Affairs, prohibition of denominational public schools; replacement of Christian education advisors with advisors on spiritual, religious and moral education; replacement of pastoral guidance programs with spiritual life and community involvement program. This law redefines the relationship between schools and school boards, and especially between various educational agents: primarily between students, parents, teachers and principals. It clarifies the rights of regular students, adult students, and students with disabilities. Finally, it defines the rights and duties of the student, the teacher, the role of school management and the school council, the role and powers of the school board and the duties and powers of the Minister. The changes to the new legal provisions of the Education Act can be found at the following internet address: http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/lancement/LIP/index.htm [accessed 21 Jan 2014].

[9] Bill 95 (Loi modifiant diverses dispositions législatives de nature confessionnelle dans le domaine de l'éducation, 2005) Lois modifiées par la loi 95: charte des droits et libertés de la personne (L.R.Q., chapitre C-12); loi sur l'enseignement privé (L.R.Q., chapitre E-9.1); loi sur l'instruction publique (L.R.Q., chapitre I-13.3); loi sur l'instruction publique pour les autochtones cris, inuit et naskapis (L.R.Q., chapitre I-14).

The educational regulations are available on the following websites: http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/ministere/legislation/index.asp?page=reglements1 or http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=2&file=//I_13_3/I13_3R8.htm [accessed 21 Jan 2014].

This law presents school legislation regarding the nature and objectives of educational services; preschool, elementary and secondary educational services; supplementary and special services; the general organizational framework of educational services; admission and school attendance; levels of education; school calendar and time requirements; information or documents to be provided to the parents of students; curriculum material; subject distribution; learning evaluation; graduation requirements; language quality; transitional and final measures; arrangements for disabled students and students living in low-income areas.

mandatory for all Quebec students: the "Ethics and Religious Culture" program (MELS 2008).[10]

Since 2008, the non-denominational Ethics and Religious Culture curriculum has been compulsory in all private and public Quebec elementary and secondary schools, non-denominational and denominational alike, whether regular or special education. The curriculum is therefore present throughout the entire academic pathway of the Quebec education program. We should note that in spite of this, the Private Education Act still allows private schools to offer denominational educational teaching in addition to including the Ethics and Religious Culture program in their curriculum.

This program targets two main objectives which are interdependent: recognition of others and pursuit of the common good. These goals are the driving force behind the three skills this program is designed to help students acquire. In order for students to *reflect on ethical questions*, the teacher must develop their capacity to think independently, critically and creatively. So, teachers must introduce the diverse values, morals and standards that make up our pluralistic society, without favoring one over another. Furthermore, for students to *demonstrate an understanding of religion*, the teacher must convey the theoretical and cultural knowledge required to understand the various religions represented in Quebec, in order to promote togetherness. Finally, while developing the first two skills mentioned, the teacher must allow students to *engage in dialogue*, in other words to reflect on information, interact with others, and present and support their own point of view. For each of these skills, the program establishes themes from which the teacher can develop learning and evaluation activities appropriate to the age of the students. The following section contains an analysis of the cultural approach to religion in this non-denominational program.

14.3 ERC Program and Religious Culture

In order to understand the cultural approach to religion of the Ethics and Religious Culture program, we will first examine the meaning of the expression "religious culture." The program defines it as follows:

It is considered cultural because it is aimed at the ability to grasp the field of religion by means of its various forms of expression in time and space. It allows for understanding the signs in which the religious experiences of individuals and groups are conveyed that contribute to shaping society. Moreover, it does not espouse any particular set of beliefs or moral references (MELS 2008).[11]

The program therefore requires teachers to promote an understanding of religion in its social dimension and cultural expressions. This approach is indicated clearly in the program: "The goal is neither to accompany students on a spiritual quest, nor

[10] The program was signed by the Minister of Education, Ms. Courchesne, in July 2007.

[11] See the "Preamble" section.

to present the history of doctrines and religions, nor to promote some new common religious doctrine aimed at replacing specific beliefs … it is aimed at fostering an understanding of several religious traditions whose influence has been felt and is still felt in our society today" (MELS 2008).[12] Therefore, the ERC program does not allow teachers to promote their personal experiences or respond to the students' search for meaning or values. As certain authors advocate, the teacher must present only "situated knowledge" and objectives in order to remain impartial and non-denominational (Moore 2006; Estivalezes 2005). This requirement reinforces the cultural dimension of non-denominational religious teaching.

In addition, unlike denominational religious teaching programs, teachers must not see students as individuals searching for meaning (MEQ 1994). In Ethics and Religious Culture, students need to understand their society and their cultural and religious heritage, as well as develop attitudes of tolerance, respect and openness in order to live and act in a pluralist democratic society (MELS 2008).[13] The teacher is therefore conveying cultural and religious information to future citizens, to help them understand the world around them. This concept is in line with Robert Jackson's observation that most non-denominational educational approaches in Western countries could be described as civic education. According to him, this perspective allows better integration of cultural and ethnic diversity in varied pluralist social settings (Jackson 2004). The Conseil supérieur de l'éducation maintains that citizenship education is one of the responsibilities of the Quebec educational system. This type of education must not encourage political indoctrination, but rather allow a feeling of belonging to the ideals of Quebec society while respecting its multi-ethnicity and renewal. This report, which preceded the Proulx report (1999), established the foundation and position that led to the Ethics and Religious Culture program (Québec (Province). Conseil supérieur de l'éducation et al. 1998).

This aspect must be qualified. Just like the Physical Education and Health program, the ERC program belongs to the subject area known as "Personal Development."[14] The goals of this subject area are the "students" construction of identity and the development of their worldview as well as the ability to "reflect and raise questions about themselves and their relationships with others and the environment through action and interaction" (Québec (Province). Ministère de l'éducation 2003).[15] On the one hand, teachers must encourage not the students' search for meaning or values, but rather their social and cultural understanding of religious expressions. On the other hand, they must encourage personal growth, or the "understanding and enrichment of their value system, the development of personal attitudes, and solving problems pertaining to their personal and social lives" (MELS 2008).[16] These two instructions may seem contradictory. While teachers must

[12] Idem.

[13] Idem.

[14] The Quebec Education program is divided into six subject areas: languages; social sciences; arts education; personal development; career development; and mathematics, science and technology.

[15] See the "Introduction, Personal Development" section.

[16] See the "Connections with the Other Subject Areas" section.

encourage social understanding of religion without responding to the students' search for meaning, they must also allow for the development of the students' identity. Because of this possible confusion, clarifications have been made to the program.

In the section "Connections with the Other Subject Areas," the program clarifies that personal development is mainly associated with the ethical aspect of the program; there is no mention of developing connections between religious culture competency and personal development (MELS 2008).[17] Instead, religious competency is associated with arts education,[18] languages[19] and social sciences aiming to "research the historical origins of certain beliefs, values or norms" and to "use different techniques specific to interpreting and establishing a time line or a graph in order to understand a form of religious expression" (MELS 2008).[20]

We interpret these clarifications as an attempt to maintain the program's cultural approach to teaching religion. They are intended to prevent teaching that focuses on developing students' beliefs. Religious teaching must therefore remain solely cultural, even though this program is listed under the "Personal Development" section. Its goal is to inform students of the types of religious expression they are surrounded by, without attempting to respond to their personal questions or conveying values or beliefs. In this regard, it would seem more appropriate to place the ERC program under the "Social Sciences" section, in order to avoid confusion and to underscore the cultural and civic approach of the program.

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[17] "Use the processes involved in adopting a healthy, active lifestyle in order to evaluate possible options and actions concerning an ethical issue" and "apply what they have learned in situations in order to foster reflection on ethical questions related to the need to achieve their potential." See "Connections with the Other Subject Areas: Personal Development (Physical Education and Health" in the "Making connections: ERC and the other dimensions of the Quebec Education Program" ERC program section.

[18] "Apply processes that enable analyzing a work of art and interpreting its meaning in order to develop an understanding of the phenomenon of religion." See "Connections With the Other Subject Areas: Arts" in the "Making connections: ERC and the other dimensions of the Quebec Education Program" ERC program section.

[19] "Draw upon competencies involving writing, reading and appreciating a variety of texts in order to reflect on ethical questions and demonstrate an understanding of the phenomenon of religion." See "Connections With the Other Subject Areas: Languages" in the "Making connections: ERC and the other dimensions of the Quebec Education Program" ERC program section.

[20] See "Connections with the Other Subject Areas: Social sciences" in the "Making connections: ERC and the other dimensions of the Quebec Education Program" ERC program section.

14.4 The Cultural Dimension of the Program Goals, Dialogue and Ethics Skills

Another dimension of the cultural component of the "Ethics and Religious Culture" program is found in its two goals, as well as in the ethics and dialogue skills it aims to develop. First of all, the program goals entitled "recognition of others" and "pursuit of the common good" guide teachers in their choice of teaching practices, attitudes and interventions with students. They point out the spirit in which the program skills must be developed: the promotion of Quebec societal values for better togetherness. Recognition of others is seen as self-knowledge which fosters receptiveness to dialogue, with both an open mind and discernment. In order to recognize the value, dignity and uniqueness of another person, we must know and respect his or her worldview, while rejecting anything that violates human dignity or the common good. Furthermore, by a pursuit of the common good, the program encourages the exploration of common values, supports projects which advance the common good, and promotes principles and democratic ideals particular to Quebec culture.

Since Quebec's pluralistic society requires "dialogue that is imbued with listening and reflection, discernment and the active participation of its members" (MELS 2008), the teacher must allow students to "engage in dialogue" by reflecting on information, interacting with others, and presenting and supporting their own point of view. This skill must be developed in students by way of two interactive dimensions that are essential for dialogue: internal deliberation and interpersonal exchange favoring togetherness and the common good of Quebec. The other skill, "reflect on ethical questions," allows students to analyze an ethical situation and develop a critical position in the face of the diverse values and norms created by Quebec society, from a common base necessary for togetherness. The point of reference for this skill is therefore the values and norms of Quebec society.

In this way, the program goals and these two skills indicate a central axis of the ERC cultural approach: Quebec culture. Unlike Catholic denominational teaching that presents faith as the first point of reference, the ERC program encourages Quebec culture as the common culture for all students (MEQ 1994). Teachers must therefore exemplify and cause the students to adhere to the values of Quebec culture as the point of reference for their teaching. So, if Quebec culture is to influence and guide the entire program, we have a right to ask: what exactly is it? If it is used to ensure the non-denominational nature of the curriculum, then what are its values? MELS clarifies that the Quebec values listed in the Charters of Rights and Freedoms serve as a common reference point in this non-denominational cultural program. In this regard, Pierre Lucier explains that even though the program is officially non-denominational, Quebec culture "confesses" values such as openness, respect and dialogue. In doing this, it does promote a particular worldview (Lucier 2008a, b). In fact, the program was based on a very precise concept of society, values, ethics, dialogue and religion.

So, in order to comprehend fully the cultural dimension of the program, we must understand the type of religious teaching it offers. For this reason, we will analyze the key elements of religious culture competency.

14.5 Religious Culture Competency: A Cultural Approach to Religion

The first thing that comes to the fore when trying to understand the meaning of religious culture competency is the wording of the skill description: "demonstrate an understanding of the phenomenon of religion" (MELS 2008).[21] Two elements stand out: understanding; and the phenomenon of religion. As was clarified in Sects. 3.1 and 3.2, to develop religious culture competency the teacher must convey the theoretical and cultural knowledge needed to understand the diverse religions present in Quebec society, in order to promote togetherness. This must be done without responding to the students' search for meaning and without favoring one belief over another. So, as was mentioned above, religious culture requires a rational understanding of religions and not a personal commitment to their belief systems.

As for the concept of "the phenomenon of religion," we should point out first of all that the program is not referring to a phenomenological approach to research. Instead, it uses the more general definition of this term, which indicates a fact observed that comes to one's consciousness, that which is perceived by the senses (Garnier et al. 2003). This is the meaning that applies to the idea of phenomenon. In fact, the program uses the term to refer to what can be observed in Quebec society from various religious expressions:

> Living together in our society requires that we gain an understanding of the phenomenon of religion. In this program, the goal is to encourage students to understand the various forms of religious expression, grasp the complexity of the phenomenon and gain perspective on the various dimensions: experiential, historical, doctrinal, moral, ritual, literary, artistic, social or political. (MELS 2008)[22]

We would also point out that the concept of religious phenomenon is directly connected to the idea of religious expression. So, in order to understand the phenomenon of religion, we need a greater understanding of religious expression as it pertains to this competency. Actually, the first part of this skill that must be developed is to bring a student to the point that he or she "analyzes forms of religious expression"[23]—in other words, is able to put them in context, connect them to religious traditions in the world and describe their meaning and purpose. As well, this competency is intended to ensure that a student "makes connections between forms

[21] See the "Competency 2: demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion" section.

[22] See "Competency 2: demonstrates an understanding of the phenomenon of religion" section.

[23] Idem.

of religious expressions and the social and cultural environment"[24] by situating them in space or time and linking them to elements of the social and cultural setting of Quebec and elsewhere. Finally, a result of this skill is that the student "examines various ways of thinking, being and acting"[25] within a certain religious tradition or between several traditions, and also understands their impact on society.

So, the idea of 'religious expression' is integral to every facet of this competency. It is therefore central to understanding the cultural approach. The program defines this concept as follows:

> Relates to one or more dimensions of a religion. Religious expression takes root and develops in a sociocultural universe. The Torah, the Bible, the sweat lodge, the minaret, Puja, Christmas, the icon, the Buddhist temple and certain street names referring to saints are all forms of religious expression. (MELS 2008)

An analysis of the prescribed themes for this competency allows us to better understand the idea of religious expression and the cultural approach (MELS 2008). In fact, it is interesting that most of the prescribed themes relate to the understanding of a religious expression readily apparent in the student environment. These themes deepen the students' understanding of what they see, hear and can touch in their immediate surroundings. Expressions that students must learn about second-hand are found only in the senior secondary cycle.[26] The understanding of religious phenomenon therefore centers on analyzing religious expressions from the student's immediate environment.

In summary, we see that competency in religious culture refers to rational understanding of various religious expressions in society, that is, of the phenomenon of religion observable by diverse cultural expressions: objects, buildings, clothing, rituals, expressions of religious beliefs, etc.

In each of the themes for this competency, teachers must respect the requirements for presenting material about major world religions. These guidelines were developed based on the cultural influence of each religion on Quebec's religious heritage:

> This program takes a special look at Quebec religious heritage. The historical and cultural importance of Catholicism and Protestantism is especially highlighted. However, attention is also given to the influence of Judaism and Native spirituality on this heritage, as well as other religions that today contribute to Quebec culture and inspire different ways of thinking, being and acting. (MELS 2008)[27]

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[24] Idem.

[25] Idem.

[26] In the senior secondary cycle, students of ages 15 and 16 study four themes: "religions down through time," "existential questions," "religious experience" and "religious references in art and culture."

[27] It is interesting that the program outline specifically states the place of each religion in its vision of religious culture: 'In Religious Culture, your child will progressively: learn about the important place of Catholicism and Protestantism in Quebec's religious heritage; discover the contributions of Judaism and Native spirituality to this religious heritage; learn about elements of other religious traditions more recently found in Quebecsociety." See also the "Introduction" section.

So we see that the program associates the concept of religious heritage with religions that have historically had the most influence on Quebec culture. This mention of historical influence reveals another dimension of the ERC program's cultural approach: the idea of religious heritage.

In fact, based on Quebec's religious heritage, the program institutes a hierarchy of religions according to their influence on Quebec culture, which means that teachers must convey more cultural information about the religions that have been more influential. In spite of having to respect this hierarchy of religions according to their cultural and historical importance, the teaching must remain non-denominational. Therefore, even though students acquire more cultural knowledge about religions that have influenced Quebec heritage, the teaching must not turn into a Christian, Jewish or Native denominational course. This distinction is crucial for understanding the program's cultural approach. For this reason, we present the following analysis of these guidelines (MELS 2008).[28]

The program allows the study of "various expressions of Quebec's religious heritage present in the immediate or distant setting" (MELS 2008)[29]—that is Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism),[30] Native spirituality and Judaism. First of all, Christianity holds a central place in cultural teaching because it is considered the dominant religion of Quebec's religious heritage, having most influenced Quebec's identity and religious legacy. For this reason, the program requires that Protestantism and Catholicism be "covered throughout each year of a cycle" (MELS 2008).[31] Christianity is present in every year of teaching and therefore in each theme covered in Religious Culture. Secondly, the program states that Native spirituality and Judaism have influenced Quebec's religious heritage. So they must be "covered on a number of occasions in each year of a cycle" (MELS 2008).[32] Even though they are not covered in each religious competency theme because of having a lesser historical influence than Christianity, they must still be presented more than once a year during the teaching of the curriculum.

[28] See the "Program Content, Religious Culture" section: "Christianity (Catholicism and Protestantism) is covered throughout each year of a cycle; Judaism and Native spirituality are covered on a number of occasions in each year of a cycle; Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism are covered on a number of occasions over the course of a cycle; religions other than those mentioned above may be covered over the course of a cycle, depending on the reality and the needs of the class; cultural expressions and those derived from representations of the world and of human beings that reflect the meaning and value of human experience outside of religious beliefs and affiliation are addressed during the cycle."

[29] See the "Introduction" section.

[30] We note that Orthodoxy is not considered to be a religion that has influenced Quebec's religious heritage, due to its later arrival in the history of Quebec. For that reason it is not included in "Christian" religious heritage, but rather in the "other religions" that will be discussed later.

[31] See the "Program Content, Religious Culture" section. A teaching cycle includes at least 2 years of study. There are three study cycles at the elementary level and two at the secondary level. For example, the first elementary cycle includes the first and second years of elementary school.

[32] See the "Program Content, Religious Culture" section.

In addition to religions included in Quebec's religious heritage, the program requires students to learn about other religious traditions present in Quebec society (MELS 2008).[33] Therefore, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism must be "covered on a number of occasions over the course of a cycle," meaning they must be addressed several times during at least 1 year of the teaching cycle (MELS 2008).[34] As well, "religions other than those mentioned above may be covered over the course of a cycle, depending on the reality and the needs of the class."[35] These "other religions" could include either new religions or other religious traditions that were not previously addressed. They are covered only if the teacher feels it is appropriate to do so. Finally, "cultural expressions and those derived from representations of the world and of human beings that reflect the meaning and value of human experience outside of religious beliefs and affiliation are addressed during the cycle."[36] By this description, the program includes non-religious worldviews, for example: atheism, humanism or agnosticism. Also, certain non-religious worldviews are included in the list of religions prescribed by the program.

In connection with this issue, philosopher Daniel Weinstock states that the program tries to be fair to all faiths by including in religious culture all belief systems, whether they are religious or not. However, in doing this, it favors one definition of belief systems over the others. According to him, non-religious worldviews are not the same as religious beliefs. So, the program's claim of fairness may cause confusion between the goal of studying religious culture and the goal of studying ethics, namely: what is the difference between a religious and philosophical response to human questions (Weinstock 2006)?

14.6 The Teacher's Role and the ERC Program's Cultural Approach

To ensure that program goals and skills are approached in a non-denominational way, the Ministry of Education has defined the role and professional stance required of teachers of the curriculum. We present here our analysis of these mandatory requirements, which is drawn from two sources of departmental information. The primary source is of course the official "Ethics and Religious Culture" program (MELS 2008). In this, we found a section entitled "Role of the Teacher" which presents the requirements pertaining to the professional stance of teachers. As well, in order to delve deeper into the meaning of these requirements, a second Ministry website[37] was used that provides details and explanations. We can summarize the

[33] See the "Introduction" section.

[34] See also the "Program Content, Religious Culture" section.

[35] Idem.

[36] Idem.

[37] Retrieved from https://www7.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DC/ECR/ressources/index.php?page=faq [accessed 3 Oct. 2008].

"Role of the Teacher" section of the Ethics and Religious Culture program in two main points: providing support for students by being cultural mediators, and maintaining a critical distance.

The idea of student support formed part of the Catholic and Protestant denominational curriculum. In fact, in the Catholic religious education program, the teacher was to "accompany the student as a coach or an initiator (MEQ 1994: 21)," meaning as a "seeker of God with students…[to] assist youth to draw on sources of human and Christian wisdom to find answers to their questions" (MEQ 1994: 21). We note that faith was therefore the core support of this denominational program. In order to guarantee the non-denominational nature of its cultural approach to religion, the ERC program redefined this concept.

As was mentioned in Sect. 14.3, the program no longer aims to allow youth to find answers to their personal questions, but rather to help them to develop a common Quebec culture. Therefore, teachers must assist students in developing the three program skills, providing support as they expand their capacities in ethics, religious culture, and dialogue. In order to do this, teachers must continuously improve their skills and ability to provide quality teaching. In addition, they must "play the role of cultural mediator, that is, they build bridges between the past, the present and the future, especially with regard to Quebec culture" (MELS 2008).[38] This concept is crucial in analyzing the cultural approach of the ERC program, because it is foundational to non-denominational religious teaching.

First of all, it is mentioned in the first professional skill required of all Quebec teachers, which is expressed like this: "Act as a professional beneficiary, critic and interpreter of objects of knowledge or culture while carrying out their duties" (Québec (Province). Ministère de l'éducation et al. 2001: 61–67). Teachers are required to situate cultural knowledge in its context while being aware of students' prejudices and preconceptions (Desaulniers and Jutras 2006: 139). More specifically, this competency requires the teacher to maintain a critical distance with respect to the material taught, by placing knowledge in its proper setting in order to be able to exercise judgment about statements made in class. It expects the teacher to transform the class into a cultural space open to the cohabitation of diverse perspectives. This is done by creating a culture of shared and common points of reference, in order to develop an environment that promotes togetherness and the ability to look critically at its own origins, cultural practices and social role (Québec (Province). Ministère de l'éducation et al. 2001: 61–67). So, teachers become cultural mediators by distancing themselves from their personal viewpoints and being able to determine their own cultural roots, in order to recognize their limits and

The professional stance of the ERC program created some problems for teachers during the implementation of the program. In this website, the MELS presented answers to the teachers' questions. It is a section of the official ERC program website that is reserved for teachers. It is important to note that this information was only available during the first year of implementation of the program, and is no longer accessible. Despite this fact, we chose to integrate the information into our theoretical framework because it contains clarifications that are crucial for our research.

[38] See the "Pedagogical Context, The Role of the Teacher" section.

potential, all with the goal of being sensitive to differences in the class resulting from diversity.

Marie-Paule Desaulniers and France Jutras believe that the basic role of the teacher is to be an intermediary between knowledge and student culture, as well as to open them up to the world through the human culture and heritage that is conveyed in class. They define the role of cultural mediators as heritage speakers, critics and interpreters of knowledge. In fact, as beneficiaries of societal culture, cultural mediators need a general culture in order to situate teaching material in its context and show its evolution. As critics, they must be aware of their own personal prejudices that could color their judgment and distort the knowledge conveyed in class. They must also be aware of student prejudices and reprimand those who express them in class. As interpreters, they draw connections between students' lives and the culture to be conveyed to them. So, the role of cultural mediator is not unique to the teaching of religious culture, but is central to all education in the Quebec context (Desaulniers and Jutras 2006).

Pierre Lebuis maintains that teaching the ERC curriculum requires teachers to cause students to think for themselves, by provoking questions according to the skill being developed. While providing ethical support requires that teachers develop students' independent rational and critical thinking, giving religious cultural support as cultural mediators necessitates avoidance of misunderstandings and respect of students' freedom of conscience. Lebuis associates this idea more with competence in religious culture, in order to ensure the teaching is non-denominational. According to him, the competence requires the presentation of religions as objects of knowledge and culture, without guiding students' conscience, choices or behavior. He connects the concept of cultural mediators to the professional impartial stance and critical distance characteristic of ERC teachers, as it assures the non-denominational nature of the teaching and therefore preserves the cultural approach (Lebuis 2008).

As we have just established, each of these definitions and analyses mentions the concept of cultural mediators, the professional impartial stance and the concept of critical distance. We will examine these aspects in more detail. In order to respect every student's freedom of conscience and of religion, teachers of the non-denominational cultural religious curriculum must "maintain a critical distance regarding their own worldviews especially with respect to their convictions, values and beliefs" (Québec (Province). Ministère de l'éducation et al. 2001: 61–67). What does "critical distance" mean? First of all, "teachers show professional judgement imbued with objectivity and impartiality in order to foster students' reflection on ethical questions or understanding of the phenomenon of religion" (MELS 2008). MELS states that "regardless of their personal positions, teachers therefore strive to be impartial and objective in their relationship with the students."[39] It goes on to say that to be impartial, the teacher must "address the values, norms, beliefs and

[39] https://www7.mels.gouv.qc.ca/DC/ECR/ressources/index.php?page=faq. [accessed 3 Oct. 2008].

convictions as objects of study."[40] This issue relates to the requirement to develop only a knowledge of religion (see Sect. 3.1). Secondly, it is stated that "to ensure against influencing students in developing their point of view, teachers abstain from sharing theirs."

Thirdly, it is stated that "when a stated opinion violates someone's dignity or proposed actions undermine the common good, the teacher intervenes by referring to the program goals" (MELS 2008)—that is to say, the recognition of others and the pursuit of the common good. In other words, the teacher should not accept everything that is said in class in the name of respect and openness. If the assertions of the students are in conflict with the goals of the program, the teacher must reinforce the latter and redirect the conversation so that it complies with the program. The teacher is actually seen as a guardian of the program objectives, and must help students to recognize and reject statements or actions that violate human dignity (MELS 2008). Remember that Quebec cultural values are at the heart of the program goals. So, presenting religion from a cultural approach requires teachers to be impartial and to develop a critical distance toward the material conveyed to students. It is interesting to note that out of all the educational curricula in Quebec, the Ethics and Religious Culture program is the only one specifically to define the concept of the teachers' critical distance (Gravel and Lefebvre 2012). Is it therefore unique to non-denominational cultural religious teaching?

14.7 Critical Conclusion: Synthesis and Typology

Our analysis has enabled us to identify the central issues of the cultural approach to religion in the Ethics and Religious Culture program. There are eight main characteristics of the Quebec program's cultural approach:

1. Non-denominational religious program
2. Cultural and social understanding of religion
3. Common Quebec culture
4. Citizenship approach
5. Religious expression and phenomenon
6. Quebec religious heritage and the hierarchy of religions according to their historic and cultural influence
7. Cultural mediators
8. Critical distance and impartiality

MELS developed the cultural approach to teaching religion in order to ensure that the Ethics and Religious Culture program would be non-denominational. It is this approach that distinguishes the program from denominational religious teaching. Teachers must not encourage a search for meaning or values, but rather an intellectual understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of religion. Even though

[40] Idem.

the program is officially listed under the subject area "Personal Development," its religious component must not promote the development of personal values. It must rather encourage future citizens to resolve problems relating to togetherness, based on an understanding of the phenomenon of religion observable by students by way of social expressions of religion. Since it is also connected to the subject area "Social Sciences," this approach to religion requires teachers to see students as future citizens needing to develop a common culture: Quebec culture. In fact, the program goals and skills must encourage the common good and promote democratic principles and ideals unique to Quebec society. In the context of non-denominational and cultural religious teaching, teachers must use Quebec culture as the reference point for their teaching and must cause students to adhere to social values. So, if faith or religious belief is no longer considered the common base of Quebec society, then not all religions have the same importance. In fact, the program associates the concept of Quebec religious heritage with religions that have historically had the most influence on Quebec culture, which mainly include Christianity, Judaism and Native spirituality. Students will therefore develop a larger amount of cultural and religious knowledge of certain heritage religions, even though the teaching must remain non-denominational and cultural.

Finally, in order to ensure that a cultural approach is used for non-denominational religious teaching, the stance and role of the teacher have been clarified. As with all other subjects in the Quebec education program, teachers are cultural mediators. However, the concept of critical distance in such teaching is clearly stated. In effect, teachers must remain impartial and objective in order to avoid conveying their viewpoints and beliefs; they must only teach cultural knowledge of religion.

In conclusion, we would like to point out that this analysis represents only a starting point in understanding this issue. Further research would be desirable in order to grasp the practical implications for teachers in their professional practice. In order to really understand its educational impact, it is crucial to understand how teachers implement this approach. What difficulties do teachers encounter in class? How do they internalize Quebec societal values? These questions merit further study. Therefore, in our future research, we hope to respond to at least some of them.

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