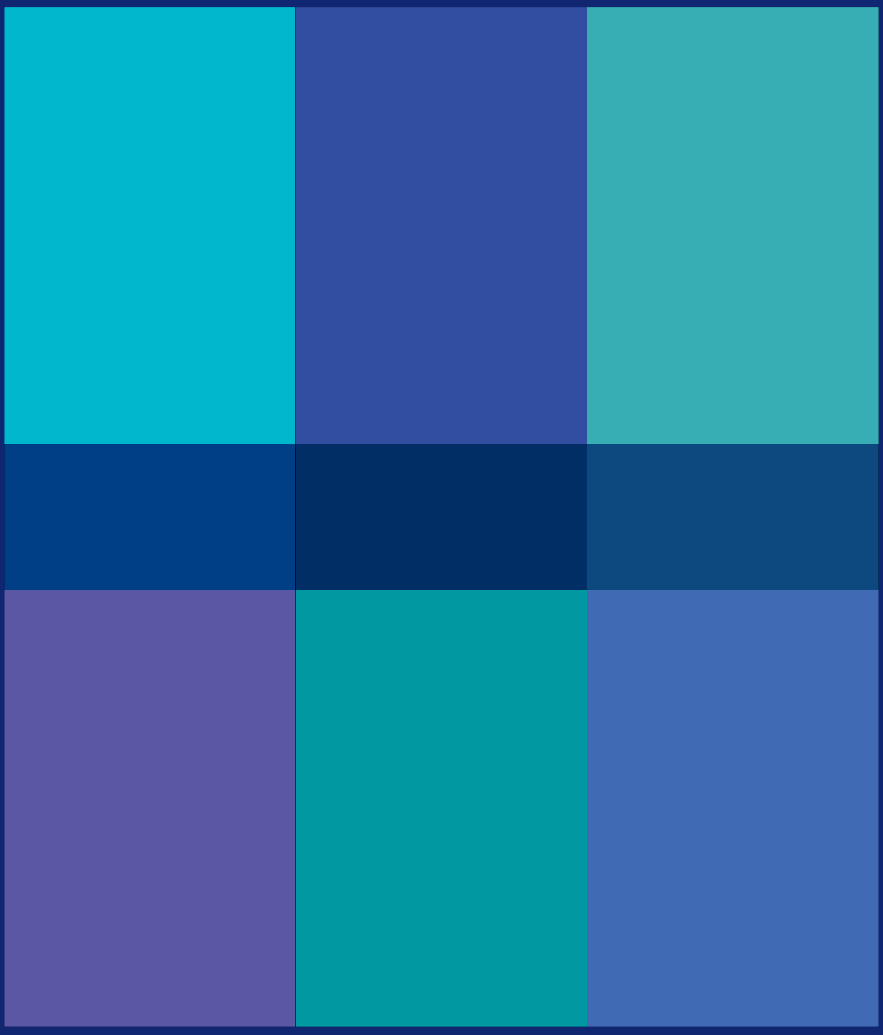
C·E·P·S Journal

Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal
Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij

Vol.9 | No4 | Year 2019



Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij
Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal
issn 2232-2647 (online edition)
issn 1855-9719 (printed edition)
Publication frequency: 4 issues per year
Subject: Teacher Education, Educational Science
Publisher: Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia
Technical editor: Lea Vrečko / **English language editor:** Terry T. Jackson / **Slovene language editing:** Tomaž Petek / **Cover and layout design:** Roman Ražman / **Typeset:** Igor Cerar / **Print:** Birografika Bori, d. o. o., Ljubljana /

C·E·P·S *Journal*

Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal
Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij

The CEPS Journal is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal devoted to publishing research papers in different fields of education, including scientific.

Aims & Scope

The CEPS Journal is an international peer-reviewed journal with an international board. It publishes original empirical and theoretical studies from a wide variety of academic disciplines related to the field of Teacher Education and Educational Sciences; in particular, it will support comparative studies in the field. Regional context is stressed but the journal remains open to researchers and contributors across all European countries and worldwide. There are four issues per year. Issues are focused on specific areas but there is also space for non-focused articles and book reviews.

About the Publisher

The University of Ljubljana is one of the largest universities in the region (see www.uni-lj.si) and its Faculty of Education (see www.pef.uni-lj.si), established in 1947, has the leading role in teacher education and education sciences in Slovenia. It is well positioned in regional and European cooperation programmes in teaching and research. A publishing unit oversees the dissemination of research results and informs the interested public about new trends in the broad area of teacher education and education sciences; to date, numerous monographs and publications have been published, not just in Slovenian but also in English.

In 2001, the Centre for Educational Policy Studies (CEPS; see http://ceps.pef.uni-lj.si) was established within the Faculty of Education to build upon experience acquired in the broad reform of the national educational system during the period of social transition in the 1990s, to upgrade expertise and to strengthen international cooperation. CEPS has established a number of fruitful contacts, both in the region – particularly with similar institutions in the countries of the Western Balkans – and with interested partners in EU member states and worldwide.

~

Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij je mednarodno recenzirana revija z mednarodnim uredniškim odborom in s prostim dostopom. Namenjena je objavljanju člankov s področja izobraževanja učiteljev in edukacijskih ved.

Cilji in namen

Revija je namenjena obravnavanju naslednjih področij: poučevanje, učenje, vzgoja in izobraževanje, socialna pedagogika, specialna in rehabilitacijska pedagogika, predšolska pedagogika, edukacijske politike, supervizija, poučevanje slovenskega jezika in književnosti, poučevanje matematike, računalništva, naravoslovja in tehnike, poučevanje družboslovja in humanistike, poučevanje na področju umetnosti, visokošolsko izobraževanje in izobraževanje odraslih. Poseben poudarek bo namenjen izobraževanju učiteljev in spodbujanju njihovega profesionalnega razvoja.

V reviji so objavljeni znanstveni prispevki, in sicer teoretični prispevki in prispevki, v katerih so predstavljeni rezultati kvantitavnih in kvalitativnih empiričnih raziskav. Še posebej poudarjen je pomen komparativnih raziskav.

Revija izide štirikrat letno. Številke so tematsko opredeljene, v njih pa je prostor tudi za netematske prispevke in predstavitve ter recenzije novih publikacij.

The publication of the CEPS Journal in 2019 and 2020 is co-financed by the Slovenian Research Agency within the framework of the Public Tender for the Co-Financing of the Publication of Domestic Scientific Periodicals.

Izdajanje revije v letih 2019 in 2020 sofinancira Javna agencija za raziskovalno dejavnost Republike Slovenije v okviru Javnega razpisa za sofinanciranje izdajanja domačih znanstvenih periodičnih publikacij.

Contents

Varia

Reviews

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.845

Editorial

Religion, Education, and the Challenges of Contemporary Societies

Religions have had, and still have, a critical role in shaping the world in which we live. As an ideology, they play a vital role in shaping world politics. In recent decades, we have been witnessing a kind of revival of religion and its re-entry into the public sphere. The context of modern globalisation in tandem with various political, economic, and ecological crises makes Western societies increasingly susceptible to influxes of heterogeneous groups of migrants, who bring with them cultural and religious traditions that are often markedly different from those of the majority of the local populations. The contrast between historically established religious practices and relatively newly established religions, combined with power struggles over the new public role of religion in some countries (especially evident in post-socialist Central and Eastern Europe), is giving rise to complex social challenges, some of which are also manifested in the field of public education. The present issue of CEPS Journal systematically addresses these challenges.

The growing pluralisation of European societies is bringing forth some old questions and opening up new dilemmas. The changing circumstances are probably not eroding the foundations of the modern public school laid during the Enlightenment period; the public school's commitment to secularity and neutrality (while also allowing for private schools with religious or other kinds of worldview affiliation) continues to remain at the core of its purpose in the 21st century. However, some social developments and conflicts of the recent past are undoubtedly opening, repeating and/or worsening a number of difficult questions about the practical application of foundational democratic principles in specific social contexts of individual societies and nation-states.

The old, fundamental question of the presence of religion-related content in school curricula has long been morphed into much more than the simple question of confessional religious instruction (as in catechesis) in public schools. When we discuss religion-related content in the public school today, we also – if not mostly – talk about the different forms of non-confessional education about religion(s). In the contemporary European context, which is marred by growing Islamophobia and the related growth of intolerant and radically exclusionist political (and other) extremisms, the need for a systematic critical introduction of pupils to the complex social and cultural phenomenon that is religion (with all its diversity in today's world) is particularly evident.

The growing pluralisation also gives rise to the complex problem of religious symbols in contemporary public spaces. With the advent of modern secularity and the increased pluralisation of the 21st century, the marking of school spaces with Christian symbols is no longer self-evidently justified. At the same time, pupils (and to a lesser extent teachers) increasingly enter educational spaces with visible symbols of their minority religious affiliation (e.g., Muslim girls and women wearing veils), which challenges the (until recently) prevailing image of European countries as monolithic societies and also problematises the principle of equality (regardless of cultural differences) ensured by modern democratic societies.

European education systems have adopted different standpoints regarding the way religious belonging among pupils and teachers is dealt with and the kind of knowledge about religions that is communicated in and beyond the classrooms. The situation varies from country to country and is based on particular cultural and legal traditions and consequently on the kind of regulation that is enforced within a given country. In societies in which religion is strictly separated from the state, any kind of religious content, and sometimes also any information about religion, is excluded from teaching. This has often resulted in young people no longer being sufficiently equipped with information about religions and consequently having serious difficulties understanding and critically reflecting on today's dilemmas and conflicts connected to religion. In contrast, in some countries, there has arisen highly confessional teaching that mostly provides students with religious knowledge of one religion only. This is again highly problematic and clearly insufficient to meet the needs of today's world.

The authors of this special issue of CEPS Journal share the conviction that religious education (RE) should be organised on a study-of-religion(s) basis. Our opinions are based on the supposition that the primary goal of public education in the 21st century is to comprehensively familiarise pupils with religion and its diverse manifestations and negotiations in contemporary societies. Furthermore, that aim is achievable only if RE is based on a scientifically informed, value-neutral, and (as much as possible) objective and critical approach. Religion has to be taught in the same way as any other subject in public schools.

We open our thematic issue with the introductory overview of the basic principles of the study-of-religion(s) approach to religious education (RE). In her presentation and critical discussion, Karna Kjeldsen relies on epistemological and methodological bases of the discipline of religious studies or – probably more suitably – the scientific study of religion(s) (but also adding arguments and perspectives of general theories of education). She makes references to her

own research on 'how Christianity is discussed and represented in political and public debates in Denmark, national curricula, textbooks and the intended teaching of RE teachers (lesson plans, syllabi, other teaching material etc.)' and uses the comparison to History teaching in primary schools (with examples from Sweden and Denmark) to argue that analytical-critical skills (like being able to 'investigate primary sources, question them rigorously, set them into context and be able to present their produced knowledge') should be the central part of RE in the elementary public school.

We continue with a kind of manifesto: Tim Jensen, veteran researcher and long-time activist in the field of RE, former secretary-general and current president of the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR), presents his 'programmatic summary' of the basic presuppositions and principles for a scientific study-of-religion(s) based RE as 'a time-tabled, compulsory and totally normal school subject, taught by teachers educated at study-of-religion(s) departments of public universities' – a paradigm already named by some as 'Jensen's Scientific Approach to RE'. Like the author of the first paper, Jensen intentionally uses the term 'religion education' for this approach in order to distinguish it from the established generic term 'religious education' used for various RE models (non-confessional, semi-confessional and/or fully confessional) by experts, researchers, school authorities, teachers, politicians, etc.

Another vocal advocate of the promotion of a secular approach to religion in school, Wanda Alberts, critically examines contemporary European models of RE and highlights problems that are inherent in the dominant trends. She emphasises that elements of religious notions of religion prevail not only in confessional but also in integrative models (designed for all pupils in religiously heterogeneous classes) and even in so-called 'alternative subjects' for the pupils who abstain from confessional RE. The author calls the combination of the prioritisation of Christian confessional models in combination with the frequently implicitly religious character of non-confessional models 'small-i-indoctrination' and warns that this enforces 'an unquestioned discursive hegemony of a particular (Christian) notion of religion as a frame of reference for almost all education about religion' (which is especially problematic when it is represented as a universal perspective and not a particular religious view of religion). She is highly critical about the general lack of secular perspective on religion and religious diversity in European RE and argues that the frequent lack of strict distinction between religious and secular approaches to religion in public school is a serious human rights issue.

Similarly, our next author, Bengt-Ove Andreassen, warns about the non-confessional models which are very often being 'marinated' in confessional

religion (a metaphor introduced by Swedish RE scholar Jenny Berglund). He deconstructs the proclaimed general aim of RE to 'serve the promotion of social cohesion by way of promoting knowledge and understanding of the new multi-religious world'. By critically focusing on 'knowledge about religion' in RE (in light of Norwegian curricula developments), he argues for the critical importance of analytical and interpretative skills in RE.

The last two papers expand the issue's focus to include the question of religious symbols in public schools. Christian Moe argues that both questions (RE and the use of religious symbols) 'involve the challenge of applying liberal democratic principles of secularism and pluralism in a school setting, and refract policies on religion under conditions of globalization, modernization and migration'. The author takes this situation as a 'teachable moment' and finds in it the potential for the scientific study-of-religion(s) based RE. However, at the same time, he emphasises that 'this requires maintaining a spirit of free, unbiased comparative enquiry that may clash with political attempts to instrumentalise the subject as a means of integrating minority students into a value system'.

In the final paper on the topic, Aleš Črnič and Anja Pogačnik summarise the key issues and debates regarding religious symbols in public schools. They briefly examine how the Muslim veil is managed in select European countries and then focus on a single country and present the specific expert recommendations for managing religious symbols in public schools in Slovenia (thus 'combining a broader, comparative perspective with practical, small-scale policy suggestions'). In their conclusion the authors specifically argue for a 'more principled and inclusive management of religion in public schools'.

We round off the thematically focused papers with two reviews of books, covering the same thematic field (both books were reviewed by Anja Pogačnik).

We Need to Talk About Religious Education: Manifestos for the Future of Religious Education (Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2018) is edited by Mike Castelli and Mark Chater, both former RE teachers and RE curriculum advisers, now involved in executive-level organising of RE in the United Kingdom. The book is academic in nature yet includes more than just individuals with academic experiences. Chapters highlight various aspects of the English RE system, raise a set of fundamental questions about the subject to be considered, and invoke a different path toward a future of Religious Education. Although the book is based on the British/English RE system (which is not immediately apparent from the book's title), the discussed questions and suggestions are generally applicable to other national contexts and 'provide a valuable starting point for a plethora of thinking streams and possible imaginings of the future for Religious Education anywhere.'

The second reviewed book is a volume edited by Anders Sjöborg and Hans-Georg Ziebert, entitled *Religion, Education and Human Rights: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives* (Springer International Publishing, 2017). It grew out of an international workshop and presents a collection of contributions that loosely revolve around the fields listed in the title. Contributing scholars come from a range of different fields and disciplines (including law, theology, religious studies, etc.) and what connects them is a focus on the countries around the Baltic Sea region (Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Belorussia, Poland, and Germany). While some chapters provide a worthwhile read to those engaged in similar research topics, the book as a whole unfortunately lacks a clear focus in its content and fluctuates widely in the quality of contributing chapters.

In accordance with the profile of the CEPS Journal, the section before the book reviews presents two Varia papers.

In the first one, entitled *Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship and Employability through Non-Formal and Informal Learning: The Latvia Case*, Tamara Pigozne, Ineta Luka and Svetlana Surikova present some results of their research on adult education resources developed to reduce youth unemployment. The research was conducted using a mixed-method (quantitative and qualitative) approach, and the results reveal a widely shared opinion about the importance of intensive cooperation with employers when organising educational activities among young Latvian adults. The authors also uncover the most and least efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia.

The second Varia paper was written by Mohammad Salman Fayyad Alkhazaleh and Habes Mohammed Khalifa Hattamleh. They entitled it *The Educational Supervisor's Performance in Light of Applying the Knowledge Economy in the Education Directorates of Zarqa Governorate in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan* and it presents the results of 'the study of the performance of the educational supervisor in the light of applying the knowledge economy in the education directorates of the Zarqa Governorate'. Based on these results, the authors also suggest some recommendations.

Aleš Črnič

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.678

A study-of-Religion(s)-Based Religion Education: Skills, Knowledge, and Aims

Karna Kjeldsen[1]

Different approaches to religion education have been in place for a long time or developed more recently to meet growing religious and cultural plurality in European countries and schools. In this article, I summarise and discuss basic principles for a study-of-religion(s) approach to religion education, adding arguments and perspectives from critical theories about education in general. I shall also argue that national curricula for, respectively, religion education in Sweden and History in Denmark indicate that analytical-critical skills can be a central part of religion education in elementary and lower secondary public schools. The structure of the article is based on a modified version of the 'map of history' developed by the scholar of education and history education Rosie Turner-Bisset who has formulated principles for teaching History in primary schools. The model will be used as a framework, for systematising and discussing key principles of a study-of-religions approach to religion education with reference to three categories: 1) attitudes, 2) skills and concepts, and 3) knowledge.

Keywords: citizenship education, learning about/learning from religion, religion education, study of religions

1 Centre for Teaching and Learning, Absalon University College, Denmark; kakj@pha.dk.

Na religiologiji temelječe religijsko izobraževanje: veščine, znanje in cilji

Karna Kjeldsen

Različni pristopi k religijskemu izobraževanju so prisotni že dolgo časa ali pa so se razvili pred kratkim v luči rastoče religijske in kulturne pluralnosti v evropskih družbah in šolah. V prispevku povzemamo temeljna načela na religiologiji temelječega pristopa k religijskemu izobraževanju in o njih razpravljamo, dodajamo pa tudi argumente in perspektive splošnih kritičnih teorij o izobraževanju. Zagovarjamo tezo, da nacionalna kurikuluma za religijsko izobraževanje na Švedskem in zgodovino na Danskem dokazujeta, da so lahko analitično-kritične veščine osrednji del religijskega izobraževanja v javni osnovni šoli. Struktura članka temelji na modificirani različici 'zemljevida zgodovine', ki ga je razvila strokovnjakinja za edukacijo in poučevanje zgodovine Rosie Turner - Bisset in v njem oblikovala načela za poučevanje zgodovine v osnovni šoli. Model uporabimo kot okvir za sistematiziranje in razpravo o ključnih načelih na religiologiji temelječega religijskega izobraževanja glede na tri kategorije: 1) stališča; 2) veščine in koncepti; 3) znanje.

Ključne besede: državljanska vzgoja, učenje o religijah/od religij, religijsko izobraževanje, religiologija

Introduction

In national and international discussions on religion education (RE) in public schools, the questions of whether and how RE should focus on various extra-academic aims remain central. Questions are often formulated in terms of whether the pupils should learn not only *about* religion but also *from* religion. What is less clear, however, is what these categories mean and how learning *from* religion is different from *learning* religion/education *into* religion, sometimes used as categories for confessional RE (Alberts, 2008; Kjeldsen, 2016; Teece, 2008, 2010). Many politicians, RE researchers, and teachers still argue that the overall aims also of, in principle, non-confessional RE in public schools should involve various kinds of extra-academic aims and thus include learning *from* religion. Over the previous two decades, these discussions have been related to political discourses on citizenship education and intercultural/interreligious dialogue as means of meeting challenges such as intolerance, discrimination, and lack of social cohesion due to the increasing religious and cultural plurality in European countries and schools (Council of Europe, 2002; Jackson, 2009, 2014; Willaime, 2007). International organisations, including the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and the United Nations, have been very active in promoting and developing projects and political recommendations on how member states should implement citizenship and intercultural education in schools. According to these organisations, teaching on 'religious and non-religious convictions' should be a central part of this education in order to foster social cohesion, tolerance for difference, and respect for human rights (Council of Europe, 2002, 2008a, 2008b; OSCE, 2007; UN, 2006).[2] Several RE scholars from different academic fields have participated in these or related projects and have proposed ways in which RE can contribute to these aims. They especially recommend didactic approaches focused on intercultural and/or interreligious dialogues, including different ideas on learning *from* religion (e.g., Jackson, 2008, 2014; Keast, 2007; Miedema, Schreiner, Skeie, & Jackson, 2004; Weisse, 2007). However, as research from different countries show, discourses on citizenship education and learning *from* religion are also linked to political and ideological efforts to use schools and RE as key instruments to transmit and (re)socialise the pupils into what is seen as the traditional cultural and religious norms and values (Jensen, 2013; Jensen & Kjeldsen, 2013; Jödicke, 2013). Based on their research on RE, scholars of the study of religions including Tim Jensen,

2 See Jackson, 2008, and Jensen and Kjeldsen, 2014 for an overview on these initiatives.

Wanda Alberts, Bengt-Ove Andreassen, Jenny Berglund, Katharina Frank, and Christoph Bochinger,[3] have criticised several aspects of these approaches and the ways in which RE is implemented in many if not most European countries. They are particularly critical of the tendency to use and think of RE as a 'special' school subject, which should contribute to different kinds of political, existential or moral extra-academic aims. Instead, they have argued that RE ought to be a normal school subject, and as such, be based on the academic university subject: in this case, the academic-scientific study of religion. In a number of publications, they have reflected on essential principles for this kind of RE (e.g., Alberts, 2007; Andreassen, 2016; Berglund, 2010; Frank, 2013, 2014; Frank & Bochinger, 2008; Jensen 2008, 2011).

In this article, I summarise and discuss basic principles for a study-of-religion(s) approach to RE, adding arguments and perspectives from critical theories about education in general. I shall also argue that national curricula for, respectively, RE in Sweden and History in Denmark indicate that analytical-critical skills can be a central part of RE in elementary and lower secondary public school. The article mainly draws on the RE research and reflections conducted by study-of-religion(s) scholars. References will also be made to my research on how Christianity is discussed and represented in political and public debates in Denmark, national curricula, textbooks, and the intended teaching of RE teachers (lesson plans, syllabi, other teaching material, etc.) in primary and lower-secondary schools in Denmark (Kjeldsen, 2016, 2019).[4]

The structure of this article is based on a modified version of the 'map of history' developed by the scholar of education and history education Rosie Turner-Bisset (2005, p. 20). In this model, she formulates important principles for teaching history in primary schools regarding 1) attitudes towards the discipline, 2) syntactic knowledge (processes and skills), and 3) substantive knowledge (concepts). To teach history well in schools, Turner-Bisset argues that a deep understanding of History as an academic discipline is required, including knowledge of the facts and concepts of the discipline and the frameworks that inform historical enquiry. History teachers (and pupils) should have knowledge about how to study history (i.e., methodological and theoretical knowledge and skills) and a set of attitudes towards the subject, for example 'history is an enquiry-based discipline' (ibid.). According to this model, children should

3 These scholars are members of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR) Working Group on Religion in Public Education, established in 2007 by Wanda Alberts and Tim Jensen.

4 The data for this part of the study consist of collected documents from teachers in 15 classes from the 3rd grade, 14 classes from 6th grade and 14 classes from 9th grade, and it covers in total 37 schools from different areas in Denmark.

investigate primary sources, question them rigorously, set them into context and be able to present their produced knowledge. I find these principles highly relevant for a study-of-religions-based RE. The model will be used as a framework for systematising and discussing key principles of a study-of-religions approach to RE with reference to three categories: 1) attitudes, 2) skills and concepts, and 3) knowledge.

Attitudes towards RE and the Study of Religion(s)

Proponents of a study-of-religions approach to RE argue that it should be a standard, compulsory school subject. A school subject in line with what Alberts (2007) has defined as 'integrative RE', Jensen (2011) as 'secular RE' (or 'religion education') and Frank and Bochinger (2008) as 'Religionskunde'. In order to make the subject compulsory, it should, as discussed by especially Jensen, Andreassen, and Alberts be able to meet the criteria for a compulsory school subject dealing with religion, i.e., it must be objective, critical, and pluralistic (Alberts, 2010, p. 283; Andreassen, 2014, pp. 265–266; Jensen, 2011, p. 141).[5] This means that RE must be emancipated from theology and religious interests and be the responsibility solely of educational authorities. Well-educated teachers, who, in addition to their pedagogical and educational expertise, are educated in the academic study of religion, should teach the subject. It also implies that the course name, curricula, and content cannot favour a specific religion with references to cultural and historical arguments, as is often the case with Christianity in European countries. As pointed out by RE scholars, linking Christian values with democratic and national values and heritages ostracises people with other or no religious outlooks and (re)produces boundaries between a Christian 'we' and 'others'. Furthermore, specific countries and Europe as a whole are not solely grounded in Christian values and ideas, and schools cannot be expected to consolidate only one tradition or maintain historical power structures (Alberts, 2007, p. 368; Andreassen, 2014, p. 277; Berglund, 2013, pp. 172–173; Jensen, 2005, pp. 72–73). Another crucial attitude is that in educational and scientific settings, religions should be studied as human-socially and culturally constructed, negotiated and changing phenomena from a non-religious perspective. This means, *inter alia*, that teaching or representations on religions include insider perspectives, but is marked by an outsider perspective based on analyses and explanations developed in the academic study of religions and

5 This is stated in the rulings of the European Court of Human Rights in the case Folgerø and others vs. Norway (2007). See Andreassen (2013) and the complete verdict at https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng#{%22itemid%22:[%22001-72492%22]}

other human or social sciences (Alberts, 2007, p. 377; Andreassen, 2016, pp. 48–50; Frank, 2013; Jensen, 2005, 2008, 2011).

One of the tenets of the kind of RE propagated by the named scholars is that the school subject should not have different kinds of explicit political, existential or moral extra-academic aims. They find it problematic that RE should contribute directly to political-social aims, such as citizenship education, and thus be used as a key instrument in identity politics and 'culture wars', not least because that often implies that the majority religion (a variant of Christianity) is given a special status in the subject and in the general education and formation (German: *Allgemeinbildung)* of the pupils (Alberts, 2007; Andreassen, 2014; Berglund, 2013; Jensen, 2015; Jensen & Kjeldsen, 2013; Kjeldsen, 2016). Tim Jensen, for one, has argued that, although there may be positive political and social side effects of RE, this should not constitute the primary justification for RE, and that RE ought to be relevant in all contexts, including future contexts, where the present problems and challenges may be irrelevant or may have changed in unexpected ways (Jensen, 2008, p. 131). Moreover, as research indicates, it is very difficult to evaluate whether and how RE has actually contributed to extra-academic attitudes or competencies; to what extent pupils will continue to have and use these, and whether RE will generate the expected socio-cultural and political effects in the long run (e.g., Ipgrade, 2012; Sjöborg, 2013). Scholars of pedagogy and education, Dietrich Benner (e.g., 2005) and Gert Biesta (e.g., 2014) have expressed similar criticism of educational discourses on citizenship. In their view, there is too much focus on unrealistic expectations when it comes to school-based citizenship education as a means to solve political problems. One of their arguments is that these strategies tend to overlook the fact that political and cultural challenges depend on broader structural, economic, and social conditions and solutions, and thus cannot be solved by individuals through learning processes. Another argument is that many politicians and school authorities understand citizenship education in social terms as socialising children, especially immigrant children, into existing political, religious, or social values and norms. For Biesta, citizenship is a political identity understood as the readiness or ability to take political actions that challenge the status quo when needed (Biesta, 2013, pp. 13–19). In line with this view, Benner argues for a non-affirmative approach to education in which the younger generations learn how to discuss critically, problematise, challenge, and, if possible, how to find alternatives to dominant values and attitudes (Benner, 2005).

Study-of-religion(s)-based RE scholars are also critical of approaches to RE which focus on intercultural or interreligious dialogue, and/or have as a stated aim that the pupils should learn *from* religions in an existential, moral or

religious way. Often, such approaches require pupils to express their existential or religious outlooks. However, some research indicates that publicly defined ideas about social identities (cultural or religious) and 'us and them' can be enhanced or even learned in schools when pupils are expected to discuss their own religious or existential outlooks (Buchardt, 2014). Moreover, as pointed out by Andreassen (2016, p. 19) and Frank (2013, p. 56), focusing on these topics can be a violation of the pupils' private sphere. Andreassen also emphasises that it becomes even more problematic if the subject includes evaluations or exams. In my research, I found that some teachers included personal questions in the examination questions. Examples included 'Discuss if you see yourself as a selfish person or one who "love[s] thy neighbour" (in a Christian way)'; 'Discuss whether you are an atheist or believe in God'; and 'What does "love of thy neighbour" mean to you?' (Kjeldsen, 2016, p. 253).

As pointed out by Andreassen, it is difficult to see how pupils' attitudes, views of life and existential questions can be evaluated based on professional, explicit criteria. Furthermore, he refers to research conducted in England by Nigel Fancourts (2005) demonstrating that many pupils have the impression that, in order to have good evaluations, they have to show that they have become better, moral humans by learning *from* religions (Andreassen, 2016, p. 205). Another criticism put forward by, Alberts (among others) is that approaches to RE that attempt to combine non-confessional RE with the idea of learning *from* religion in a religious or existential way sometimes fall back into what could be categorised as religious models (Alberts, 2007, p. 359).[6] This criticism also applies to life-philosophical/existential approaches,[7] which often take a liberal-protestant/existential theological approach to religion as a starting point. In these approaches, existential questions and answers or Paul Tillich's notion of 'ultimate concerns' (Tillich, 1966, pp. 15–28) are seen as the essence of all religions and an ontological fact. This notion of religion is used as an argument for making pupils' existential questions the point of departure in RE and that the pupils can learn *from* religions in an existential way while remaining in a secular framework (Andreassen, 2008, pp. 97–109, 266; Berglund, 2013, p. 179; Jensen, 2013, p. 42). My studies on teachers' intended teaching, national curricula, and textbooks clearly show that such approaches can end up in a grey area between learning *about* religion and *learning* religion (Christianity), irrespective of the teachers' intentions. One important finding was that while other religions are

6 Other research also indicates this problem, see for example Conroy et al., 2013, pp. 43, 46.

7 Life philosophy (German *Lebensphilosophie*) in Denmark is inspired by the Danish theologians, N. F. S. Grundtvig and K. E. Løgstrup and liberal-existential theologians such as Paul Tillich. Life philosophy is put forward as the overall perspective in the official curriculum and guideline for RE in the elementary and lower-secondary school in Denmark. See also Böwadt, 2009.

represented from an outsider perspective with a focus on practice, Christianity is represented from an insider perspective and related to the life-world of the children, so-called universal existential questions and national-cultural values. In this way, Christianity is depicted as more relevant for the children's lives than other religions, and the only religion they are expected to learn *from* (Kjeldsen, 2016, 2019). This kind of RE is an example of what Jensen and Kjeldsen have termed 'small-c confessional RE' , i.e., RE formally dissociated from a specific religious confession but still based on a religious understanding of religion, and with an explicit or implicit aim of promoting religion, or religion-based values (Jensen & Kjeldsen, 2013, p. 188).[8]

Due to these problematic aspects, proponents of a study-of-religions approach to RE suggest that the aim of RE primarily should be to contribute to the developing of the pupils' analytical and critical thinking competencies and knowledge. This includes the ability to analyse, discuss, and explain religious and non-religious discourses on religion(s) and examine religious diversity in relation to social and historical developments, power, politics, social conflicts, and other factors (Alberts, 2008, 2010; Andreassen, 2016; Berglund, 2013; Frank, 2014; Frank & Bochinger, 2008; Jensen, 2011). These analytical and critical thinking competencies and scientific-based knowledge *may* contribute to the general education and formation of the pupils, including citizenship education understood in line with Benner and Biesta's critical pedagogic and educational theories. However, the latter cannot be tested or guaranteed.

Skills and concepts: Theoretical and methodological theories and reflections

A central element of a study-of-religion(s)-based approach to RE is that the pupils learn how to use theoretical and methodological approaches and terminology pertaining to the academic study of religion(s). In this way, RE can contribute to the development of general skills, such as the ability to describe, analyse, and contextualise primary and secondary sources. Pupils should also learn to systematise, categorise, and compare different aspects of religions (i.e., myths, rituals, authority, and gender). When the pupils are ready for it, the teaching can also include theories and methods to analyse different discussions on how religion(s) can be related to societal changes, minority-majority issues, identity discourses, ethics, politics, conflicts and ideology. Another critical skill is the ability to identify and compare insider and outsider representations and

8 The term 'small-c confessional RE' is inspired by the distinction about theology and theology-like or religious studies of religion proposed by scholar of the study of religions, Donald Wiebe (1984).

sources and critically analyse them. These skills can contribute to the ability of the pupils to analyse and discuss *all* religions and religion-related issues from a methodological agnostic and distanced perspective, regardless of their own religious, anti- or non-religious outlooks (Alberts, 2017, p. 181). It is necessary to underscore that when pupils use theoretical and methodological approaches pertaining to the study of religion(s), they will be producing knowledge themselves and not just learning about religious topics.

According to scholars of religion, Armin W. Geertz and Russel T. McCuthenon (2000), the academic study of religion(s) has been marked by different 'turns', including 'the linguistic turn' (e.g., Jensen, 2003), 'the cultural turn' (e.g., Gilhus & Mikaelsson, 2001), 'the social turn' and post-colonial and feminist criticisms (e.g., Geertz, 2000, 2015). These 'turns' have given rise to self-critical and new theoretical reflections on concepts, such as 'religion' and 'world religions', and reflections on how to best represent and compare religions. Many of these self-critical reflections and developments are relevant to RE as a school subject. Proponents of a study-of-religion(s) approach to RE argue that a central part of RE should be the deconstruction of the concepts of religion and world religions, as well as other concepts, such as culture and ethnicity (Alberts, 2007, p. 381; Andreassen, 2016, p. 50–51; Frank, 2013, pp. 77–80; Jensen, 2005, p. 72). Pupils should be introduced to some of the basic criticism on how the western liberal-Christian notion of religion has framed the dominant understanding of the concepts on religion and world religions, and how other religions have been constructed and evaluated hand in hand with colonisation and Christian mission (Asad, 1993; King, 1999; Masuzawa, 2005; Said, 2003). An important insight for pupils is that notions of and approaches to religion centred on 'belief' and 'ultimate concerns' tend to overlook the fact that what scholars and others call religion means different things to different people and cannot be separated from other cultural spheres (e.g., Jensen, 2003; Lincoln, 2006; Luther, 2000; McCutcheon, 2015). This criticism and deconstruction should also be part of the teaching of the younger pupils in a simplified way. They can attempt to work out their own and compare definitions on religion, and they can analyse and discuss what the concept of world religion implies. Older pupils can analyse which understanding of religion and other related concepts dominate public and political discussions, and discuss the possible consequences of this use.

Knowledge: Religions as internally diverse and multi-dimensional phenomena

A study-of-religion(s)-based RE makes a variety of religious ideas/traditions from different geographic and temporal contexts a central part of the content. Other relevant content includes new religions, spirituality, civil religion, criticisms of religion, non-religious outlooks, and different philosophical traditions. Ethical and existential issues can also be a part of RE if they are approached from a more distanced perspective than in the case of the different life-world approaches (Alberts, 2007, pp. 376–379; Jensen, 2005). An essential principle in the study of religion(s) and RE is to represent and study religions as internally diverse, innovative, dynamic, and changeable phenomena. Postcolonial and feminist criticisms have contributed to a growing awareness in the study of religion(s), that religions often have been studied and represented with a focus on texts, institutions and official doctrines and practices. This has given rise to studies on how different aspects of religions, for example, myths, doctrines, and rituals are constructed phenomena, which produce and legitimise hierarchy structures, authority and social roles. Studies on the lived religion of different groups and individuals, as well as how unofficial forms of religion can differ from the official versions are also ways to study and represent religions in a more complex and nuanced way (Lincoln, 1989; McCuthenon, 2000; Mikaelsson, 2004). A growing new field investigates how material objects, spaces, and bodily aspects are central parts of religious traditions and how people practice and conceive their religions. Another focus is on how materiality plays a vital role in the construction, maintenance and contesting of authority, social roles, and ideologies (Feldt & Høgel, 2018; Morgan, 2010). These insights are highly relevant for RE. In order to prevent schools from conveying one particular interpretation of a religious tradition as the authoritative one, RE must include examples of different sources that represent the voices of a variety of individuals and social groups across gender, age, minority-majority positions, and religious affiliations (Alberts, 2007, p. 379; Andreassen, 2012, pp. 92–95; Berglund, 2013, p. 49; Jensen, 2011, p. 142). Fieldwork (including online fieldwork), interviews and other anthropological or sociological methods can also be useful approaches through which the pupils themselves produce knowledge on diversity, lived religion and compare official and unofficial religion. Working with different religious objects, sounds, places and bodily aspects are also ways to illustrate that religions are more than texts, dogmatic teaching, and beliefs. It must be an overall aim for RE to represent religions in a balanced way and include historical and contemporary developments, innovation, diversity, official,

unofficial and individual aspects, lived religion, conflicts and relations to other aspects of the society.

Apart from representing different religions as unique cultural and historical formations, RE should include cross-cultural and comparative aspects. As pointed out by Jensen (2011), this comparison must be qualified by using the terminology and principles that pertain to the study of religion(s). One important principle is to avoid comparing religions as a whole (e.g., Islam vs Christianity) as comparison of religions as massive closed systems can (re)produce stereotypes and link religions, ethnicity and cultures together in an essentialised way. In my study of RE textbooks and their teaching guidelines for the elementary and lower-secondary school, I found many examples of such problematic comparisons. A very common example is that Islam and Judaism are characterised as law-based religions, while Christianity is presented as a 'religion of love or spirit' which 'does not have any rules connected to food because all the attention is directed towards love at God and other human beings' (e.g., Mortensen, Rydahl, & Tunebjerg, 2002, p. 60). Another important principle is that comparisons should not only focus on similarities but also on differences (Jensen & Sørensen, 2015; Paden, 2004). Scholar of religion Aaron W. Hughes (2012) has, for example, shown how the concept of 'Abrahamic religions' is a non-academic discourse that aims to promote interreligious dialogue by showing similarities between Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. He criticises that this concept signals that an essential core and general similarities between religious ideas and practices from very different periods and geographical contexts exist. In his opinion, such comparisons cannot contribute to the knowledge of how groups and individuals from different historical, cultural, and social contexts are religious (Hughes, 2012).

Is a study-of-religion(s) approach to RE possible? Examples from national curricula.

Although an increased readiness to represent religions in a more nuanced way can be detected in RE in some countries and in other approaches to RE, many scholars, teachers and policy-makers express the opinion that a study-of-religion(s) approach to RE is not applicable in the primary and lower-secondary schools. One argument is that RE should include learning *from* religion(s) in various ways in order to live up to the schools' overall aims. Another argument against this approach is that it is too sophisticated for children at these grade levels. However, if we look at national curricula for other school subjects, such as History, it is difficult to see why the latter argument is

pedagogically or educationally valid. History in Denmark is a good example. The subject is introduced in the 3rd grade level, and after the 4th, pupils shall:

- Have knowledge about historical-critical concepts and how to **find, use** and **evaluate** sources.
- Be able to read historical **primary sources** and choose sources to illustrate historical issues.
- Have knowledge about **terminology, concepts and historical sources**.
- Be able to **explain the historical-critical concepts** used in the **analyses** of different sources (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2019a, author's translation and emphasis).

As these excerpts from the national curriculum illustrate, a central part of History, also in the lower grade levels, is that the pupils shall attain knowledge about and use theoretical and methodological methods to analyse primary sources. This clearly differs from RE in primary and lower-secondary school in Denmark. In the national curriculum, there are no aims related to theoretical or methodological issues. After the 3rd grade level, the pupils shall be able to:

- **Express** themselves 'on the religious dimension'[9] based on fundamental existential questions and ethical principles.
- **Express** themselves on central biblical narratives,
- **Express** themselves on what Christianity is and about the central elements of the history of Christianity, including the role of the established church in Denmark.

After the 6th grade, the pupils should be able to **express themselves in nuanced ways** about the same content, and after 9th grade, the pupils should be able to:

- **Relate to/or take a position** on 'the religious dimension'.
- **Interpret** how fundamental values can be found in Biblical narratives.
- **Relate to/or take a position** on 'what Christianity is' and on problematic questions/issues in some of the major world religions and worldviews
- (The Danish Ministry of Education, 2019b, author's translation and emphasis).

The curriculum does not explain what is meant by the phrases, 'relate to' or 'take a position on'; it also does not place any attention to analytical and

9 'The religious dimension' is an Paul Tillich inspired concept on religion based on the idea that 'religion' basically is about existential questions and answers (ultimate concerns) and is an ontological fact for all humans.

critical thinking skills. My research shows that this absence of theoretical and methodological aspects also applies to textbooks and the intended teaching of the teachers. Some teaching guidelines to textbooks do introduce theories on religious topics, such as rituals; however, they do not show how the pupils can use this (Kjeldsen, 2016, p. 272). This absence also characterises the national curriculum for RE in the elementary and lower-secondary school in Norway. After the end of 4th grade, the pupils shall be able to, *inter alia*:

- **Talk** about the content and **listen to** the central narratives of the Bible, the Torah, and the Quran.
- **Describe** Christian churches.
- **Know** Christian psalms.
- **Talk** about different religions, religious practices, and ethical and existential issues.
- **Recognise** religious and humanistic art and be able to use aesthetic expressions from religions and humanism.

  (The Norwegian Ministry of Education, 2015, author's translation).

After the end of the 7th and 10th grades, the content is much the same, except that pupils shall be able to **explain or account** for the abovementioned aspects, **talk about and explain** the concept of religion, and **discuss** questions related to religion, culture, and society. In addition to these few aims, the curriculum does not mention theoretical and methodological issues or skills.[10] Therefore, a crucial question to ask educational authorities is why RE is different compared to other subjects. Why is it that pupils shall learn how to read and write in different languages, learn mathematical skills and how to analyse historical texts, and similar in their first years of school, but not learn how to use methodological and theoretical approaches pertaining to the academic study of religion(s) and develop analytical critical thinking skills in RE? As mentioned above, this difference does not seem to be based on solid pedagogical and educational grounds. The national curriculum for RE in Swedish elementary schools may serve as a good example of how a more analytical and critical thinking approach is possible also in the elementary and lower-secondary schools. It states that RE shall enable pupils to interpret cultural expressions connected to religious traditions and gain competencies about how to investigate primary sources and issues in society related to religions and other worldviews from an analytical-critical perspective. The guideline further stresses that RE should contribute to the development of academic and analytical skills, including the historical criticism of sources. In addition, the pupils should be

10 For an overview on RE in Norway, see Andreassen, 2013.

able to identify how religious motifs or stereotypes may be found in different political and public statements (The Swedish Ministry of Education, 2017, 2018, author's translation)[11].

Concluding remarks

The various models of RE presently in place in Europe, the different didactic approaches to RE, and research into RE all clearly demonstrate that RE in many countries is conceived or thought of as a unique or extra-ordinary subject. This is evident, even though what Jean-Paul Willaime (2007) calls a 'Européanisation' of challenges, namely globalisation, pluralisation and migration are challenging the various models of RE and ideas about national and/or European citizenship, 'cultural identity and heritage' and social cohesion. Due to these challenges, trans-national political organisations, RE teachers, researchers and pupils seem to agree on the need to teach about different religions in schools in a nuanced, pluralistic and impartial way as part of or as a supplement to the existing RE. At the same time, many politicians and people involved in RE also assert that RE still should contribute to various extra-academic aims and include some form of learning *from* religion(s) (and particularly the majority religion). However, RE research conducted by the scholars here mentioned shows that these ideas on RE are based on political, ideological and/or religious interest, and imply various (unintended) problems. Not only seen from a study-of-religion(s), but also from a critical educational, pedagogical and democratic perspective. These problematic aspects, I argue, show the relevance of a study-of-religion(s) based approach to RE.

Moreover, critical educational and pedagogical thinkers such as Benner, Biesta, and Thomas Ziehe (2004), further support this approach. They argue that democratic and pluralistic societies need individuals who think critically and have the ability to participate in democratic discussions and processes and, possibly, change the status quo. In addition, Ziehe also asserts that schools shall introduce knowledge and work methods that are unfamiliar to pupils and challenge what they know and encounter in their everyday lives and wider society. This, he finds even more critical today, given the growing public opposition to scientific-based knowledge and a general acceptance of everyday knowledge and subjective opinions as the most important forms of guidance in both private and public matters (Ziehe, 2004). A study-of-religion(s) approach to RE is in line with this thinking, and can, as put forward by RE scholars of the academic study of religions, contribute to the development of future citizens with relevant

11 For an overview on RE in Sweden, see Berglund, 2013.

and needed analytical and critical thinking competencies and knowledge on religion(s) and society.

References

Alberts, W. (2007). *Integrative religious education in Europe: A study-of-religions approach*. Berlin: de Gruyter.

Alberts, W. (2008). Didactics of the study of religions. *Numen 55*(2), 300–334.

Alberts, W. (2010). The academic study of religions and integrative religious education in Europe. *British Journal of Religious Education, 32*(3), 275–290.

Andreassen, B. O. (2008). *'Et ordinært fag i særklasse': en analyse av fagdidaktiske perspektiver i innføringsbøker i religionsdidaktikk* [A special subject: An analysis of didactic perspectives in didactic teaching books]. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Tromsø, Tromsø.

Andreassen, B. O. (2013). Religion education in Norway: Tension or harmony between human rights and Christian cultural heritage? *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion, 49*(2), 137–164.

Andreassen, B. O. (2014). Christianity as culture and religions as religions. An analysis of the core curriculum as framework for Norwegian RE. *British Journal of Religious Education, 36*(3), 265–281.

Andreassen, B. O. (2016). *Religionsdidaktikk. En innføring* [Didactics of religion. An introduction] (2nd ed.). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Asad, T. (1993). *Genealogies of religion. Discipline and reasons of power in Christianity and Islam.* Baltimore & London, UK: The John Hopkins University Press.

Benner, D. (2005). *Tekster til dannelsesfilosofi: mellem etik, pædagogik og politik* [Selected texts on theories of *Bildung*: Between ethics, pedagogy and politics]. Aarhus, DK: Klim.

Berglund, J. (2013). Swedish religion education: Objective but marinated in Lutheran Protestantism? *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion, 49*(2), 165–184.

Biesta, G. (2013). *Demokratilæring i skole og samfund: uddannelse, livslang læring og medborgerskabets politik* [Learning democracy in school and society]. Aarhus, DK: Klim.

Buchardt, M. (2014). Religion and culture as identity politics in the classroom. Münster: Waxmann Verlag.

Böwadt, P. R. (2009). The courage to be: The impact of Lebensphilosophie on Danish RE. *British Journal of Religious Education, 31*(1), 29–39.

Conroy, J. C., Lundie, C., Baumfield, V., Barnes, L. P., Gallagher, T. et al. (2013). *Does religious education work? A multi-dimensional investigation*. London, UK & New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.

Council of Europe. (2002). *Recommendation Rec (2002)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on education for democratic citizenship.* Retrieved from www.coe.int

Council of Europe. (2008a). *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue*. Retrieved from www.coe.int

Council of Europe. (2008b). *Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural*

education. Retrieved from www.coe.int

Fancourt, N. (2005). Challenges for self-assessment in religious education. *British Journal of Religious Education, 27*(2), 115–125.

Feldt, L., & Høgel, C. (2018). Reframing authority - The role of media and materiality. In L. Feldt & C. Høgel (Eds.), *Reframing authority: The role of media and materiality* (pp. 1–16). Sheffield: Equinox Publishing.

Frank, K. (2013). Wie implementiert man einen religionskundlichen Unterricht? Analysen und Entwicklungen [How to implement a study-of-religions based religious education? Analysis and developments] In A. Hindriksen (Ed.), *Religionspädagogik zwischen religionswissenschaftlichen Erwartungen und pädagogischen Ansprüchen* (pp. 61–103). Bremen: Universität Bremen. Retrieved from http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:gbv:46-00103350-11

Frank, K. (2014). Die Konstruktion von religiösem und säkularem Wissen im schulischen Religionsunterricht [Construction of religious and secular knowledge in religious education in schools]. Zürich: Universität Zürich. Retrieved from http://www.religionswissenschaft.uzh.ch/seminar/personenliste/frank/frank_konstruktion_2014.pdf

Frank, K., & Christoph, B. (2008). Religious education in Switzerland as a field of work for the study of religions: Empirical results and theoretical reflections. *Numen, 55*(2), 183–217.

Geertz, A. W. (2000). Global perspectives on methodology in the study of religion. In A. W. Geertz & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Perspectives on method & theory in the study of religion* (pp. 49–73). Leiden: Brill.

Geertz, A. W. (2015). Primitivisme og postkolonial kritik i studiet af oprindelige folks religioner [Primitivism and post-colonical critique in the study of indigenous people]. In A. W. Geertz & T. Jensen (Eds.), *Religionsforskningen før og nu II. Nyere tid* (pp. 215–245). Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

Geertz, A. W., & McCutcheon, R. T. (2000). The role of method and theory in the IAHR. In A. W. Geertz & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Perspectives on method & theory in the study of religion* (pp. 3–37). Leiden: Brill.

Gilhus, I. S., & Mikaelsson, L. (2001). *Nytt blikk på religion: studiet av religion i dag* [New eyes on religion: The study of religions today]. Oslo: Pax.

Hughes, A. W. (2012). *Abrahamic religions: On the uses and abuses of history*: Oxford Scholarship Online.

Ipgrave, J. (2012). Three challenges to the common understanding of the role of RE in promoting religious tolerance. *REsource. The Journal of the National Association of Teachers of Religious Education, 35*(1), 10–13.

Jackson, R. (2008). Teaching about religions in the public sphere: European policy initiatives and the interpretive approach. *Numen, 55*(2), 151–182.

Jackson, R. (2009). The Council of Europe and education about religious diversity. *British Journal of Religious Education, 31*(2), 85–90.

Jackson, R. (2014). *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious worldviews in intercultural education*. Council of Europe Publishing. Retrieved from https://www.

coe.int/en/web/education/newsroom/-/asset_publisher/ESahKwOXlcQ2/content/signposts-policy-and-practice-for-teaching-about-religions-and-non-religious-world-views-in-intercultural-education?inheritRedirect=false

Jensen, J. S. (2003). *The study of religion in a new key: Theoretical and philosophical soundings in the comparative and general study of religio*n. Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

Jensen, T. (2005). European and Danish religious education: Human rights, the secular state, and ‚rethinking religious education and plurality'. *Religion & Education, 32*(1), 60–78.

Jensen, T. (2008). RS based RE in public schools: A must for a secular state. *Numen,* 55(2), 123–150.

Jensen, T. (2011). Why religion education, as a matter of course, ought to be part of the public school curriculum. In L. Loobuyck & P. Franken (Eds.), *Religious education in a plural, secularized society. A paradigm shift* (pp. 131–149). Münster: Waxmann Verlag.

Jensen, T. (2013). A battlefield in the culture wars: Religious education in Danish elementary school 1989-2011. In A. Jödicke (Ed.), *Religious education politics, the state, and society* (pp. 25–49). Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.

Jensen, T. (2014). L´enseignement de la religion au Danemark: les résponses récentes à des défis européens communs [RE in Denmark: Recent responses to common European challenges]. In J.-P. Willaime (Ed.), *Le défi de l´enseignement des faits religieux à l´école: résponses européennes et québécoises,* (pp. 43–66). Paris: Riveneuvre

Jensen, T. (2015). Religious education (RE) in other kinds of bordertowns: Denmark as an extreme and exemplary case. In J. Berglund, T. Lundén, & P. Strandbring (Eds.), *Crossings and crosses* (pp. 213–238). Bosten/Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Jensen, T., & Kjeldsen, K. (2013). RE in Denmark - Political and professional discourses and debates, past and present. *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion, 49*(2), 185–224.

Jensen, T., & Kjeldsen, K. (2014). Baseline study. European projects and recommendations involving religious education (RE). IERS Project. intercultural education through religious studies, lifelong learning program (LLP) of the European Union. Retrieved from http://iers.unive.it/files/2014/03/Baseline_Study-European-projects-and-recommendations-involving-RE.pdf

Jödicke, A. (2013). Introduction. In A. Jödicke (Ed.), *Religious education politics, the state, and society* (pp. 7–22). Würzburg: Ergon Verlag.

Keast, J. (Ed.) (2007). *Religious diversity and intercultural education: A reference book for schools.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing. Retrieved from https://book.coe.int/eur/en/human-rights-education-intercultural-education/3692-religious-diversity-and-intercultural-education-a-reference-book-for-schools.html

King, R. (1999). *Orientalism and religion: Postcolonial theory, India and 'the mystic east'*. Florence: Routledge.

Kjeldsen, K. (2016). *Kristendom i folkeskolens religionsfag. Politiske og faglige diskussioner, repræsentation og didaktisering* [The status and function of Christianity in religion education in the Danish public school. Political and professional debates, representation and didactic approaches]. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). The Faculty of Humanities, University of Southern Denmark,

Odense.

Kjeldsen, K. (2019). *Et kristent funderet religionsfag. En undersøgelse af kristendoms særlige status i skolen* [A Christian based religious education. A study on the special status of Christianity in the School]. Copenhagen: Unge Pædagoger.

Lincoln, B. (1989). *Discourse and the construction of society. Comparative studies of myth, ritual, and classification.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Lincoln, B. (2006). *Holy terrors: Thinking about religion after September 11*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Luther, H. M. (2000). Secular theory and the academic study of religion. In T. Jensen & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Secular theories on religion. current perspectives* (pp. 137–148). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Masuzawa, T. (2005). *The invention of world religions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

McCuthenon, R. T. (2000). Critics not caretakers: The scholar of religion as public intellectual. In T. Jensen & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Secular Theories on religion. Current perspectives* (pp.167–181). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

McCuthenon, R. T. (2015). The category 'religion' in recent publications: Twenty years later. *Numen, 62*(1), 119–141.

Miedema, S., Schreiner, P., Skeie, G., & Jackson, R. (2004). The European network for religious education through contextual approaches (ENRECA): Its Policy and aims. *Panorama: International Journal of Comparative Religious Education and Values, 16*, 10–14.

Mikaelsson, L. (2004). Gendering the history of religions. In P. Antes, A. W. Geertz, & Randi R. W. (Eds.), *New approaches to the study of religion. Volume 1: Regional, critical, and historical approaches* (pp. 295–315). Berlin & New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.

Morgan, D. (2010). Introduction. The matter of belief. In D. Morgan (Ed.), *Religion and material culture. The matter of belief* (pp. 1–17). London, UK & New York, NY: Routledge.

Mortensen, C. B., Rydahl, J., & Tunebjerg, M. 2002. *Liv og religion 3 Lærerens Bog* [Life and religion. Guide for teachers]. Copenhagen: Gyldendal.

OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe). (2007). *The Toledo guiding principles on teaching about religion or belief in public schools.* Retrieved from www.osce.org

Paden, W. E. (2004). Comparison in the study of religion. In P. Antes, A. W. Geertz, & R. Randi (Eds.), *New approaches to the study of religion. Textual, comparative, sociological and cognitive approaches.* (Vol. 2, pp. 77–92). Berlin & New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.

Said, E. (2003). *Orientalism* (3rd ed.). London, UK: Penguin Books.

Sjöborg, A. (2013). Religious education and intercultural understanding: Examining the role of religiosity for upper secondary students' attitudes towards RE. *British Journal of Religious Education,* (35)1, 36–54.

Skolverket. (2017). *Kommentarmaterial till kursplanen i religionskunskap* [National guidelines for religion education].

Skolverket. (2018). *Kursplan. Religionskunnskap* [National curricula for religion education].

Teece, G. (2008). Learning from religions as 'skillful means': A contribution to the debate about the identity of religious education. *British Journal of Religious Education 30*(3), 187–198.

Teece, G. (2010). Is it learning about and from religions, religion or religious education? And is it any wonder some teachers don't get it? *British Journal of Religious Education 32*(2), 93–103.

Tillich, P. (1966 [1951]). *Systematic theology* (Vol. 1). Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Undervisningsministeriet. (2019a). *Fælles Mål. Historie* [National curricula for History].

Undervisningsministeriet. (2019b). *Fælles Mål. Kristendomskundskab* [National curricula for 'Knowledge about Christianity'].

United Nations. (2006). Alliances of civilizations. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/en/index.html

Utdanningsdirektoratiet. (2015). *Læreplan i kristendom, religion, livssyn og etikk* (KRLE) [National curricula for 'Christianity, religion, worldviews and ethics'].

Weisse, W. (2007). The European research project on religion and education REDCo. An Introduction. In R. Jackson, S. Miedema, W. Weisse, & J. P. Williame (Eds.), *Religion and education in Europe. Developments, contexts and debates* (pp. 9–26). Münster: Waxmann Verlag.

Wiebe, D. (1984). The Failure of nerve in the academic study of religion. *Studies of Religion 13*(4), 401–422

Willaime, J-P. (2007). Different models for religion and education in Europe. In R. Jackson, S. Miedema, W. Weisse, & J. P. Williame (Eds.), *Religion and education in Europe. Developments, contexts and debates* (pp. 57–66). Münster: Waxmann.

Ziehe, T. (2004). Øer af intensitet i et hav af rutine: nye tekster om ungdom, skole og kultur [New texts on youth, school and culture]. Copenhagen, DK: Politisk Revy.

Biographical note

Karna Kjeldsen, PhD, is an assistant professor in the field of didactics of the study of religion(s) at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, Absalon University College, Denmark. Her research interests include politics on religion(s), migration, citizenship and religious education, the representation and teaching of religions, theoretical and methodological issues in the study of religions and religious education, and developing and promoting a study-of--religion(s) based approach to religion education.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.707

'Jensen's Scientific Approach' to Religion Education

Tim Jensen[1]

Following an initial programmatic summary of 'fundamentals', the author puts forward (with reference to other programmatic 'minimum presuppositions' for the scientific study of religion(s)) his basic presuppositions and principles for a scientific study-of-religion(s)-based religion education as a time-tabled, compulsory, and totally normal school subject, taught by teachers educated at study-of-religion(s) departments of public universities. The article, thus, reflects what Cathy Byrne named 'Jensen's scientific approach' to religion education.

Keywords: religion education, scientific approach to religion education, study-of-religion(s)

1 University of Southern Denmark, Denmark; t.jensen@sdu.dk.

Jensenov znanstveni pristop k religijskemu izobraževanju

TIM JENSEN

Sledeč izhodiščnemu programskemu povzetku 'osnov', avtor predstavi (s sklicevanjem na programske 'minimalne predpostavke' za znanstveno preučevanje religij(e)) svoje temeljne predpostavke in načela za na religiologiji temelječe religijsko izobraževanje, ki poteka v obliki v redni urnik umeščenega obveznega in povsem običajnega šolskega predmeta, poučujejo pa ga učitelji, izobraženi na religioloških oddelkih javnih univerz. Ta prispevek osvetljuje tisto, kar je Cathy Byrne poimenovala 'Jensenov znanstveni pristop' k religijskemu izobraževanju.

Ključne besede: religijsko izobraževanje, znanstveni pristop k religijskemu izobraževanju, religiologija

Programmatic 'Fundamentals'

1) Religion is a human, cultural, social and historical phenomenon. 2) Granted that scientifically based knowledge of humankind, history (evolution too), nature, culture, social formation, identity formation, etc. is considered essential and valuable knowledge, then scientifically based knowledge of religion(s) must be considered equally essential and valuable. 3) Religion(s) can, like other historical, social, and cultural phenomena, be scientifically researched, analysed, interpreted, and explained, – *and* the scientific research results can be 'translated' into teaching, at both the university and public school levels. 4) The production of valuable scientifically based knowledge of religion(s), leading to more and more qualified knowledge of humankind, history, evolution, culture, etc., can and must engage a variety of scholars from the natural, social, and human sciences. However, specialist knowledge of religion(s) has for more than a century been pursued by scholars at specific university departments for the study of religion(s).These departments are still a *sine qua non* for a concerted and strategic scientific study of religion.[2] 5) If scientifically produced knowledge of humankind, nature, and culture, including religion, is considered to be of scientific and cultural value and, therefore, to be funded by the state, then this state-funded research and knowledge must be shared with the public at large and not kept as a 'professional secret' among scholars within academia. 6) For a state to ensure that this valuable knowledge is shared with society at large, it must ensure that public school education reflects and transmits the knowledge produced at the public universities. 7) Though knowledge of religion(s) can and must be sought and produced by a series of sciences and also taught and touched upon in school subjects such as history, literature, and in the natural and other social sciences subjects, a specific time-tabled compulsory and totally normal school subject – study-of-religion(s)-based religion education (RE) – taught by teachers educated at the study-of-religions departments must be established. Only in this way can the state ensure that teaching about religion(s) in school is as scientifically based as is the teaching of other school subjects. 8) By providing a scientific study of

2 In this article, the author refers indiscriminately to 'science of religion', 'scientific study of religion(s)', and 'religious studies' in order to refer to what has also been called '*Religionswissenschaft*', 'history of religions', 'comparative religion', and the 'study of religion' (or 'study of religions'). With reference to the International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR) and its notion of the academic study of religion(s) as 'historical, social and comparative', the author subscribes to a concept of a kind of 'history' or 'study' of religion(s) that includes a wide range of historical, comparative, critical-analytical, sociological, psychological etc. approaches to religion as a human phenomenon (and theoretical object) and to religions as more or less observable historical, social and cultural traditions.

religion(s) at public universities and a study-of-religion(s)-based RE in public schools, the state, moreover, provides for a second-order analytical-critical discourse on religion, a second-order discourse that may, arguably, be seen as crucial to the well-being and well-functioning of an open, secular (not 'secularist'), pluralist and democratic society. 9) Moreover, the RE thus offered can help provide citizens at large with 'general education' ('*Allgemeinbildung*'), as well as with analytical and communicative competences needed for the skilled execution of various professions in today's society and world. Such competences are often also aimed at in so-called 'citizenship education'. 10) The contents of the public school RE are to reflect, pedagogically and didactically tailored to the various age groups, the public university scientific study-of-religions programmes and contents. It is to be a 'mini' (or 'school') study-of-religion(s).

'Religion: A Human Phenomenon'

If scientifically based knowledge, in general, is considered valuable and a must, at least to such a degree that the state finds it worthwhile to produce such knowledge at state-financed public universities, then scientifically based knowledge about religion necessarily must also be considered valuable, and scientific studies of religion(s) thus also must be state-financed and located at public universities. This, then, is the first evident matter of fact as well as the primary, totally straightforward, logical and solid argument in favour of a scientific study of religion(s).[3]

However, let me add a few more words: the so-called 'modern research university', dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge *for its own sake*, has been and still is 'under attack'. It has, nevertheless, as scholar of religion Donald Wiebe (2019) points out, been an exponent of what Ernest Gellner in *Postmodernism, Reason, and Religion* called a specific 'Western epistemic tradition', an expression of what constituted 'a new cultural value' (Gellner, 1992, p. 85).

What most scholars of religion still, despite all critical approaches to the term and concept 'religion' as well as to the 'study of religion(s)', analyse and discuss in terms of religion, is 'something' that has been and still is of importance in the past and present history of the world and mankind. What may be termed religious ways of thinking and acting have, according to the most recent

3 Having theology departments at the public universities, it must be added, is *not* the same. Though much work done within theology is unmistakably scientific in both theory, method, and aim, other kinds (e.g. within systematic or practical theology) are not. Furthermore, most theologians study but one religion – quite often the one they themselves adhere to – and many do so not just to gain more knowledge (of religion or humankind in general) but in order to make the religion relevant to contemporaries.

theories of cognition and evolution,[4] been with humans for a long time. When scholarship on the history and evolution of humankind and of religion(s) can detect institutionalised modalities of religion(s), the same (study of the) history of religion(s) shows that various religions (or 'religious traditions') have exercised considerable influence on histories, societies and cultures throughout the world.

Religion(s), including, for example, the naming of something as 'religion', giving something status of 'religion', and religious and non-religious 'discourses' on religion simply are essential in the social formation and identity construction,[5] including past and present 'politics of identity'. Knowledge of all these 'religion-related discourses' (including practices), then, is important knowledge if 'we' want to have (and if states want their citizens to have) qualified knowledge of the world, of 'world-making', humankind, social formation, identity construction, etc., - *and* knowledge of all of this is vital if we want to have qualified knowledge of religion. To quote scholar of religion Jeppe Sinding Jensen: 'Delving into human nature might tell us something about religion and, conversely, exploring religion should enable us to probe into human nature' (Jensen, 2019, p. 115).

The Scientific Study of Religion(s)

The modern science (or academic study) of religion[6] may have many forerunners, but it seems certain that the development of it in Europe was linked to the Enlightenment and its plea for rationality and reason, including, not least, rational and critical approaches also to religion (see Wiebe, 2016; cf. also Preus, 1987; Strenski, 2006; Stroumsa 2014).

In order to hopefully avoid misunderstandings among readers unfamiliar with the history of the scientific study of religion(s), it can be added that what is often called the 'naturalistic' approach to religion (a first instance of which one may find in, e.g., David Hume's [1777] *Natural History of Religion*) is not an invention by some hard-core atheist scholars of religion or anti-religious philosophers.

4 See titles by Armin W. Geertz (2013, 2016) as well as the Festschrift edited in his honour by Anders Klostergaard Petersen et al. (2019) for introductions to the massive output of research on religion, cognition and evolution.

5 For theories and analyses of religion as a dimension, marker, and classifier in regard to social formation, authority, hierarchy, power, identity construction, etc. see – apart from classical works of e.g. Durkheim (and his Paris 'equipe') – the influential work by scholars like Burton L. Mack, Jonathan Z. Smith, Bruce Lincoln, and Russell T. McCutcheon (specifically McCutcheon, 2019).

6 This article does not provide a full-fledged definition of 'science', be it science 'as such' or science as in 'natural', 'social 'and 'human' science, nor does it flesh out key constituent characteristics of the scientific study of religion(s). What follows is, however, sufficient for the purpose of this article and its argument.

It was (as also emphasised by, e.g., Ivan Strenski, 2006) in many cases imagined and promoted by people and scholars who were religious themselves.[7] Some were also (Christian) theologians. Nevertheless, many of the very same scholars agreed that a science of religion (and what frequently has been called a methodological 'agnosticism' or even 'atheism') as a human and natural phenomenon was possible, and that the science or study of religion(s) ought to be institutionalised and housed in universities together with, next to, and/or in direct opposition to theology. Though the study of religion (precisely because of its critical-analytical study of religion as a human, social, historical and cultural phenomenon and construct) is 'religion-critical' – especially if seen from the point of view of a religious insider – it is so in a non-ideological way. This, at least, is the norm.

Consequently, when the highly influential scholar of religion, Bruce Lincoln, in an effort to characterise 'religion' as a particular kind of 'culture', writes that the defining characteristic of religion is the way it invests 'specific human preferences with transcendent status by misrepresenting them as revealed truths, primordial traditions, divine commandments and so forth' (Lincoln, 2000, p. 416), Lincoln, by way of the ‚mis' in 'misrepresenting', may, in my opinion, be seen as taking a step in the direction of a normative and therefore not so normal definition of and analytical-critical approach to religion.

A younger scholar, Russell T. McCutcheon (often mentioning Lincoln as a 'mentor' and often considered more radically critical in his approach to religion than most other scholars) takes pains to distinguish his critical approach from a normative critique of religion.

> Such a stance satisfies what I take to be the requirements of a non-confessional approach to the study of religion, one that is in keeping not only with the publicly funded nature of the field but also with the widely adopted canons of the Human Sciences (much as we'd hope, I would imagine that a Political Science course studies the mechanisms of party politics and avoids deploying normative judgments about which of their politics is progressive and thus preferable). (McCutcheon, 2019, p. 99)

The study of religion(s) (traditionally) brackets the 'truth claims' of religion(s) in order to study religion in a scientific way as a human, social, and cultural phenomenon. This is why it is often said to be methodologically 'agnostic' and 'impartial', trying its best to be 'neutral', and 'objective'.

7 F. Max Müller, famous for editing the ground-breaking (1879-1910) *Sacred Books of the East*, for his ideas for a science of religion (as 'comparative religion'), and for his (re-) use of Goethe's dictum "He who knows one knows none", was but one of many 'founding fathers' who, one way or the other, were 'religious'.

This, however, also means that (most) scholars of religion do not think that 'anything goes'. Only a small minority of scholars of religion consider so-called alternative kinds of knowledge (including what may be called religiously based or 'esoteric' knowledges) equal to the knowledge produced by science.

Donald Wiebe, arguing against such claims of a plurality of (postulated) equally valid and valuable 'knowledges' about religion, writes that the academic study of religion, in order for it to 'live by the same epistemic constraints as the other sciences', must let its claims be 'governed by the boundary conditions established by the methodologies and substantiated knowledge of the natural and social sciences', and produce 'knowledge expressed in testable propositional claims' (Wiebe, 2016, p. 192). Though not explicitly mentioning the *human* sciences, Wiebe, however, adds that:

> […] "fields of study" within the "modern research university" which are "beyond the range of the natural and social sciences [...] present no significant challenge to the overall scientific ethos of the modern university which is predominantly concerned to discover and disseminate public (i.e. objective) knowledge about public (i.e. inter-subjectively available) facts concerning states of affairs in the natural and social worlds. (Wiebe, 2016, p. 191)

This author is in full agreement: such 'fields of study', including the study of religion(s), ought and must 'present no significant challenge' to the overall 'scientific ethos of the modern research university'. Or, in the words of another prominent and influential scholar, Armin W. Geertz:

> The secular study of religion is understood [...] to mean the non-sectarian, non-religious study of religion. It is not necessarily an atheistic approach. It simply chooses to interpret, understand and explain religion in non-religious terms. It confines itself to analytical models grounded in a view of the world based on the insights and achievements of the natural sciences. The study of religion, obviously, is not a natural science. It applies methods, theories and models developed in the human and social sciences: history, sociology, linguistics, psychology, anthropology, ethnography and philosophy. It is further characterized by a comparative interest in all religions throughout human history. But its view of the world is secular and humanistic. (Geertz, 2000, p. 21)

R. J. Zwi Werblowsky (1924-2015), one of the most prominent scholars within the International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR), the preeminent international association for the cross-cultural, analytical and historical study of religion, during the 1960 IAHR World Congress in Marburg, Germany, formulated a series of presuppositions for the kind of academic study of religion(s) to be pursued by the IAHR and its (today) more than fifty national, regional and international member associations and affiliates. Werblowsky's 'presuppositions' have, time and again (and most recently in Jensen & Geertz, 2016) been seen as the basis for work of the IAHR and its global membership.

The full statement cannot be reproduced here, but key parts read:

> 1. [...] 'Comparative Religion' is a well-recognized scientific discipline whose methodology may still be in great need of further elaboration, but whose aim is clearly a better understanding of the nature of the variety and historic individuality of religions, whilst remaining constantly alert to the possibility of *scientifically legitimate* generalisations concerning the nature and function of religion.
> 2. *Religionswissenschaft* understands itself as a branch of the Humanities. It is an anthropological discipline, studying the religious phenomenon as a creation, feature and aspect of human culture. The common ground on which students of religion *qua* students of religion meet is the realization that the awareness of the numinous or the experience of transcendence (where these happen to exist in religions) are – whatever else they may be – undoubtedly empirical facts of human existence and history, to be studied like all human facts, by the appropriate methods. [...] [T]he discussion of the absolute value of religion is excluded by definition, although it may have its legitimate place in other, completely independent disciplines such as e.g., theology and philosophy of religion.
> 3. The statement that „the value of religious phenomena can be understood only if we keep in mind that religion is ultimately a realization of a transcendent truth" is to be rejected as part of the foundations of *Religionswissenschaft*. […]
> 4. The study of religions need not seek for justification outside itself as long as it remains embedded in a culture pattern that allows for every quest of historical truth as its own *raison d´être*. Whatever the subsequent use made by the individual scholar of his special knowledge, and whatever the analysable sociological function of scientific activity in any specific cultural and historical situation, the *ethos* of our studies is in themselves. (Schimmel, 2016 [1960], pp. 82–83; italics in the original)

This statement has, as said, been a 'guiding light' for generations of scholars and is, to this very day, used by the IAHR leadership (cf. Jensen & Geertz, 2016) to indicate a consensus as regards basic presuppositions for a scientific study of religion(s). I – per extension – add that it is therefore also indicating the basic presuppositions for the study-of-religion(s) based RE that I find the only one appropriate for a public school. The *ethos* of such a study-of-religion(s) based RE is no different from the *ethos* described and prescribed by Werblowsky.

The Scientific Study of Religion(s) in the Academy

When reading (and, to a large extent, agreeing with the works of 'deconstructivist' or 'discourse theory' scholars[8] as well as works of scholars applying cognitivist, biological, and evolutionist approaches,[9] it is tempting to say that science and knowledge of religion(s) (and of humankind, history and evolution), if *thoroughly* scientific and qualified, *must* be produced in inter- or cross-disciplinary university settings, with tight collaboration between the natural, human, and social sciences, between specialists in culture as well as in cognition, biology, neurology, sociology, philology, and history (to mention but some of the forms of expertise needed).

One may, moreover, argue (for equally good reasons) that a continued use of the notion of 'religion' (as anything but a contested *analytical* category) as well as the continuous life of 'departments for the study of religion(s)' may well be an impediment to gaining the very knowledge aimed at because starting out from a notion of 'religion' that is, despite sincere and thorough reflections on the epistemological pitfalls, misleading. Some, for instance Fitzgerald (2017, p. 138), may also claim that the very notion of 'science' over against 'religion' (like 'religious' over against 'secular') – and thus also a 'science or study of religion' – are but instances of a "modern liberal myth transformed into common-sense reality."

Others (e.g., Martin & Wiebe, 2012) argue that existing departments of religious studies are not appropriate places for a scientific study of religion(s) because they are not sufficiently emancipated from religious ways of thinking about religion and from non- or extra-scientific aims. Martin and Wiebe think that in most such departments, not least in the USA, students learn about religion(s) as well as the study of religion(s) as reservoirs of (what is considered

8 See, e.g., Russell T. McCutcheon (2000, 2007, 2017, 2019) and Timothy Fitzgerald (2017).

9 See the already mentioned works by Geertz (2000, 2013, 2016) and in honour of Geertz (Klostergaard Petersen et al., 2019).

positive) values. As treasuries for (what is also considered *positive*) personal, human development, and for the 'mastering' of so-called existential questions about life and death, meaning and meaninglessness, tolerance, inter-cultural and inter-religious understanding, and peaceful coexistence: all aims that Wiebe and Martin (quite rightly, I think) consider at variance with the aims of (the mentioned presuppositions for) a scientific study of religion(s). All examples of what Wiebe earlier (1984, 2011) criticised as a 'failure of nerve' of the study of religion(s). Courses in many departments named religious studies are, Martin and Wiebe claim (2012, p. 12), courses in 'religion appreciation.'

The author of the present paper sees the point in each of the mentioned critical approaches to the study of religion(s) as well as to some study-of-religion(s) departments, and there certainly are indications that not all existing departments for the study of religion(s) are 'fine-tuned' to the kinds of scientific studies of religion(s) that, e.g., the above-mentioned scholars of religion consider appropriate and timely.[10]

Nevertheless (and Wiebe and Martin (2012, p. 13) also admit to this) there *are* quite a few scholars engaged in (striving towards) practising a study of religion(s) as a scientific *discipline* and as a discipline housed by departments of this name. Like Hubert Seiwert (2012) in his response to Martin and Wiebe (2012), I do not think that a disciplined scientific study of religion(s) is an impossible 'delusion'. In fact, I am convinced that it could be empirically proved that despite the continued use of the problematic term 'religion' and despite the theological or 'religion appreciation' bias or tendencies of some study-of-religion(s) departments, scientific, analytical-critical, and non-religious theories and methods on religion are produced in specific study-of-religion(s) departments.[11]

That scientific and valuable research on religion is also taking place in sociology, anthropology, and (even) theology departments is, of course, not denied. However, the more than hundred years of focused historical and comparative study-of-religion(s) work that has taken place at departments for precisely that kind of studies simply has produced a valuable reservoir of knowledge, theories, and methods, including self-criticism, that cannot be overestimated. It can probably always become better, more qualified (as Werblowsky noted in

10 One such indication is provided by the 2013 (Religious Studies Project) analysis of self-presentations of departments for religious studies on their respective websites. See https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/2013/12/06/what-is-the-study-of-religionsself-presentations-of-the-discipline-on-university-web-pages/.

11 Despite criticisms of and problems pertaining to the concept of 'religion', and though seeing 'the study of religion [...] more like an organized, specific-purpose field trip into the general region of social and cultural processes than [as] a fenced-in disciplinary or departmental acre with its own, non-shared. special-to-religion methods', Willy Braun also speaks in favour of a discipline (and departments) called 'the study of religion(s)' (Braun, 2000, p. 15).

1960), and further developed. This is the very 'soul' of science. Nevertheless, this is, I claim, precisely what has taken place for decades in departments and international fora for and about the study of religion(s) by scholars of religion.[12]

Scholars of religion, educated and working at these departments, have, over the years, moved forward and changed the scientific study of religion(s), and some have been first movers in critically rethinking religion *and* the study of religion(s). Consequently, I have no problems recommending states to support the production of scientifically based knowledge of religion primarily by way of establishing specific study-of-religion(s) departments.

Making Science-of-Religion(s) Knowledge Known to the Public

Contrary, for instance, to Wiebe who seems to insist that science (of religion) must aim at nothing but the production of scientifically based knowledge, I insist that it is possible and desirable to combine research for the sake of (and with the aim of) the production of knowledge with the aim of sharing, also with society and public at large, this knowledge. In my country, Denmark, the current University Act (as of 2002) has made a law of what I consider a virtue: scholars are obliged to share their knowledge with society at large, and universities are obliged to encourage this. My reason for not just finding it possible but also laudable is this: scientifically based knowledge about everything – about humankind, about the history and evolution of humankind, *and* about knowledge, theories and approaches to religion(s) developed within the study of religion(s) – is essential and valuable: a 'cultural value'.

However, the academic and scientific knowledge of religion(s) is also valuable for a linked yet slightly more specific or maybe even extra-scientific reason, namely for what I consider the well-being of an open, democratic, pluralist, secular state, and society.

If an open, democratic, pluralistic, and secular (not 'secularist' in the sense of 'anti-religious') state wants to stay so, then it must give space and voice

12 I say this well aware also of the recent biting and detailed criticism of Leonardo Ambasciano (2019), and I strongly recommend readers who think that a study-of-religion(s) RE (as well as 'Jensen's scientific approach') is *too* scientific (or not scientific enough), to consult Ambasciano's book starting with this question: 'How come that, despite centuries of scientific research, the main academic discipline dedicated to the historical study of religion has been – and still is – so blindly devoted to an apologetical study of its research object?' (2019, p. xi) That his first chapter starts with an equally critical quote from Luther and Wiebe, followed by a reference to 'Theses of Method' by Lincoln almost goes without saying. However, I still do not change my mind. I put my hope in this very discipline or field and in critical scholars like Ambasciano, Lincoln, Martin, Geertz, Wiebe, and a host of other scholars of religion. There is, as remarked by Werblowsky, always place for improvements.

to people thinking and speaking of religion in various kinds of ways (religious, a-religious, anti-religious), - at times also relatively ignorant ways. However, it must likewise establish an analytical-critical and knowledgeable second-order discourse on religion, and this is precisely what the scientific study of religion(s) located at public universities provides.

In order, however, for the state to ensure that this second-order discourse on religion be available and known to the public at large (i.e., to citizens of the state), the state must find a way to disseminate it, so that it is not locked up within the walls or 'ivory tower' of the academy but shared more widely.

Sharing with the public is, however, not as easy as it sounds. The language of science is not identical to the language of, for example, the mass or social media (see Murphy, 2000), and communicating in a language other than that of research and of the scholar is not easy. It is, furthermore, not without risks. Entering the public sphere means entering the political sphere, and it is evidently a risk for a scholar and the scientifically based (in principle and to the highest possible degree value-free, neutral, and a-political) knowledge that s/he puts forward to become (or be seen as) all but neutral, value-free, and a-political. The knowledge that is valuable precisely because it is value-free (to the highest degree possible) risks becoming less valuable, maybe even totally de-valued, politicised, and thus useless.

The scholar, just like this author during the Danish Muhammad-cartoons affair (cf. Jensen 2008b; Jensen forthcoming), risks becoming a (masked, undercover) politician, a 'scholar-preacher' rather than a 'scholar-teacher'. The risks mentioned, of course, evidently are also there if the scholar is a scholar of religion, not least at times when religion and religions are hotly disputed matters in the public sphere and political debates.

Taking Science of Religion(s) to Public Schools

The obvious thing to do (and not at all equally risky) is to make a study-of-religion(s)-based RE part of the public school curriculum, to make the departments for the study of religion(s) responsible for the education and training of RE teachers, *and* to make sure that RE syllabuses, textbooks and teaching in public schools are all solidly based on the scientific study of religion(s). RE offered in public schools, then, has to be nothing but a 'mini study-of-religion(s)', and what the pupils are supposed to learn about religion is the same as what the students at the universities learn about religion *and* about the academic way(s) of studying and seeing religion. Pupils and students are not there to learn from religion but from the academic study of religion(s) approach to religion. Only,

of course, that the teaching and learning in the school are, in terms of didactics and pedagogics, tailored to the new context and constraints (e.g.. the time and lessons dedicated to the subject, the various age groups and the steps in the educational system).

In this way, RE will finally be a normal school subject. It will, just like any other school subject, be linked to the respective university-based human, social, and natural sciences. Nobody would dream of having school subjects like biology, history, literature, mathematics, and social sciences taught by teachers who did not know about and teach in line with the scientific field or discipline in question. Nobody would dream of having textbooks that did not respect and render (even if didactically adjusted) what the respective scientific field or discipline in question had to say about the subject matter in question. Why then, should the human, social, phenomenon called religion and the school subject RE constitute or pertain to a totally different category? A majority of scholars of religion, most of them paid by the state to do their work, agree that it can and must be studied just like any other human, social, historical and cultural phenomena. Furthermore, they (at least quite a few of them) have shown this to be possible for more than a century.

RE-teachers, educated by scholars of religion at study-of-religion(s) departments, naturally, will also have to be well educated in the *didactics* and *pedagogics* of a study-of-religion(s)-based RE, regardless of whether this RE takes place at the elementary school level (primary and secondary school) or at the upper-secondary level (gymnasium). This means that the education of RE-teachers within the study-of-religion(s) departments has to include training in the art of *sharing* scientific knowledge, study-of-religion(s) theories, methodologies, and methods with different age groups within the framework of the various general and particular curricula or syllabuses for RE in public schools.

Reduction is a scientific virtue but also a didactical and pedagogical necessity – and a challenge. But, tailoring the scientific approaches to religion to teaching about religion to various age groups is an art that can be taught, and the same goes for producing RE textbooks. How to generalise, how to reduce, how to teach about, in principle, (almost) everything pertaining to religion as studied by the academic study of religion(s) in school, all this can be taught and learnt.

This part of the education of RE-teachers may, of course, be combined with teaching about sharing with the public at large via other media than the school and text-books, for instance by way of the scholar functioning as an expert to the media, as author of essays in mass media (including social media), as constructor of websites, and as consultant or teacher in regard to qualification

of various professions (diplomats, doctors, police officers, prison personnel, lawyers, judges, etc.) in need of qualified knowledge of religion(s).

RE as a 'Mini-Science-of-Religion(s)'

I am thus (in line with the arguments in favour of specific study-of-religion(s) departments as reservoirs and workshops for accumulated and specialist knowledge of religion(s), discourses on 'religion', theory and methodology in the study of religion, and the history of the study of religion(s)) in favour of a time-tabled, compulsory, secular/non-religious RE in public schools.

In order for it to be a normal, and thus also compulsory, school subject with no opt-out possibilities and no alternatives,[13] it has to be precisely what I argue it must be: study-of-religion(s)-based and thus (as far as possible) in contents and approaches also in line with criteria for a compulsory RE such as those formulated in landmark cases by the European Court of Human Rights and the US Supreme Court: the information and knowledge must be conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner (cf. Jensen, 2002, 2005a).[14]

Consequently, I am not only not in favour of religious, confessional, multi-confessional (or multi-denominational), inter-religious, inter-cultural, or 'small-c confessional' RE. I am also not in favour of 'dimensional' RE, such as it can be found in France when teaching about 'faits religieux' takes place within the context and contents of other school subjects.[15]

RE ought be a separate, 'mini study-of-religion(s)' RE, taught by teachers trained at study-of-religion(s) departments, with syllabuses and curricula drafted (on behalf of, e.g., a ministry of education) and textbooks written by study-of-religion(s) scholars and RE teachers, without any 'assistance' (and thus contrary to what has been the case in the UK) from so-called religious 'representatives' or insiders.

A study-of-religion(s)-based RE also means that the pupils/students, when entering the classroom enter as pupils and students (not as, for example, atheists, 'nones', Christians, Muslims, or Buddhists) with the RE-teacher, from

13 In many places there are alternatives like 'Philosophy and Ethics', '*Werte und Normen*' and the like. The opt-out possibility and/or alternative typically exist because public school RE is confessional (as in, e.g., Germany) but it can also exist, as in, e.g., Danish primary school, even if the RE offered *formally* is non-confessional. The opt-out option and/or alternative is normally there with some more or less explicit reference to human rights articles on freedom of religion or belief, and on the rights of parents to choose the 'religious upbringing' of their children.

14 The *Toledo Guiding Principles* (OSCE/ODIHR, 2007) has a useful discussion of this and related matters in Europe and the USA (Ch. II, and Appendix III); for the US, see Haynes and Thomas, 2007.

15 See Jensen, 2016, 2017a, 2017b, and Jensen & Kjeldsen, 2013 in which the mentioned various kinds of RE in existence in Europe are listed, analysed, criticised and discussed.

day one, telling and teaching them that this is not about learning from religion nor about 'religion appreciation' (cf. Martin and Wiebe above). Such an approach has nothing to do with being 'disrespectful' or not taking into account the background of the pupils/students (and their parents). This is simply about RE being a totally different 'ball-game' from religion, religious upbringing, and religious instruction.

This kind of RE, contrary to what is claimed, for example, in the *Toledo Guiding Principles*, does *not* demand specific 'sensitivities' or 'respect' from teachers. The RE teacher must, as said, from the first lecture make it crystal clear what 'this' is all about, and s/he may well find inspiration to do so in Bruce Lincoln's (2000) 'Theses on Method' (in which he stresses, inter alia, that '[r]everence is a religious and not a scholarly virtue').

RE is about learning about and (as first formulated by Wanda Alberts) *from* the study (history) of religion(s). It is about learning about and from scholarly discourses on 'religion' (the notion, the analytical term, the signifier, the classifier, whether applied to whatever and for whatever reasons by insiders or outsiders), but it is (of course) also about what many scholars of religion still refer to, delineate, define (if only operationally), (re-)describe, analyse and explain as religion(s), religious people and places, nay indeed, as (what used to be called) 'religious phenomena' (e.g., myths, rituals, specialists), despite the equally many references to, for example,, Jonathan Z. Smith's 'map is not territory' (1978), and his, equally [in-]famous, dictum that there is 'no data for religion', and that 'religion' is solely the invention of the scholar.[16]

Having thus mentioned something that may, at least to some colleagues, sound almost blasphemous ('religious phenomena'), I hasten to stress that pupils nowadays, of course, must learn that those ‚phenomena' are not 'out there', to be found just like, for example, stones on a beach and as instances of some transcendental 'sacred'. They are 'there', but they are also there to be 'searched out' for the scholar for a specific purpose: to be constructed and used as 'analytical tools'. Just as pupils can and must be taught to use 'religion' as an analytical tool (and disputed notion), so they can and must be taught about the various past and present scholarly uses and discussions of 'myth' and 'ritual' (including possible relations between the two).

16 Without entering into a detailed discussion, I only want to say that I think there are good reasons why some buildings, actions, people, thoughts, ways of eating and being together, ways of having sex, ways of dressing, etc. may be seen as and 'stand out' as not just or only 'profane', non-religious (they are of course always also that) but as something that may be termed 'religious'. I am in favour of an (operational) definition that sees religion as a cultural (sub-)system differing from other such by way of a reference to a postulated more than human and more than natural 'something' (power, being, scripture, etc.). Lincoln's detailed definitions and discussions (Lincoln, 2000, 2003) are quite helpful, I think.

Mentioning cross-cultural 'religious phenomena' (and thus also methodic comparison), I cannot resist emphasising that a study-of-religion(s) based RE (just like a study of religion(s) programme at the university) *must*, as I see it, make quite a lot of comparison(s). If the study of religion(s) is not comparative (as well as radically historical), then it is not scientific, and then there is no study-of-religion(s). It is by way of controlled comparison of data carefully selected for precisely that purpose that we can talk about a specific discipline and expertise, and it is only by way of comparison of things we consider similar to each other that we can detect the significant (historical) differences as well as develop and fine-tune our analytical tools.

Furthermore, the skilled comparison that encompasses, in principle, religions and religious phenomena from all over the world, past and present, is what 'we' can add to whatever other 'knowledge' of religion(s) that other scholars, pupils, and people, in general, may have. This is the sorely needed distance and juxtapositioning that we can offer to contemporary short-sighted debates about, for instance, so-called new religions, minority and majority religion(s), what religion 'is', 'ought' to be, and where it 'truly' belongs.

A contemporary study-of-religion(s) based RE cannot but also teach about contemporary works and theories on the history and evolution of religion in relation to the history and evolution of humankind and civilisation. I am convinced that teaching about this will help pupils realise the degree to which a modern study-of-religion(s) based RE partakes in the efforts of other human, social, and natural sciences to penetrate further into the 'mysteries' of the first human beings, the evolution of humankind and the coming into being of culture and civilisation. Teaching about this, indeed, can open the eyes of the pupils for other kinds of 'mysteries' and 'wonders' than those which RE in many places wants pupils to 'see' by way of an existentialist and/or crypto-religious 'big questions'- approach to religion and RE.

Last, but not least, pupils, in my opinion, will benefit from learning something about the largest and most influential of the so-called 'world religions', including something about the early, later and contemporary histories of these religions as well as about their positions in various countries as majority or minority religions. Pupils in a country like Denmark have to learn more about the Lutheran-Protestant kind of Christianity that has been dominant in Denmark for more than five centuries than about any other single religious tradition. Only in this way may they come to apprehend a scholarly second-order approach also to this religion, only in this way may they be able to emancipate themselves from normative, prejudiced, Lutheran-Protestant notions of religion(s).

At the same time, they must, of course, learn about the now well-known criticism of the 'world religions paradigm', as well as about contemporary study-of-religions anti-essentialist and de-reification efforts and approaches, closely linked, often, to discussions and deconstructions of stereotypical and prejudiced notions of religion (and 'true' religion) as something with an essence and a core – up against which so-called 'abuse' of (a) religion or 'false' religion may be detected and condemned.[17]

All in all: the study-of-religion(s) based RE aims, as I wrote decades ago (Jensen, 1997, 1999), at *familiarising* the pupils with the second-order study-of-religion(s) discourse and outsider approaches to religion, at the same time as it aims at *de-familiarising* them with whatever religious, 'folk' or 'prejudiced' notions of religion(s) that they may have acquired from their parents, friends, society, or public, popular and political discourses at large.

In this way RE can contribute, as do other school subjects, to '*Allgemeinbildung*', understood as closely linked to the adoption of knowledge, skills and competences which are *sine qua non* for a life in modern society as critical and 'enlightened' citizens, capable of critically and analytically 'reading' everything, also everything that has to do with religion – be it religion 'out there', or be it religion and notions of religion in religious, academic, public or political discourses.

References

Ambasciano, L. (2019). *An unnatural history of religions: Academia, post-truth and the quest for scientific knowledge*. London, UK: Bloomsbury.

Alberts, W. (2007). *Integrative religious education in Europe: A study-of-religions approach*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.

Alberts, W. (2008). Didactics of the study of religions. *Numen, 55*(2), 300–334.

Alberts, W. (2019). After World Religions: Reconstructing religious studies. *Numen,* 66(1), 89–91.

Andreassen, B.-O., & Lewis, J. L. (Eds.). (2015). *Textbook gods*. Sheffield, UK: Equinox Publishers.

Antes, P., Geertz, A. W., & Rothstein, M. (Eds.). (2016). *Comparative views on comparative religion: In celebration of Tim Jensen's 65th birthday*. Sheffield & Bristol, UK: Equinox.

Braun, W. (2000). Religion. In W. Braun & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Guide to the study of religion*

17 For a study-of-religion(s) based teaching about religion(s), including some of the so-called world religions, stereotypes and prejudices linked to religion(s) and 'world religions' see Jensen et al 2018. For the 'world religions paradigm', see Owen, 2013; Cotter & Robertson, 2015; and Alberts, 2019. I cannot resist adding that the 2017 revision of the national curriculum for the study-of-religion(s) based RE in Danish Upper-Secondary School (Gymnasium) has, with reference to the criticism of the 'world religions paradigm', dropped the term. However, it is the same religions that are taught, even if, of course, in ways sensitive to criticism of essentialism, reification etc. For essentialism and teaching about religion in school, see Hylén, 2015.

(pp. 3–18). London, UK & New York, NY: Cassell.

Braun, W., & McCutcheon, R. T. (Eds.). (2000). *Guide to the study of religion*. London, UK & New York, NY: Cassell.

Byrne, C. (2014). *Religion in secular education: What in heaven's name are we teaching our children?* Leiden: Brill.

Cotter, C. R., & Robertson, D. G. (Eds.). (2019). *After world religions: Reconstructing religious studies*. London, UK: Routledge.

Fitzgerald, T. (2017). The ideology of religious studies revisited: The problem with politics. In S. Führding (Ed.), *Method and theory in the study of religion: Working papers from Hannover* (pp. 124–152). Leiden: Brill.

Führding, S. (Ed.). (2017). *Method and theory in the study of religion: Working papers from Hannover*. Leiden: Brill.

Geertz, A. W. (2000). Analytical theorizing in the secular study of religion. In T. Jensen & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Secular theories on religion: Current perspectives* (pp. 21–31). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Geertz, A. W. (2016). Conceptions of religion in the cognitive science of religion. In P. Antes, A. W. Geertz, & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Contemporary views on comparative religion: In celebration of Tim Jensen's 65th Birthday* (pp. 129–141). Sheffield & Bristol, UK: Equinox.

Geertz, A. W. (Ed.). (2013). *Origins of religion, cognition and culture*. Durham, UK: Acumen.

Haynes, C., & Thomas, O. (2007). *A first amendment guide to religion and public schools*. Nashville, TN: First Amendment Center. Retrieved from https://www.freedomforuminstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/FCGcomplete.pdf

Hylén, T. (2015). Closed and open concepts of religion: The problem of essentialism in teaching about religion. In B.-O. Andreassen & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Textbook gods* (pp. 16–42). Sheffield, UK: Equinox.

Jensen, T. (1999). Religion and religious education in a Europe of conflicting trends. In N. Å. Tidmann (Ed.), *Into the third millennium* (pp. 142–159). Malmö: Foreningen Lárare I Religionskunnskap.

Jensen, T. (1997). Familiar and unfamiliar challenges to the study and teaching of religions in an increasingly religious and multireligious context. In N. G. Holm (Ed.), *The familiar and the unfamiliar in the world religions: Challenges for religious education today*, (pp. 199–223). Åbo: Åbo Akademi University.

Jensen, T. (2005). European and Danish religious education: Human rights, the secular state, and 'rethinking religious education and plurality. *Journal of Religion and Education, 32*(1), 60–78.

Jensen, T. (2008a). RS based RE in public schools – A must for a secular state. *Numen,* 55(2-3), 33–60.

Jensen, T. (2008b). In the wake of the cartoon crisis: Freedom of expression of academics in Denmark. In W. B. Drees & P. Sjoerd van Koningsveld (Eds.), *The Study of religion and the training of Muslim clergy in Europe: Academic and religious freedom in the 21st century* (pp. 243–274). Leiden: Leiden University.

Jensen, T. (2011). Why religion education as a matter of course ought to be part of the public school

curriculum. In L. Franken & P. Loobuyck (Eds.), *Religious education in a plural, secularised society: A paradigm shift* (pp. 131–150). Münster: Waxmann Verlag.

Jensen, T. (2016). Intercultural religious education: A Study-of-Religions (Re-)view. In A. Ziaka (Ed.), *Intercultural religious education and Islamic Studies: Challenges and prospects in Greece, Europe, USA* (pp. 270–296). Athens: Maistros.

Jensen, T. (2017a). RS-based RE – Uphill, uphill, uphill!. In Steffen Führding (Ed.), *Method and theory in the study of religion: Working papers from Hannover* (pp. 199–231). Leiden: Brill.

Jensen, T. (2017b). Religious education in public schools: The most important tendencies (with special focus on Scandinavia). *Gosudarstvo, Religiya, Tserkov' v Rossii i za Rubezho, 35*(4), 46–71.

Jensen, T. (forthcoming). From respected religion scholar expert to undercover-politician: The fate of a religion scholar going public?. *Changing Societies and Personalities*.

Jensen, T., & Geertz, A. W. (2016). The academic study of religion and the IAHR: Past, present, and prospect – An introduction. In T. Jensen & A. W. Geertz (Eds.), *The academic study of religion and the IAHR: Past, present, and prospect* (pp. 1–18). Leiden: Brill.

Jensen, T., & Geertz, A. W. (Eds.). (2016). *The academic study of religion and the IAHR: Past, present, and prospect*. Leiden: Brill.

Jensen, T., & Kjeldsen, K. (2013). RE in Denmark: Political and professional discourses and debates, past and present. *Temenos, 49*(2), 185–223.

Jensen, T. & Rothstein, M. (Eds.). (2000). *Secular theories on religion: Current perspectives*. Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Jensen, T., Reeh, N., Nøddeskou, M. H., Lapis, G., & Bulian, G. (2018). Guidelines on prejudices and stereotypes in religions. Venice: Study of religions against prejudices and stereotypes (SORAPS). Retrieved from https://soraps.unive.it/outputs/

Klostergaard Petersen, A., Sælid, G. I., Martin, L. H., Sinding Jensen, J., & Sørensen, J. (Eds.). (2019). *Evolution, cognition, and the history of religion: A new synthesis, festschrift in honour of Armin W. Geertz*. Leiden: Brill.

Lincol, B. (2000a). Culture. In W. Braun & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Guide to the study of religion* (pp. 409–422). London, UK & New York, NY: Cassell.

Lincol, B. (2000b). Reflections on 'theses on method'. In T. Jensen & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Secular theories on religion: Current perspectives* (pp. 117–121). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Lincoln, B. (2003). *Holy terrors: Thinking about religion after September 11*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Mack, B. L. (2000a). A radically social theory on religion. In T. Jensen & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Secular theories on religion: Current perspectives* (pp. 123–136). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

Mack, B. L. (2000b). Social formation. In W. Braun & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Guide to the study of religion* (pp. 283–296). London, UK & New York, NY: Cassell.

Martin, L. H. & Wiebe, D. (2012). Religious studies as a scientific discipline: The persistence of a delusion. *Religio: Revue Pro Religionistiku, 20*(1), 9–18.

Martin, L. H., & Wiebe, D. (2012). Why the possible is not impossible but is unlikely: A response to

our colleagues. *Religio: Revue Pro Religionistiku, 20*(1), 63–71.

McCutcheon, R. T. (2000). Critics not caretakers: The scholar of religion as public intellectual. In T. Jensen & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Secular theories on religion: Current perspectives* (pp. 167–181). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

McCutcheon, R. T. (2007). *Studying religion: An introduction*. London, UK: Equinox.

McCutcheon, R. T. (2017). 'Man is the measure of all things': On the fabrication of oriental religions by European history of religions. In S. Führding (Ed.), *Method and theory in the study of religion: Working papers from Hannover* (pp. 82–107). Leiden: Brill.

McCutcheon, R.T. (2019). *Fabricating religion: Fanfare for the common E.G.* Berlin & Boston, MA: de Gruyter

Murphy, T. (2000). Speaking different languages: Religion and the study of religion. In T. Jensen & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Secular theories of religion: Current perspectives* (pp. 183–192). Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press.

OSCE/ODIHR (Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe/ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights). (2007). *The Toledo guiding principles on teaching about religion or belief in public schools*. Warsaw: Organisation for Security and Co-Operation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. Retrieved from https://www.osce.org/odihr/29154

Owen, S. (2013). The world religions paradigm: Time for a change. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education, 10*(3), 253–268.

Preus, S. J. (1987). *Explaining religion: Criticism and theory from Bodin to Freud*. New Haven; CT: Yale University Press.

Schimmel, A. M. (1960). Summary of the discussion. *Numen, 7*, 235–239.

Seiwert, H. (2012). The study of religion as a scientific discipline: A comment on Luther Martin's and Donald Wiebe's paper. *Religion: Revue Pro Religionistiku, 20*(1), 27–38.

Sinding Jensen, J. (2019). 'Where is the future for the study of religion?' On consilience, anomalous monism and a biocultural theory of religion. In A. Klostergaard Petersen, G. I. Sælid, L. H. Martin, J. S. Jensen, & J. Sørensen (Eds.), *Evolution, cognition, and the history of religion: A new synthesis, festschrift in honour of Armin W. Geertz* (pp. 115–129). Leiden: Brill.

Smith, J. Z. (1978). *Map is not territory: Study in the history of religions*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Strenski, I. (2006). *Thinking about religion: A historical introduction to theories of religion*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing.

Stroumsa, G. (2010). *A new science: The discovery of religion in the age of reason*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wiebe, D. (1984). The failure of nerve in the academic study of religion. *Studies of Religion, 13*, 401–422.

Wiebe, D. (2011). The failure of nerve in the academic study of religion. In W. Arnal & R. T. McCutcheon (Eds.), *Failure and nerve in the academic study of religion* (pp. 6–31). London, UK: Equinox.

Wiebe, D. (2016). Claims for a plurality of knowledge in the comparative study of religions. In P. Antes, A. W. Geertz, & M. Rothstein (Eds.), *Comparative views on comparative religion: In celebration of Tim Jensen's 65th birthday* (pp. 183–194). Sheffield & Bristol, UK: Equinox.

Wiebe, D. (2019). An old methodstreit made new: Rejecting a 'science-lite' study of religion. In A. Klostergaard Petersen, G. I. Sælid, L. H. Martin, J. S. Jensen, & Jesper Sørensen (Eds.), *Evolution, cognition, and the history of religion: A new synthesis, festschrift in honour of Armin W. Geertz* (pp. 130–140). Leiden: Brill.

Biographical note

Tim Jensen, PhD, is Senior Lecturer and Director of Teaching at the Study of Religions, University of Southern Denmark. Honorarprofessor, Institut für Religionswissenschaft, Leibniz Universität, Hannover, Germany; Senior Research Fellow Ural Federal University, Ekatarinburg, Russia. Jensen is currently (2015-2020) President of the IAHR, the International Association for the History of Religions (http://www.iahr.dk), the preeminent international forum for the critical, analytical and cross-cultural study of religion past and present. He served as IAHR Secretary General from 2005-2015, and before that (2000-2004) as General Secretary of the EASR, the European Association for the Study of Religions. Though specialized in ancient Greek religion, he has done research and published widely on study-of-religion related methodology, on religion, law, and human rights, on applied religious ethics, on religious environmental activism, on public discourses and notions on religion, and on public religious education from a study-of-religion perspective.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.688

Religious Education as Small 'i' Indoctrination: How European Countries Struggle with a Secular Approach to Religion in Schools

Wanda Alberts[1]

This article critically reviews the European religious education landscape and argues that a religious notion of religion prevails in most models, not only in confessional RE but also in integrative models and even in so-called alternative subjects that are compulsory for pupils who do not take part in confessional RE. Thus, schools in Europe provide hardly any chance for pupils to acquire a secular perspective on religion and religious diversity, based on a non-theological study of religion. Furthermore, the explicitly or implicitly religious character, particularly of integrative approaches or obligatory alternative subjects to confessional RE, is frequently hidden or played down. Building on analyses of separative (Germany) and integrative (Norway, England) models of RE, the article argues that carefully distinguishing between religious and secular approaches to religion in school is a serious human right's issue, not least because only secular approaches may be compulsory. The predominant religious framing of religion – that is always linked to confirming the exceptional position of Christianity among the religions in RE – in combination with an actual lack of secular alternatives creates a climate of what may be called 'small 'i' indoctrination', i.e., an unquestioned discursive hegemony of a particular (Christian) notion of religion as a frame of reference for almost all education about religion, which is, furthermore, often represented as if it constituted not a particular religious view of religion, but a kind of universal perspective on religion. This results in highly problematic conceptualisations, both of religion in general and individual religions – most visibly in stereotyping 'other' religions, that are not complemented with an unbiased secular perspective. Thus, the subject matter religion is widely exempted from the secular approach to education in European schools, while a particular religious perspective on religion is promoted, even in models that are designed for all pupils of a religiously heterogeneous class.

Keywords: religious education, Europe, small 'i' indoctrination, Germany, Norway, England

1 Faculty of Philosophy, Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany; wanda.alberts@irw.uni-hannover.de.

Religijsko izobraževanje kot indoktrinacija z malim 'i': kako se evropske države spoprijemajo s sekularnim pristopom k religijskemu izobraževanju

Wanda Alberts

Prispevek kritično oceni področje evropskega religijskega izobraževanja. V njem opozarjamo, da religijsko pojmovanje religije prevladuje v večini modelov, ne le v konfesionalnem religijskem izobraževanju, ampak tudi v integrativnih modelih in celo v t. i. alternativnih predmetih, ki so obvezni za učence, ki se ne udeležujejo konfesionalnega religijskega izobraževanja (verouka). Javne šole v Evropi učencem izjemno redko predstavljajo laično perspektivo o religiji in religijski raznolikosti, ki bi temeljila na neteološkem preučevanju religije. Poleg tega pa je eksplicitno ali implicitno religiozen značaj še zlasti integrativnih pristopov ali obveznih alternativnih predmetov verouku pogosto skrit ali pa je pomen tega minimaliziran. V prispevku s pomočjo analize seperativnega (Nemčija) in integrativnega (Norveška, Anglija) modela religijskega izobraževanja pokažemo, da je skrbno razlikovanje med religioznim in laičnim pristopom k religiji v šolah resno vprašanje človekovih pravic in da so lahko za učence obvezni le predmeti o religijah, ki temeljijo na laičnih pristopih. Prevladujoče religiozno uokvirjanje religije – ki je vedno povezano z izpostavljanjem izjemnega položaja krščanstva med religijami, obravnavanimi v religijskem izobraževanju – v kombinaciji z dejanskim pomanjkanjem laičnih alternativ ustvarja klimo, ki bi jo lahko poimenovali kot indoktrinacija z malim 'i'. – tj. nevprašljiva diskurzivna hegemonija določenega (krščanskega) pojmovanja religije kot referenčnega okvira za skoraj celotno izobraževanje o religijah, ki se pogosto predstavlja kot nekakšna univerzalna perspektiva, ne pa specifičen religiozen pogled na religijo. Posledice tega so vidne v zelo problematičnih konceptualizacijah religije na splošno in konkretnih posameznih religij, najočitneje pri stereotipiziranju »drugih« religij, ki niso obravnavane tudi z nepristranske laične perspektive. Tako je religija kot šolski predmet v evropskih šolah skoraj popolnoma izvzeta iz siceršnjega laičnega pristopa k izobraževanju, namesto tega pa se spodbuja posebna religiozna perspektiva religije, ki prevladuje celo pri predmetih, ki so namenjeni vsem učencem religijsko heterogenih razredov.

Ključne besede: religijsko izobraževanje, Evropa, indoktrinacija z malim 'i', Nemčija, Norveška, Anglija

Introduction: 'Religious education' and religious education research

At a European level, religious education (RE) research is frequently represented as a research *discipline*. Despite a number of differences, which in itself are a popular object of discussion, many scholars conceptualise one 'field' of religious education for which a large group of scholars – educationalists of religion – are specialists. Moreover, common aims and challenges of RE are frequently discussed.[2]

At first glance, this certainly makes sense: scholars from Europe – and beyond – who are in one way or another involved in RE co-operate, not least with respect for the great challenges of our time, in order to better understand and improve RE. Looking at the variety of what is commonly conceptualised as RE, I have become very sceptical, however, of the usefulness of constructing RE *in general* as a somewhat uniform field of study, and, furthermore, as a kind of research discipline. The frequent discourse about *RE in general* blurs necessary distinctions. The fact that all models of RE somehow relate to some not-further-specified object called 'religion' does not make them a meaningful field, neither in school education nor in related teacher training programmes or university disciplines. The fundamental epistemological differences, for example, between the research traditions and presuppositions of the secular Study of Religion and theologies, cannot be harmonised in some religious education research discipline. Similarly, at the school level, very different and often contradictive, if not mutually exclusive religious and non-religious ways of relating to religion cannot be meaningfully conceptualised as a single 'field'.

It completely makes sense to discuss all kinds of topics related to RE in schools, including religious, interreligious and non-religious approaches, in a non-confessional academic fashion at a conference, comparable to other thematic conferences in the Study of Religion, Anthropology or Sociology, where religion is discussed in a scientific, non-religious way. It also makes sense if religious bodies who would like to improve their own approaches to religion and their communication in educational contexts come together and discuss that. However, these are two very different matters. This is comparable to a conference in political studies and a conference of political parties that are trying to promote their impact and agendas on a particular issue. I am not saying that it is not interesting to each of those to look at what the others are doing, but I

2 For a recent overview of RE and RE research in Europe see, for example, Jackson 2016 and the Vienna University Press book series on Religious Education at Schools in Europe (e.g., Rothgangel et al., 2016).

think it is dangerous to blur the borders between those two and to try to unite their very different presuppositions and interests in public state schools. Not least in a context in which religious freedom, including the right to freedom from religion, i.e., the right not to profess any religion, is to be respected.

The otherwise generally acknowledged distinction between theologies, interfaith activities, and the secular Study of Religion is frequently not respected when it comes to RE issues. In this article, I will show what kind of problems, contradictions and not least human rights issues emerge when the totally different character and interests of these approaches are ignored. My argument will include examples from Germany, Norway and England.

Learning about religion in schools in Europe

There are many attempts to map the complex situation of religion-related education in schools in Europe. With respect to learning about religion and religious diversity, we find different categorisations of the frameworks in which this kind of learning takes place.

A significant distinction is between *confessional* and *non-confessional* models, which differ considerably with respect to their contents, organisation, and perspectives on religion and religious diversity. In *confessional* models, religion – first of all, one's own religion, assuming a somewhat religiously homogenous group of pupils, but normally also religious diversity – is studied from an explicitly religious perspective, using the epistemologies of particular religious traditions as a general framework for approaching religion. *Non-confessional* models, by contrast, attempt to frame education about religion/s – in these models with a clear focus on religious diversity – independent of particular religious positions. This may be an explicitly non-religious, i.e., secular approach to religion, regarding religion as a 'normal' subject matter in a secular school. However, this is, surprisingly, not always the case. In clear contradistinction to a secular approach to religion, 'interfaith', 'multifaith' or so-called 'dialogical' models have been established that attempt to study religion not from a secular perspective but combine the approaches of different religious communities to some joint interreligious approach.

The different motivations behind different approaches to RE in Europe are often distinguished as 1) *education into religion* ('learning religion'), 2) *education about religion/s* ('learning about religion/s'), and 3) *education from religion* ('learning from religion'), frequently with reference to Grimmitt (e.g., 2000). The first of these three quite clearly describes a religious framework (i.e., the initiation into a particular religious tradition), while the second is often

used to describe a secular framework where knowledge about religion (which is not in itself religious) is communicated in a secular manner. The third is ambiguous. It may be meant to express some general educational insights and competences that build on the *study* of religion/s, but often presupposes some kind of moral superiority of religion in general or of individual religious traditions, including the idea that aspects of these traditions are advisable to be integrated into the pupils' own set of values. This raises the question of what 'good' or 'right' religion is and if there is something to religion that secular worldviews lack.

Making the general organisation of RE the starting point, I have distinguished between *integrative* and *separative* approaches to education about religion/s in school (Alberts, 2007); the former refers to education about religion with the same composition of pupils as in any other subject, i.e., for the whole class together, while the latter refers to models in which the class (in one way or another) is separated when it comes to education about religion. Both of these categories, however, contain different approaches in different contexts. *Separative* approaches regularly include confessional subjects for particular religious traditions in order to take account of the pupils' religious backgrounds, and, frequently, also non-confessional 'alternative subjects' for pupils who – or whose parents for them – choose not to take part in confessional RE. The number of alternatives offered within separative approaches varies considerably, from one to a small variety, trying to accommodate as many religious traditions as possible. It is obvious, however, that the separative model has its limits in terms of the number of confessional subjects that may be organised.[3]

However, *integrative* approaches also vary considerably in terms of organisational issues. Some models, despite their integrative aspirations are not compulsory and, therefore, not truly integrative in practice. Compulsory integrative RE in European secular states may be regarded as an indicator for the attempt to establish a secular (in contradistinction to a confessional or interreligious) approach, as this is a legal prerequisite laid down in European human rights legislation. However, close analyses of seemingly non-confessional approaches frequently also bear witness of what has been called 'small 'c' confessional' (i.e., implicitly, or not at first glance visible confessional) remains, not least with respect to the general framing of religion and individual religions.[4]

Each of the different ways of categorising approaches to learning about religions in schools in Europe highlights some basic distinctions, but also

3 For details on individual countries see, for example, the respective chapters in Rothgangel et al., 2016.

4 Cf. Jensen and Kjeldsen (2013) on 'small 'c' confessional' RE in Denmark, Andreassen, 2014 on Norway, Berglund, 2013 on Sweden and Frank, 2010 on Switzerland.

aspects and nuances within the models. However, they also show how controversial the representation of religion/s in schools is and that this is not a straight forward issue. The complexity of the matter, however, shall not mystify the fact that (despite different degrees of correspondence between ideal and practice) the distinction between a (in one way or another) religious approach and an approach that at least aims at conceptualising religion in a non-religious way is the striking difference between approaches. This becomes obvious in the human rights' issue, where the decisive question is whether pupils can be forced to attend a particular kind of religious education or not.

One religious perspective on religion is sufficient – partiality as the norm: Germany (the separative model)

The general separative framework, which is the norm in most of the 16 federal states of Germany, is perhaps best understood with reference to the apparent plausibility that the so-called *Böckenförde-dilemma* met with in post-war West Germany after the terror of the Nazi regime, when the legal framework for the country in ruins was established. This kind of climate is expressed, for example, in the preamble of the constitution of the Free State of Bavaria (of 1946), which reads:

> [I]n the face of the scene of devastation into which the survivors of the 2nd World War were led by a godless state and social order which lacked any conscience and respect for human dignity, with the firm intention of permanently securing for the future generations the blessings of peace, humanity and justice and mindful of its history of more than a thousand years, the Bavarian people herewith bestows upon itself the following Democratic Constitution. (Free State of Bavaria, 2014, official translation)

Ernst-Wolfgang Böckenförde, a judge at Germany's Federal Constitutional Court held that 'The liberal secularized state lives by prerequisites which it cannot guarantee itself' (1976, p. 60). This has often been interpreted as an argument for confessional religious education in schools, with the idea that the production of ethics and the task of making pupils moral beings is best transferred to religious communities. In this spirit, the old separative confessional model of RE from the *Weimar constitution* of 1919 was taken over into the new constitution of 1949 (*Grundgesetz*).

Article 7.3 of the constitution says that religious education is taught 'in accordance with the basic teachings of the religious communities'. This has generally been interpreted as the legal basis for a separative confessional model. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and in the course of German reunification, the RE issue became a matter of discussion again and the question arose which approach the 'new' Eastern federal states should follow, considering that they had a highly secular population with no established RE in schools in GDR times. On a legal level, it was negotiated if the so-called *Bremen clause* of the constitution (art. 141), which says that article 7.3 does not apply to federal states that already had other regulations by January 1, 1949, also applies to the Eastern federal states or not.[5] Leaving aside the highly interesting but very complex legal subtleties, it may be summarised that (apart from a few but critical exceptions[6]) most German federal states today still follow the separative model with different types of confessional RE and obligatory alternative subjects for those pupils who do not take part in confessional RE.

The German classical separative model includes Protestant and Catholic RE, while the opportunity for a few more religious communities to provide RE is offered in many states, recently, above all, including Islamic RE. If one recalls the function that RE was supposed to serve in post-war West Germany, it was, from the 1980s onwards, regarded as a problem that more and more pupils opted out of confessional religious education. Within the logic of RE that I have sketched above, this meant that growing numbers of pupils were not taught in schools how to be a moral person. If religious education was simply a religious offer made possible by the state for those who wish to take part in it, there would have been no problem if pupils exercised their right to 'freedom from religion', an essential aspect of human rights legislation. If, however, ethical education is completely 'out-sourced' to RE within the responsibility of religious communities, the question arises how children who do not take part

5 Bremen had, as stated in its constitution of 1947, introduced 'not confessionally bound education in biblical history on a general Christian basis' (cf. Freie Hansestadt Bremen, 2014, art 32, translation WA).

6 Apart from *Bremen*, the exceptions mainly include the subject *Lebensgestaltung Ethik Religionskunde* (shaping life, ethics, knowledge about religion, LER) in *Brandenburg* and the obligatory integrative subject *ethics* in *Berlin*, where RE (offered by a number of religious communities and the Humanist Association) is a completely voluntary subject. For a detailed discussion of the legal aspects and the social debates around these issues in Berlin and Brandenburg, see Reuter 2014. *Hamburg* is another particular case where Art. 7.3. of the basic law is interpreted in favour of a multi-confessional dialogical RE that is organised under the responsibility of the Protestant Church. Even though the advocates of this approach call it 'RE for all', it operates within the confessional (though now multi-confessional) paradigm and, therefore, just as the 'not confessionally bound' but still generally Christian-based Bremen model, cannot be obligatory and deviates, in many important respects, from a secular model in which religion is not generally framed religiously.

in that learn how to behave ethically. Following that logic, obligatory alternative subjects to RE had to be established in order to ensure the moral education of all citizens. The names of these obligatory alternative subjects, such as 'ethics' or 'values and norms', reflect that intention. Thus, there is a clear task for these subjects, regardless of whether they are confessional or secular alternatives: they are there for making the pupils moral people, either by way of religion or by way of secular ethics. The latter, however, may be regarded as contradicting Böckenförde's famous phrase quoted above, as the question arises of who, if not religious bodies, is in a position to produce the value foundation that the liberal democratic state, according to Böckenförde, is not able to produce itself. The degree to which education authorities are presently struggling with these alternative subjects, in particular with the parts that relate to religion or religious diversity, shows that the issue of integrating a secular perspective on religion in school curricula in Germany is far from resolved.

An analysis of the notion of religion in the curricula for the obligatory alternative subjects to confessional RE shows the ambivalence towards religion that is inherent in the design of these subjects. A closer look at the curriculum for *values and norms* (Werte und Normen) in Lower Saxony may demonstrate that. The first contradiction arises when the subject is, on the very first page of the curriculum, directly and explicitly related to § 2 of the School Act, which states that the school should contribute to developing 'the personality of the pupils *on the basis of Christianity*, European humanism and the ideas of the liberal, democratic and social freedom-movements' (NSchG, translation and emphasis WA), while at the same time acknowledging that education in *values and norms* requires that the subject is neutral with respect to religion and worldviews (NKM, 2017, p. 6). How can one have neutrality based on Christianity? The whole curriculum is an expression of the ambivalence between the obvious relation of this subject to Christian confessional RE and some kind of attempt to achieve the same aims in a non-confessional way. This results in what Jensen and Kjeldsen (2013) have called 'small 'c' confessional' RE, nominally non-confessional RE in which the confessional character is hidden but nevertheless there.

The notion of religion in a confessional setting is rather clear: (right) religion is something good and valuable that helps pupils to become moral people. This notion of religion, however, is confessional. It is a particular religious view of religion that cannot be transferred to non-confessional contexts. However, the same view of religion permeates the curriculum of values and norms, with a clear preference for Christian interpretations, topics and terminology, but also with a declared intent to do justice to the diversity of religions and

worldviews. The internal contradiction of this approach to religion becomes obvious in a sentence like the following: 'Education in the subject values and norms helps to reflect the different orientations with the intention to differentiate between them with respect to their plausibility, their social reasonability and their potential for [providing] meaning' (NKM, 2017, p. 6, translation WA).

First, religions are, in the whole curriculum, mainly reduced to sources of orientation. This is, of course, a very particular and narrow conception of religion that only highlights one (generally conceived of as positive) aspect of religion. Not the empirical diversity and ambivalence of religion is the starting point but one particular way of instrumentalising 'religion', in a particularly constructed sense. Referring to the quote above, it may be asked from which perspective it is possible in a non-confessional context to judge orientations with respect to plausibility, social responsibility and meaning-making potential. Considering the diversity of religions and world views, it is more than evident that precisely the issue of what is plausible, socially responsible and, perhaps, appealing with respect to giving meaning is being negotiated if not even fought about, within, and between religious and secular traditions. Rather than trying to judge traditions, studying and analysing the strategies of how these aspects are negotiated in various areas of society would be a starting point for a discursive non-confessional approach. This is, however, virtually absent from the values-and-norms curriculum for the benefit of a small 'c' confessional approach.

That the Study of Religion is regarded, together with Philosophy and the Social Sciences, as a discipline of reference (NKM, 2017, p. 8) for *values and norms* may be regarded as mere lip service, not least because critical interventions by scholars in the Study of Religion and even the *German Association for the Study of Religion* (Deutsche Vereinigung für Religionswissenschaft (DVRW)) both with respect to the description of the discipline of the Study of Religion in the curriculum and to the framing of religion in the current values-and-norms curriculum have not had any visible effect. The passage on the Study of Religion in the curriculum sounds almost ironic when the few lines stress the importance of 'Christian occidental traditions' rather than explaining the empirical and non-confessional self-conception of the Study of Religion. The methodological Christian bias becomes visible in every religion-related part of the curriculum, whether it is Christian topics, terms and issues also being used for the study of other religions or in the shape of different implicit or explicit 'othering'-strategies that presuppose a general Christian 'we', othering not only all 'other' religions but also secular worldviews, for example by suggesting the topic '*limitations* of secular and ideological worldviews' (NKM,

2017, p. 33, translation and emphasis WA).[7] Note that this happens in the context of a subject that is designed as an *obligatory alternative* to confessional RE. The danger of such an approach in the context of current European societies may be demonstrated with the different descriptions of Christianity and Islam in the curriculum for the upper secondary school with respect to ethical aspects of religions and views of life (NKM, 2018, p. 25).

While 'the 10 commandments, the Sermon of the Mount, the imperative to love your neighbour' are referred to as 'the basis of the Christian social ethic', together with 'the primacy of the gospel over the law' with respect to the relationship of ethics and the law, Islam is described as a 'religion of the law', in which 'the relationship of state and religion' and the 'submission of the individual, from the family up to the relationship to Allah' are mentioned as the aspects to be studied (NKM, 2018, p. 25). This stereotypical polarisation, where Christianity appears as the religion of love and freedom, in contrast to Islam as a religion of the law and submission, certainly does not help the students to better understand religious diversity in contemporary society or from a historical perspective. The only responsible way of relating to passages like that is to lay open the problematic assumptions, prerequisites, and discursive strategies for such an unbalanced stereotypical description and contextualise it within other Orientalist discursive strategies. A highly selective, exclusively positive, *insider* perspective of Christianity is contrasted with a stereotypical presentation of Islam as the rigid and inflexible other.[8]

The ambivalent and generally poorly reflected notion of religion in the alternative subjects is not a minor issue but relates to fundamental questions of human rights. If these subjects are implicitly confessional (though not at first glance to an untrained person visible) one should have the right to not be forced to take part in them. This kind of implicit and hidden indoctrination with a particular biased view of religion is, in my view, a severe human rights issue and a violation of Article 2 of protocol No. 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is, furthermore, a threat to the social peace of European countries, where schools should have the task to critically discuss privileges, biases and stereotyping with respect to religion/s rather than even contributing to reproducing them in school – be it only because this is easier than employing real specialists on religion to design pedagogically and scientifically sound and up-to-date subjects and syllabuses.

7 There is no similar suggestion of a topic like 'limitations of Christian worldviews'.

8 Andreassen's (2014) analysis of the Norwegian core curriculum comes to a very similar conclusion with respect to the representation of Christianity and Islam in Norwegian RE.

Apart from the issues concerning the so-called 'alternative subjects' and their at least implicitly confessional character, there is another very problematic issue behind the German way of framing and representing religion in school. Given the prominence of the confessional approach in the German system, this model means that, for a great majority of the pupils, religion is framed only and exclusively confessionally in schools. This raises questions with respect to the general task of schools. Why is religion something that is excluded from being a 'normal' object of study in the curriculum so that there is no space whatsoever for a non-religious perspective on it? Other topics that may be discussed controversially among mixed groups with respect to religion and worldviews, such as evolution, sexual ethics, gender roles, abortion, etc., are without any question approached from a secular perspective in the public school in Germany, possibly, in addition to some religious views on that matter in RE. Religion itself, however, is taken out of that exposition to critical scrutiny. This is highly problematic in two ways, regarding 1) 'one's own religion', i.e., the tradition that, in one way or another, provides the framework for a particular confessional version of RE, assuming that the group of pupils either is a member of or somehow related to that tradition or, to be included as an interested or perhaps even more critical 'outsider' with a secular or another religious background, and 2) the perspective that is communicated on both 'religion' in general and on 'other' religions that are not part of the given confessional framework.

The *first aspect* (1) means that the position of one particular religious community that has the right to organise that particular way of RE is the one and only perspective that one gets on one's own religion during one's whole school life. This may be in a generally critical way, but this is not a necessity. Given the fact that teachers for confessional RE have been trained merely in the confessional perspective of their own religion, issues like the role of religion in societies, the relationship between religion and the state, etc., are never studied from a critical outsider perspective but from the perspective of a religious body who has the power to train teachers and offer RE in school (i.e., a privilege that a large number of religious communities do not have). That particular perspective on religion is not questioned anywhere in school, but is generally taken as sufficient framework for communicating knowledge about religion.

Furthermore, if we consider the *second aspect* (2) of this complex of problems, this confessional perspective on religion is not confined to the communication of knowledge of 'one's own' religion only, but also allows religious communities to present their version of 'the other' religions. Given the right to provide their own perspective on religion and on 'other religions' is simply a privilege of religious communities, asserting to them the *Deutungshoheit*

(hegemonic definition of knowledge) not only on their own religion but on all other religions and secular worldviews as well. In practice, that means, for example, that a child attending Protestant RE, through his or her own whole school life, only is presented a Protestant view of Islam, with no way of contextualising this Protestant view by contrasting it, for example, with a non-religious view. Thus, most pupils leave the public school in Germany with a perspective on both 'their own' and 'other' religions being framed only and exclusively by a particular religious body, even though state authorities, of course, also take part in and control the design of the curricula for RE, in order to ensure that it does not contradict the general aims and principles of the school. Nevertheless, the representation of both 'their own' religion, 'other religions' and 'religion' in general is a privilege of the responsible religious communities.

The indoctrination that this model involves is, of course, not indoctrination in the obvious and 'hard' sense. Nobody is forced into confessional RE, and the general model leaves room for a great variety of approaches, opinions and also critical voices. It is a more subtle process, which is the result of a system that privileges the traditional established religions, limits choice in various manners, operates with inclusion, exclusion and various types of 'othering' and stereotyping. It is a system in which pupils and parents have, already in the first school year, to take a decision for or against a school subject 'religion',[9] and for or against including their child in one or the other group of a class that is otherwise together as a whole. It forces pupils and parents to take a particular stance on religion, if they are aware of their options and the actual consequences of their choice with respect to the framing of the topic 'religion' at all.[10] Thereby, religion is systematically excluded from the 'normal' curriculum that attempts to provide the pupils with a balanced and multi-faceted perspective on important issues of current societies. It is regarded exclusively as a matter of choice, from year one in school onwards. The otherwise generally secular educational perspective on social and cultural issues in secular democracies is not applied to religion in public schools in Germany. This may be called *small 'i' indoctrination*. Given the small 'c' confessional character of the alternative subjects to RE, it may, furthermore, be concluded, that it is almost not possible to escape this highly biased framing of religion in the German school system.

9 The subject is often, in fact, in the syllabus, only called »religion« so that the confessional character is played down in favour of the impression that the subject is somehow generally on »religion«.

10 In practice, choice is actually very much limited and prompted by the way in which the (few) alternatives are presented.

Compulsory or not? Crucial issues of integrative approaches

Integrative approaches, meaning models of RE that do not separate pupils when it comes to RE but are designed for the whole class of pupils, provide a very different framework for learning about religion in school. At first glance, they seem to avoid many of the problems that come with the separative approach, above all, of course, because they create space for all children of a class together to learn about different religions in a framework that is independent of particular religious perspectives and thereby avoids making partiality the norm. However, debates about organisational and legal issues concerning integrative RE shows that similar issues relating to privilege and the negotiation of the power of representation are at stake in these models. Upon examination, the inherent contradictions of these models become apparent. This will be demonstrated in the following by the example of the question if a model is compulsory or not. If a model is called 'inclusive' (cf. Jackson, 2016, p. 12) or is presented as a subject for all pupils, one should expect that there is nothing in the way for making it compulsory. Following European human rights legislation, making RE obligatory is not problematic as long as the different religions are represented in a 'critical, objective and pluralistic' manner,[11] and, of course, if the subject does not contain any religious practice (ECHR, 2007). However, even in integrative models that are designed for heterogeneous groups of pupils, this does not seem to go without saying, probably not least because integrative models usually have developed out of confessional models, and for most people involved, including scholars, mostly with a theological background who often have a religious interest in RE, and politicians, a non-religious perspective on religion seems to be if not an impossibility then at least not desirable. A secular approach to religion obviously somehow raises the fear that the most essential aspects of RE, including the promotion of the somehow inherent value of religion as such or of individual religious traditions, will be lost.

This can easily be demonstrated with the help of the documents surrounding the introduction of the new integrative subject KRL (*Kristendoms-, religions- og livssynskunnskap* / 'knowledge of Christianity, religions and views of life') in Norway in the late 1990s. Though generally designed an obligatory subject, without the option of fully withdrawing from it, it attempted to balance a traditional Christian (Lutheran) confessional approach with the study

11 The formulation is used in a number of judgements interpreting art. 2 of protocol no.1 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which requires the state to "respect the right of parents to ensure [...] education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."

of different religions and world views in order to justify its obligatory status in the canon of school subjects. The 'to and fro' between the attempt to keep important aspects of the old Christianity subject that – in contemporary society – should serve the function of preserving the 'cultural heritage' of Christianity and between a necessarily non-confessional approach that a) does not contain any kind of religious practice, b) does not qualitatively privilege individual traditions,[12] and c) represents the individual religions in an 'objective, critical and pluralistic' manner, have been main issues in the discussion about the Norwegian approach, leading to its failure in the UN Human Rights Committee (in 2004) and its conviction in the European Court of Human Rights (in 2007). After this heavy backlash for Norway and its KRL-subject, including the obvious embarrassment for being convicted of a breach of human rights, Norway has nevertheless decided to prioritise the integrative character of the subject, forcing itself to organise it within the above-mentioned human rights framework, having to adjust the subject after it was found in conflict with international human rights legislation, because of its illegitimate prioritisation of Christianity and inclusion of (Christian) religious practice.

England, another famous example of an integrative approach, by contrast, takes the easy way out of the complicated human rights issue. It simply does not make the subject compulsory, despite the expectation by educators, schools, and education authorities that all pupils of a class should take part in it. Therefore, aspects that may be problematic from a human-rights-perspective, for example, if the representation of religions is not 'objective, critical, and pluralistic' or if the subject contains religious practice, is not an issue, as no-one, in a hard sense, is forced into it. A recent report, 'Religion and worldviews: the way forward – a national plan for RE' (CoRE, 2018), written by a 'high profile independent commission' (CoRE, 2019) appointed by the Religious Education Council of England and Wales, and chaired by The Very Revd Dr John Hall, Dean of Westminster, which evaluates RE in England and Wales, concludes on issue of the right of withdrawal: 'Given the freedoms afforded to schools to design their own curricula, we could not guarantee that every school curriculum nationally would be sufficiently 'objective, critical and pluralistic' to justify ending the right of withdrawal, [...]' (CoRE, 2018, p. 67).

This is a remarkable conclusion, resigning from the very beginning to the challenge of organising RE in a way so that exemption is not necessary rather than attempting to adjust the model so that this problem does not emerge. This is a stark contrast to the Scandinavian models (in both Denmark, Norway

12 This is, of course, only discussed in relation to the position of Christianity among the diversity of religions to be studied.

and Sweden) that build on truly integrative compulsory models that need to frame and represent religion in a particular way in order to be in conformity with human rights legislation. However, upon closer examination of the organisation of the English model, this is, perhaps, no surprise. If syllabuses are to be agreed upon by 'standing advisory councils on RE' in which, among educational bodies, also representatives of religious communities have to agree on a syllabus, it becomes obvious that this 'multifaith' approach is something very different from a secular approach. Furthermore, the issue of qualitative inequality would certainly come up in this model, where the group of representatives of the Church of England (in contrast to the representatives of all 'other' religions and denominations who form one group altogether) has the right to veto. This makes it highly unlikely that a syllabus that is in conflict with the interests of the Church of England, both with respect to the representation of Christianity but also with respect to the general framing of religion and religious diversity in England and elsewhere, will be 'agreed upon'. This is, for example, heavily criticised by the National Secular Society, which demands that '[r]eligious interest groups should no longer determine what gets taught. As with other subjects, the syllabus should be nationally determined by independent educationalists without an agenda motivated by a specific religion or belief.' (NSS, 2017)

Despite the generally religious and organisationally imbalanced approach (and this may be called a self-contradiction) the idea behind English RE is that all pupils should take part in it. This is presupposed in the report, which shows clearly that the attempt is made to convince parents to send their children to RE, even if they have hesitations (cf. CoRE, 2018, p. 67)

The withdrawal issue is represented instead as a problem of misconceptions of RE that must be deconstructed in discussions with parents in order to 'keep with the need to promote fundamental British values including tolerance of different faiths and beliefs' (CoRE, 2018, p. 67), than as an issue concerning the right not to take part in a religious approach that does not even intend to ensure an 'objective, critical and pluralistic' representation of religions.

Hesitations towards an approach that may contain religious practice, involve inequality of the partners in the organisational system or the simple fact that not the secular Study of Religions, but motivated 'representatives' of religious communities are used as references for the representation of religions are played down in favour of the multicultural project that this approach seems to pursue. Without any doubt, a common subject in which all pupils together talk about different religions and worldviews has many advantages compared to a mono-confessional model in which the power of representation lies within one religious community alone.

However, the rules of the game in the English model are problematic in at least three ways: 1) they include the strategic and decisive prioritisation of the majority religion 2) they make the content heavily dependent on particular religious interpretations of the individual religions (and also of 'religion' in general) and 3) they still take 'religion' out of the normal curriculum, providing mostly (albeit several) religious perspectives on religion rather than a secular perspective as in other subjects. One may wonder what the school curriculum would look like if that approach was also taken with respect to the other controversial topics mentioned above, for example, evolution, sexual ethics, gender roles or abortion. Simply providing religious perspectives on evolution is unthinkable in modern European schools. Why is this possible with respect to religion? Is religion perhaps simply regarded as not important enough to be included in the secular curriculum? Or is it, vice versa, perhaps too important, so that a secular perspective on religion, including religious truths, teachings, practice and privileges and empirical history (in contrast to religious reconstructions of history as *Heilsgeschichte*) is regarded as a threat?

Apparently, keeping a religious (though 'multifaith') perspective on religion is regarded as more important in England than designing a secular subject that then, of course, could be made compulsory, being integrative not only in theory but also in practice, respecting the rules of the game of a compulsory subject.

Conclusion

The comparative view of different models of RE in Europe shows some striking similarities, despite the critical differences between the approaches. Many European school systems have their roots in a religious system, in which a religious perspective, for a long time, used to be the unquestioned framework for education. These systems have become increasingly secularised, but religion itself as a subject matter seems to have been exempted from that process. This is obvious in the separative system in which religion (and only religion) is addressed in a confessional way, or in a small 'c' confessional 'ethics' or 'values and norms' subject that still does not start from a secular approach to religion. The integrative models mentioned above also have their roots in confessional models, and the continuity from a confessional approach is characteristic of both of them.

In England, for example, the relevant passage in the respective Education Act states that agreed syllabuses, 'shall reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are *in the main Christian* whilst *taking account of the teaching and practices of the other principal religions* represented in Great

Britain' (ERA, 1988, section 8.3, emphasis WA) and in Norway we have seen a long legal struggle for keeping a semi-confessional model even in an integrative context in which RE is compulsory, which is, as the human rights issues have shown, not legally possible. However, one may still wonder if the adjustments made to the Norwegian RE curriculum after the judgement of the European Court of Human Rights actually addressed the inherent problem or simply included the least possible verbal adjustments that were necessary after the judgement while keeping the ambivalent spirit. The recent changes of 2015, which includes the comeback for Christianity in the name of the subject (now called KRLE, *Kristendom, religion, livssyn og etikk*, 'Christianity, religion, views of life and ethics') and the regulation that about half of the time of the subject should be used for studying Christianity bear witness of what is at stake, the negotiation of the role and importance of Christianity, in contrast to the 'other' religions. In general, we may conclude that the integrative approaches frequently do not provide a new, secular perspective on religion (cf. Andreassen, 2014; Berglund, 2013; Frank, 2010; Jensen & Kjeldsen, 2013), but may be placed in a different position on a continuum that is still, in many ways, related to a confessional approach. This is, for example, frequently visible in the organisation of teacher training, often provided at Christian colleges of higher education with theology as the main approach rather than a study-of-religions perspective.

The discussed models of RE in Europe reflect different ways of preserving the priority of a Christian perspective on the discourse on religion in schools, be it by structurally prioritising Christian confessional RE (as in Germany) or by designing integrative approaches that nevertheless build on the priority of Christianity. The world religions paradigm is a helpful tool in that process, as it constructs religion in general 'according to an ostensibly Protestant Christian model' (Cotter & Robertson, 2016, p. 7) which, however, 'has gained the hegemonic status of ahistorical, universal 'common sense' (ibid. p. 10) and thus covers the Protestant Christian bias of that approach. The discussions around and recent developments of these models bear witness of the negotiation of the role of Christianity and of the prominence of a Christian notion of religion, which itself is not really questioned in any of the models. This happens in a context in which the privileges of the established churches, often with reference to 'cultural heritage' are renegotiated in European societies. This is obvious with respect to resources,[13] but in the RE context more importantly with respect to the preservation of 1) the hegemonic discourse on religion and 2) the right to define what religion is and how it should be studied (or learnt). The power imbalance in these negotiations is striking: there is not a single model in which

13 Cf. the discussion about state support for religious communities.

the different religions and worldviews are allowed to act as equal partners, and there is hardly any model in which the prominence of Christianity among the different religions is not explicitly emphasised.

Another aspect of this discourse is, however, perhaps even more important. It is generally hidden that religion, in most models, including the English integrative one, is a field that is systematically excluded from a secular approach to education. When it comes to religion, special rules apply, exemption is possible, religious communities have a say, etc. In comparison, one just needs to imagine a model of political education in which the different political parties should agree on a syllabus, with the biggest one having a right to veto. Furthermore, the frequently explicitly – in confessional and also 'multi-faith' models – or implicitly – even in compulsory alternative or integrative subjects – religious approach to religion is played down. This may include presenting a 'multifaith' approach as the natural approach in multicultural societies or by downplaying the religious character of confessional RE that is normally presented as open and critical (which it undoubtedly often is). However, it is open and critical from a confessional perspective, which is again very different from a critical secular approach that does not start from a religious perspective on religion.

When the issues above are taken seriously, the organisational and discursive landscapes around RE and religion in schools in Europe may be found to create a climate of 'small "i" indoctrination' (see my definition of the term above). This involves the presentation of a particular religious model of religion as self-evident and universal, even if it rests mainly on the view and privileges of the established majority religious communities, systematically subordinates 'other' religions discursively by applying the interpretations and paradigms of the prime model religion, and, in many ways, contradicts a secular notion and framing of religions, that one, perhaps, may expect in secular states.

References

Alberts, W. (2007). *Integrative religious education in Europe. A study-of-religions approach* [Religion and Reason vol. 47]. Berlin & New York, NY: De Gruyter.

Andreassen, B.-O. (2014). Christianity as culture and religions as religion. An analysis of the core curriculum as framework for Norwegian RE. *British Journal of Religious Education, 36*(3), 265–281.

Berglund, J. (2013). Swedish religion education - Objective but marinated in Lutheran Protestantism? *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion, 49*(2), 165–184.

Böckenförde, E.-W. (1976). *Staat - Gesellschaft - Freiheit. Studien zur Staatstheorie und zum Verfassungsrecht* [State – Society – Freedom: Studies in state theory and constitutional law]. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp.

CoRE (Commission on Religious Education). (2018). *Final report: Religion and worldviews. The way forward. A national plan for RE*. Retrieved from https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/

CoRE (Commission on Religious Education). (2019). *A New Vision for Religious Education in Schools.* Retrieved from https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/

Cotter, C. R., & Robertson, D. G. (Eds.). (2016). *After world religions. Reconstructing religious studies*. London, UK: Routledge.

Bundesregierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. (2000 [1949]). *Grundgesetz für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland* [Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany].

ECHR (European Court of Human Rights). (2007). *Case of Folgerø and Others vs. Norway (Application no. 15472/02)*. Retrieved from http://cmiskp.echr.coe.int/tkp197/view.asp?action=html&documentId=819532&portal=hbkm&source=externalbydocnumber&table=F69A27FD8FB86142BF01C1166DEA398649

ECHR (European Court of Human Rights). ([1950] 2010). *European Convention on Human Rights*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

[ERA] UK Parliament. (1988). *Education reform act*. London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

Freie Hansestadt Bremen. ([1947] 2018). Landesverfassung der freien Hansestadt Bremen vom 21. Oktober 1947 [Constitution of the City of Bremen].

Frank, K. (2010). *Schulischer Religionsunterricht. Eine religionswissenschaftlich-soziologische Untersuchung* [School religious education. A study-of-religions/sociological study]. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer.

Free State of Bavaria. ([1946] 2014). *Constitution of the Free State of Bavaria*. Retrieved from https://www.bayern.landtag.de/fileadmin/Internet_Dokumente/Sonstiges_P/BV_Verfassung_Englisch_formatiert_14-12-16.pdf

Grimmitt, M. (2000). Contemporary pedagogies of religious education: What are they? In M. Grimmitt (Ed.), *Pedagogies of religious education. Case Studies in the research and development of good pedagogic practice in RE* (pp. 24–52). Great Wakering: McCrimmons.

Jackson, R. (2016). Religious education in European organisations, professional associations and research groups. In J. Berglund, Y. Shanneik, & B. Bocking (Eds.), *Religious education in a global-local world* (pp. 11–33). Cham: Springer.

Jensen, T., & Kjeldsen, K. (2013). RE in Denmark - Political and professional discourses and debates, past and present. *Temenos. Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion, 49*(2), 185–224.

NKM (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium). (2017). *Werte und Normen: Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium, Schuljahrgänge 5–10* [Values and norms: core curriculum for the gymnasium, years 5–10]. Hannover: Land Niedersachsen.

NKM (Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium). (2018). *Werte und Normen: Kerncurriculum für das Gymnasium – gymnasiale Oberstufe, die Gesamtschule – gymnasiale Oberstufe, das Berufliche Gymnasium, das Kolleg* [Values and norms: Core curriculum for the upper secondary school]. Hannover: Land Niedersachsen.

NSchG Niedersächsisches Kultusministerium. ([1998] 2018). *Niedersächsisches Schulgesetz* [Education

Act for Lower Sayxony]. Retrieved from https://www.mk.niedersachsen.de/download/131234/Broschuere_Das_Niedersaechsische_Schulgesetz_NSchG_Stand_Mai_2018.pdf

NSS (National Secular Society). (2017). *21st century RE for All. It's time to reform religion and belief education*. Retrieved from https://www.secularism.org.uk/21st-century-re-for-all/

Reuter, A. (2014). *Religion in der verrechtlichten Gesellschaft. Rechtskonflikte um Religion als Grenzarbeiten am religiösen Feld* [Religion in a legally regulated society. Litigations on religion as boundary work at the religious field]. Göttingen: V&R.

Rothgangel, M., Jäggle, M., & Schlag, T. (2016). *Religious education at schools in Europe. Part 1: Central Europe*. Göttingen: V&R unipress (Vienna University Press).

Utdanningsdirektoratet. (2015). *Læreplan i kristendom, religion, livssyn og etikk (KRLE)* [Curriculum for knowledge of Christianity, religion, philosophies of life and ethics]. Oslo: Utdanningsdirektoratet.

Biographical note

Wanda Alberts, PhD, is full professor in the Study of Religion at the Faculty of Philosophy at Leibniz Universität Hannover in Germany, where she is responsible for the teacher training programme for the subject values and norms – the non-confessional alternative to confessional religious education in the federal state of Lower Saxony. She also worked as a professor at the University of Bergen in Norway, training teachers for the subject religion, views of life and ethics. Her main research interest is the negotiation of religion in the public sphere in contemporary societies, with a focus on educational institutions in a comparative European perspective.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.676

'Knowledge about Religions' and Analytical Skills in Religious Education: Reflections from a Norwegian Context

Bengt-Ove Andreassen[1]

Religious education appears in many different models and varies between educational systems and national contexts. Theoretically, religious education is usually divided into confessional and non-confessional models. However, as several researchers have pointed out, the non-confessional models can be 'marinated' in confessional religion. In most national contexts, regardless of the model on which it is based, religious education is intended to serve the promotion of social cohesion by way of promoting knowledge and understanding of the new multi-religious world. However, in official documents and scholarly literature, there is a taken-for-granted relationship between 'knowledge of religion' and such general aims. In the article, critical questions concerning this relationship will be raised.

Keywords: religious education, curriculum, 21st-century skills, Norway, epistemology

1 Department of Education, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway; Norway; bengt.ove.andreassen@uit.no.

'Znanje o religijah' in analitične veščine v religijskem izobraževanju: razmisleki iz norveškega konteksta

Bengt-Ove Andreassen

Religijsko izobraževanje se pojavlja v obliki različnih modelov ter se razlikuje med izobraževalnimi sistemi in nacionalnimi konteksti. V teoriji religijsko izobraževanje običajno delimo na nekonfesionalne in konfesionalne modele, vendar so – kot izpostavljajo številni avtorji – lahko nekonfesionalni modeli 'marinirani' v konfesionalni religiji. Ne glede na model, na katerem temelji religijsko izobraževanje, je to v večini nacionalnih kontekstov namenjeno podpori družbene kohezije na način, da promovira znanje in razumevanje novega multireligijskega sveta. V uradnih dokumentih in akademski literaturi pa obstoji samoumevnost odnosa med 'znanjem o religiji' in takšnimi splošnimi cilji. Članek kritično preučuje ta odnos.

Ključne besede: religijsko izobraževanje, kurikulum, veščine 21. stoletja, Norveška, epistemologija

In this article, I aim to raise some critical reflections and questions regarding 'knowledge about religion' in religious education (RE). Based on examples from Norwegian RE, I will critically discuss what 'knowledge about religions' is and argue for the importance of analytical and interpretative skills in RE. The discussions will relate to an ongoing process of developing new curricula for RE in Norway, in which ideas from the 21st-century movement have been influential.

Background – RE in the Norwegian educational system

The background for this article is my work with RE in a Norwegian educational context. RE in Norway is based on an integrative model and thus a subject that is non-confessional and should include all pupils, regardless of religious or non-religious background (cf. Alberts, 2007). The Norwegian Education Act (Section 2-4) clearly states that the teaching should be critical, objective and pluralistic.[2] In primary and secondary school (years 1-10), the subject is usually labelled 'KRLE', which is an abbreviation of Christianity, religion, secular world views and ethics (cf. The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015). In upper secondary school (years 11-13), the subject is labelled 'Religion and Ethics' (Norwegian: *Religion og etikk*). In this article, I will use the term commonly used in English, 'RE' (Religious Education), when I write about RE in general and use 'KRLE' and 'Religion and Ethics' when I refer to each of the specific subjects.

In 2018, an extensive process of designing new curricula for all school subjects was underway in Norway. The process started in 2017 and was initiated at the political level, aiming to develop and improve already existing curricula. A primary aim was to design 'subjects for the future', inspired by recommendations from international institutions like the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).[3] Presenting ideas for what a subject for the future might look like, these recommendations are highly influenced by the 21st century skills movement. Related to RE, the question at stake is, of course, what an RE subject for the future looks like.

The background to this curriculum reform was formulated in an Official Norwegian Report, entitled *The School of the Future. Renewal of Subjects and Competences* (NOU, 2015, p. 8). A significant feature in this report is how ideas about 21st-century skills are translated into the context of Norwegian education

2 The Norwegian Education Act in English: https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/b3b9e92cce6742c39581b661a019e504/education-act-norway-with-amendments-entered-2014-2.pdf.

3 cf. OECD projects like Education 2030 (http://www.oecd.org/education/2030/) and documents like OECD (2018).

policy (cf. Hilt, Riese, & Søreide, 2019). When this report was delivered, the government had already started to prepare how curriculum reform should proceed. Firstly, a new *Core Curriculum* applicable to primary, secondary and upper-secondary school was presented in the summer of 2017.[4] This will not be implemented before the fall of 2020, together with new curricula in each school subject. The new *Core Curriculum* (Chapter 2.5) states that the school should facilitate learning through three interdisciplinary themes: public health and livelihood, democracy and citizenship, and sustainable development. These interdisciplinary themes are integrated into each of the curricula for the various school subjects and are intended to serve the purpose of creating a connection between topics in each subject.

The belief in 'knowledge about religions' in RE

In curricula in different national contexts, in official documents and recommendations from international organisations, and in surprisingly much of the scholarly literature on RE, there is often a presumed idea that learning about religions leads to understanding and tolerance. In 2007, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) issued the report, *Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools* (OSCE, 2007). In this report, there are arguments that knowledge about religion(s) (and secular world views) is necessary in order to understand society, its history and culture, in both the past and present. In addition, it states that knowledge about religion 'has the valuable potential of reducing conflicts that are based on lack of understanding for others' beliefs' (cf. OSCE, 2007, pp. 76–77). The report says nothing about either the epistemological basis for this knowledge or skills that might be important in learning about religions.

Attempts to present important skills can be found in the Council of Europe publication, *Religious Diversity and Intercultural Education: A Reference Book for Schools* (Keast, 2007). In this reference book, different approaches in teaching RE are outlined, and, in some of these examples, skills for developing such competencies are discussed (i.e., Jackson, 2007, pp. 79–83; Milot, 2007, pp. 51–54). The same applies to the report, *Signposts* (Jackson, 2014, pp. 33–46), in which Robert Jackson outlines the 'interpretive approach' in RE. Inspired by interpretive anthropology and the works of Clifford Geertz, Jackson and his colleagues at Warwick University developed the 'interpretive approach' in RE

4 The new Core Curriculum has not been translated into English yet. Link to the Norwegian version: https://www.udir.no/laring-og-trivsel/lareplanverket/overordnet-del/. Link to English version: https://www.udir.no/lk20/overordnet-del/?lang=eng

in the late 1990s. However, the relation between knowledge, skills and general competencies also remains somewhat blurry in Jackson's work.

One might also say that the assumed relation between 'knowledge about religion(s)' is the main idea in the arguments for a non-confessional RE subject in public schools. Providing 'knowledge about religion', RE is expected to play a central role in addressing extremism (cf. Whitlock, 2017) and developing tolerance and understanding (cf. Jackson, 2012; Weissman, 2009). If one removes the idea that 'knowledge about religion' is a basis for such aims, one might say that the basis for a non-confessional RE is also removed. There is no doubt that the 'knowledge dimension' in RE is important. However, it is not a given that knowledge about religions automatically leads to understanding, respect and/or tolerance. Norwegian scholars Marie von der Lippe and Sissel Undheim (2017, pp. 14–15) have pointed out that there is no causality in knowledge about religions leading to understanding 'the other' or tolerance. In an English report, a similar paradox is pointed out: 'The paradox of education is that it has tremendous potential for both good and bad dependent on its use and implementation' (Gosh, Manuel, Chan, Dilmulati, & Babaei, 2016, p. 17). The keywords are 'dependent on its use and implementation'. What pupils learn will depend on several factors: How the teaching is conducted, the framing of the teacher, dominating public discourses that serve as an interpretative reference for the pupils (i.e., news media and popular culture), and also the students' background. Nevertheless, 'knowledge of religions' is a step further than no knowledge of religion. The crucial point is what constitutes the 'knowledge of religions' and how this knowledge is framed in teaching.

The strategic use of 'knowledge about religion' in RE curricula

In relation to RE or any subject in school, there are always different views or ideas regarding the knowledge or ideas that should be included in a curriculum, i.e., what the pupils should learn. The arguments vary in accordance with what perspective one has or/and what main aims RE is intended to have. Arguments about the kind of knowledge pupils should acquire often relate to cultural history or cultural heritage; i.e., knowledge about religions is important in order to provide pupils with insight into their cultural background. This line of argumentation is often related to the idea and the discussion of 'religious literacy', which I will return to below. In this sense, 'knowledge about religion' is limited to knowledge about a specific religion. In the European context, that means knowledge about Christianity in some confessional version.

A common educational perspective concerning 'knowledge about religion' is thus that emphasis should be placed on a specific religious tradition, with reference to cultural heritage. Cultural heritage is quite often related to an idea of identity formation, i.e., that getting to know your own history, your cultural background, is about getting to know who you are and the cultural tradition of which you are a part. In Europe, as mentioned above, this line of thinking is related to some kind of Christian confession. Researchers have pointed out how this kind of strategic use of 'knowledge about Christianity' is related to Norwegian cultural history (cf. Andreassen, 2014, 2017). A primary idea explicitly stated in the Norwegian curricula was that Christianity formed 'a deep current' within Norway's ('our') history (cf. Andreassen, 2014, pp. 268–269). In the current *Core Curriculum* (The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs, 1994) (which applies until 2020), Christianity was primarily related to Norwegian culture, and not viewed as a religion or a 'world religion'. This way of relating Christianity, the majority religion, to 'our culture' or 'our nation's history', is, firstly, a way of constructing knowledge about Christianity to be of special importance. Secondly, it relates Christianity to culture, i.e., something else compared to other religions that are oriented towards rules and regulations for its followers. Hence, religious traditions as 'religions' (or 'world religions') are more stereotypically constructed as something limiting 'our' way of life or 'our culture', rather than Christianity, which, in the Norwegian case, is described in the curricula as a part of Norwegian culture. These tendencies are also present in the Nordic countries (Denmark, Sweden and Norway; Finland is an exception) (cf. Andreassen, 2013; Berglund, 2013; Husebø, 2014; Jensen & Kjeldsen, 2013). In these three countries, the RE subject in school is considered or intended to be non-confessional. Still, there is a quantitative bias towards Christianity, and Christianity is the only religion which is related to national history and cultural identity.

No one argues against the fact that Christianity has been a central part of history and culture in Nordic countries since the 11th century. When Christianity is given more space in RE in school, with reference to historical significance, it indicates a perspective that emphasises historical knowledge. The opposite, a lack of historical knowledge, poses a danger because it makes it difficult – almost impossible – to have insight into today's society. Consciousness about history, in contrast, provides an insight into a binding continuity between past and present and, thus, understanding and insight into Norwegian society. Historical knowledge provides insight into heritage, tradition, and roots, and might also relate to identity. With consciousness about history linked to the position of Christianity in Norwegian history, the goal seems to be to counteract contemporary historical changes that do not provide as much importance to the knowledge of Christianity.

In the verdict against the Norwegian state in 2007, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg decided that there can be a *quantitative* bias (towards Christianity) in a curriculum, as long as this does not lead to a *qualitative* bias (Andreassen, 2013, pp. 144–145). Even with a quantitative bias, it might pass as a non-confessional subject in accordance with regulations on religious freedom and human rights. Thus, religions must be treated as qualitatively equal and not be qualitatively rated. This is, of course, complicated, and in most national contexts, it is a long way from the political level, deciding and discussing these issues, to teaching in the classroom. My point here is simply to show that there are (at least) two ways of arguing, and this might lead to slightly different ideas of why and how specific religions should be included in a curriculum. The emphasis on 'knowledge about Christianity', in Norway, Denmark, and Sweden, is strategically related to cultural heritage and the nation's history. 'Knowledge about other religions' then becomes knowledge of 'the others' and not 'us'. Thus, a pattern might appear in the 'knowledge about religions': that it counteracts intentions of social cohesion or tolerance.

'Knowledge about religions' is also to a large extent embedded in the so-called 'World Religion Paradigm' (cf. Cotter & Robertson, 2016). That means that when 'other religions' are mentioned besides Christianity, the 'world religions' are found: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism. Suzanne Owen (2011) has pointed out that the 'world religion paradigm' is widely and rather unquestioningly adopted in RE in England. In reference to Owen (2011), Wanda Alberts (2017) has argued that this is also the case for many other countries. And she adds: 'In the European context, the world religions paradigm may even be said to be the framework for the representation of religions in school, be it in separative (different versions of confessional RE and so-called "alternative subjects") or integrative (one subject for all pupils together) contexts' (Alberts, 2017, p. 451). Both Alberts and Owen comment that the usual pattern is Christianity + 'other religions' or 'other world religions'. The 'world religion paradigm' might be seen as an interpretive frame that serves to position Christianity on top or as the prototype of religion, which other religions should be understood in reference to.

Strategic use of knowledge in religious literacy arguments

The very idea behind different arguments about the importance of linking 'knowledge about religion' to cultural history can be related to the idea of 'religious literacy'.[5] The term 'religious literacy' has been used in the debate on

5 The sections/paragraphs on religious literacy and cultural heritage draw on an article written in Norwegian (Andreassen, 2017, pp. 46–48).

religious education in England since the 1990s (cf. Jackson, 2004, p. 75) and is more recently used in various ways by religious studies scholars (see, for example, Fujiwara, 2010; Moore, 2007; Prothero, 2007). The use of the term is not unambiguous, but the main content is related to an understanding of how knowledge about religion is essential for having insight into one's own culture and history. The term, however, is not only aimed at historical relationships alone but about how such knowledge also provides insight into today's society. For example, in an American context, Stephen Prothero (2007) adds great importance to knowledge about the Bible. His reasoning is that American's inadequate knowledge of the Bible makes it harder to understand their own society. Hector Avalos (2009) has criticised Prothero's (2007) argument and adds that more emphasis on Bible knowledge is not only about being conscious of the Bible's central position in American history but about highlighting and maintaining a particular perspective on how American society and American history should be understood today. Avalos (2009) also raises the question of whether the lack of Bible knowledge actually might help solve power structures related to, for example, Christian churches. Thus, 'deficient' Bible knowledge can have an emancipatory (liberating) function, according to Avalos. Alternatively, more nuanced: if your attention is too focused on how the Bible has influenced American history, you miss other important factors, and you become 'caught' in a pattern of detecting the Bible's influence.

The questions raised by Avalos also show that knowledge is not neutral but might be interpreted and used in different ways. It is about how 'knowledge about the Bible' is being framed. In the academic study of history, theoretical discussions about creating history and how people might be seen as active agents in creating histories, and thus in a position to create history, have gained much attention (cf. Kean & Ashton, 2009, p. 1). History, as 'knowledge of religion', has to be created and defined as 'knowledge'. In the school system, there is no doubt that curricula are powerful tools in creating knowledge. A curriculum also creates 'important knowledge', thus creating a hierarchy of knowledge. From a study of religions point of view, an argument would be that it is, of course, relevant to know something about religious texts, such as the Bible, as constituting different religious traditions and as examples of religious innovation and change. Several of the competence goals regarding the Bible in the current Norwegian KRLE curriculum concern the students having insight into specific texts and that there is a clear meaning in them.[6] This suggests a more

6 One of the formulations in the main subject area, Christendom after 10th grade, states that 'Pupils should be enabled to discuss and elaborate on selected biblical texts from the Prophets, the poetic biblical texts in the Bible, the Words of Wisdom, one Gospel and one of the Letters of Paul, and explain the distinctive characteristics and main ideas of these' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 8).

normative interpretation and understanding of the Bible, not just about pupils gaining religious literacy or insight into their cultural heritage. It is about getting to know specific texts, specific interpretations, which the Norwegian state defines as important. For the sake of nuance, however, one should add that the curriculum also mentions texts from other religious traditions.[7] Still, other religious texts are referred to more generally, and specific parts of the texts are not mentioned, only the Koran and Hadiths (Islam), or 'selected texts from Hindu and Buddhist written traditions' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 6).

My point is that knowledge in an RE curriculum is not 'just' about 'historical facts' to provide insight into cultural heritage or improve religious literacy. It is also about how one wants to use knowledge and use history. In RE, it is about the selection of 'important' or 'relevant' knowledge about religion that appears in the curricula, and how this is related to religious literacy and communicated as important for cultural identity or national history. Danish historian Bernard Eric Jensen (2009) points out that the past can be used in different ways and with different purposes. Central to the history subject is that history is not something objectively given that can be conveyed neutrally. History and history dissemination are about something being identified as 'history' or 'past', and thus also communicated as something central or essential. For something in the past to appear relevant in the present, it is required that the past be made alive and that it can be perceived as 'authentic' (Kruse & Warring, 2015, p. 109). 'History', 'tradition', and 'cultural heritage' do not exist in themselves but must be actively defined and maintained. Study-of-religions researchers have pointed out that religiosity is closely interwoven with an active construction and maintenance of traditions of religion (cf. Hervieu-Léger, 1999). In light of established historical perspectives, the emphasis on Christianity as cultural heritage in RE curricula in the Nordic countries concerns maintaining awareness of a majority religion and a cultural tradition, not simply learning some historical facts. This becomes more evident when one takes into account how references to or knowledge about Old Norse religions are absent in the current RE curricula.

The challenges of the 21st-century skills movement in RE

In a paper on teaching religion at universities and university-colleges, the study-of-religions scholar, Jonathan Z. Smith (1938-2017) ([1991] 2013, p.

7 Regarding Islam, after 7th grade, it states that 'Pupils should be able to explain what the Koran and Hadith are and talk about central stories from Islamic faith' (The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 7).

13), writes, 'There is nothing that must be taught, there is nothing that cannot be left out'. Challenged to define a core issue in liberal education, Smith formulates, 'training in argument about interpretation' (Smith, [1991] 2013, p. 14). One might argue that Smith put more emphasis on skills than acquiring knowledge, aiming to enable his students to think critically, in the sense of becoming aware of how, for example, a religious text can be interpreted in different ways, rather than learning simple facts, such as the founder of Sikhism was, according to Sikh tradition, Guru Nanak (1469-1539), and so forth. Smith's idea is to relate knowledge to interpretation and, consequently, to power. In this approach to teaching, Smith also formulates two rules. The first is that teaching must be 'organised around the notion of argument and the insistence that the building blocks of argument remain constant: definitions, data, classifications, and explanations' (Smith, [1991]2013, p. 17). The second rule is: 'Nothing must stand alone' (ibid.). By that, Smith explains that a second-order text should have a conversation partner in another text that deals with the same issue. Such a juxtaposition might reveal differences in arguments and interpretation. Through his two rules, one gains a sense of what Smith's idea of 'training in argument about interpretation' is.

The above citation of Smith, that 'There is nothing that must be taught, there is nothing that cannot be left out', can in many ways make you think of the basic ideas in the so-called 21st-century skills movement. Advocates of the 21st-century skills movement argue that schooling for the future should emphasise skills that will be important in pupils' future, in higher education and in working life (cf. Prensky, 2010; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). These competencies also provide a 'learning for life', not just 'learning for schools', thus implying that knowledge-oriented teaching is not relevant for the future. This distinction is but one example of a number of binary oppositions constructed in the discussion about 21st-century skills (Greenlaw, 2015, p. 896). Focus on content (knowledge) is often related to teacher-oriented teaching (vs student-centred learning), dominated by facts and principles (vs questions and problems) and, hence, theoretical (vs directed towards practice and future) (ibid.). The list might be longer. The point is that the binary oppositions create a dichotomy between traditional ('teacher-centred and hierarchical') teaching and progressive ('student-centred and inclusive') teaching. This might result in a polarised debate, thus being not very constructive.

I do not know of any education system that does not emphasise some kind of skills. The question at stake is rather if and/or how skills, instead of knowledge, are emphasised. In policy documents, the focus on skills is removed from the knowledge they are supposed to produce. Skills like analysis or

interpretation are very rarely put forward in the 21st-century skills movement. Instead, the focus is on more technical skills like critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, information literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, flexibility, leadership, initiative, productivity and social skills.[8] One can easily agree that such skills are essential in schools. However, there is a danger of them becoming 'fast' or 'quick' skills that can be marked as 'done' on a teacher's checklist. Performing an analysis or interpretation of a religious text or other material from a religious tradition is slow and takes time.

In Norway, but also in other countries, the impact of global organisations, particularly the OECD,[9] has influenced the school system (cf. Hovdenak & Stray, 2015, p. 55). This has resulted in stronger accountability requirements, the implementation of a national framework for quality control, and a curriculum (in 2006) formulating measurable competence goals, rather than content specifications. Norwegian scholars Hilt, Riese, and Søreide (2019, p. 385), have used the term 'vernacular globalisation', to describe the influence of global organisations in Norway. This term describes how global ideas are contextualised in a national educational system.

Returning to Smith, his statement, cited above, that 'There is nothing that must be taught, there is nothing that cannot be left out', can be used to legitimise a curriculum without any specific reference to what the particular content of the knowledge should be, i.e., traditional teaching goals, such as 'Knowledge about five pillars of Islam', 'Knowledge about the Reformation in Europe', or 'Knowledge about the Church of Norway'. 'Knowledge about religion' can be quite different and, at some point, include something (some religions) and portray a religion through a religious elite or extremists, as well as exclude something (some religions) and leave out the diversity of people in a religious tradition.

The crucial point is how 'knowledge about religions' is being framed and made an object for various interpretations, as Smith ([1991]2013) pointed out. The competency to map and analyse different interpretations, and thus representations, is a kind of competency that I will argue is not given sufficient attention in the 21st-century skills movement. To do a critical reading in order to be aware of different interpretations of the same, demands depth, time, and

8 This website gives a quick introduction to all the skills included in the 21st skills movement: https://www.aeseducation.com/career-readiness/what-are-21st-century-skills.

9 A recent OECD report (a position paper), 'The Future of Education and Skills' (OECD, 2018), can serve as an example of how the OECD highlights some areas of competency or skills. In this report, three challenges are put forward, needing 'new solutions in a rapidly changing world': environmental, economic and social (OECD, 2018, p. 3). In order to solve these challenges, pupils must learn to be agents: 'Future-ready students need to exercise agency, in their own education and throughout life. Agency implies a sense of responsibility […]' (OECD, 2018, p. 4).

a qualified teacher. It also differs from the typical competency regarding the ability to deal with the vast amounts of information that the 'knowledge society' produces. An important argument in the 21st-century skills movement is that Internet technology provides a challenge in its vast ocean of information. In RE, one might say that religion and religions on the Internet will help students understand that there are lots of ways being a Christian, a Muslim or a Hindu. However, it is a significant challenge, as Greenlaw and Fox (2007, p. 70) formulate it, 'Information appears indiscriminately, directed at no one particular, in enormous volume at high speeds, and disconnected from theory, meaning, or purpose'. For the RE teacher, the task is to provide students with theory and an interpretative frame. One must develop analytical and interpretative skills in order to make some sense – if that is possible – of all the information about religious traditions on the Internet (and elsewhere), as Smith argues. Analysing how knowledge can be – and is being – used for different purposes is about providing the pupils with a frame that can relate the awareness of different interpretations to power, to equality, to civilisations. Greenlaw (2015, p. 897) has criticised the 21st-century skills metanarrative for undervaluing the role of the teacher as an experienced expert who can frame the students' learning by contextualising and theorising along with the students. I will relate Greenlaw's criticism of what I see as the 21st-century skills movement's avoidance of dealing with epistemological questions. The reason is most probably that the 21st-century movement does not wish to spend much time on knowledge, because that is related to 'traditional teaching', which, basically, is seen as old fashioned and something one wants to discard. The result, in my opinion, is that the 21st-century skills movement only scratches the surface in dealing with epistemological questions.

An obvious explanation for why the 21st-century movement avoids epistemological questions is, of course, that the focus is on overarching or general competencies, literally skills, that might apply for every school subject. Then there is no time or place to deal with epistemological questions. As global institutions such as the OECD seemingly get more power in making recommendations for educational systems, thus influencing national educational systems, it is crucial to be aware firstly how (and by whom) such recommendations have been produced and, secondly, how they are interpreted and applied in specific educational systems. The latter has been characterised by Weninger (2017) as 'the "vernacularisation" of global education policy'.

For the sake of nuance, there is, of course, an important side to global education policies, as they might prevent nationalism and exclusivism in national curricula. However, these policies also contain valorised ideas of education and

are not neutral. They emphasise some things (skills or competencies) as important and thus leave something out.

The 'vernacularisation' of global education policy in Norway – designing an RE subject for the future

In the Norwegian case, in the white papers and documents that form the background of the new curricula that will be implemented in 2020, one can almost sense a fear that the curricula might become outdated too fast. When the first drafts of the new curricula were presented in early 2018, one could see the influence of the 21st-century skills movement, through a systematic focus on general competencies. The competencies do not vary much from subject to subject and focus on the fact that pupils should be enabled to explore, gather information, explain, present (to others, written and orally), think critically, analyse, make comparisons and critically assess information and knowledge.

The first job for the committees that were organised in 2018 to develop a new RE curriculum was to transfer the interdisciplinary themes, which were presented in the Core Curriculum, into five 'core elements'. This resulted in these 'core elements'[10] for RE: 1) awareness[11] of religions and secular world views, 2) exploration of religions and (secular) world views with different (research) methods, 3) exploration of existential questions and answers, 4) the ability to take another's perspective, and 5) ethical reflection. These 'core elements' apply to RE both in primary and secondary (the KRLE subject) and in upper secondary (the Religion and Ethics subject) schools.

The first two of the 'core elements' deal explicitly with religion. 'Awareness of religions and secular world views' are elaborated in this way:

> The subject will provide knowledge and understanding of religions and secular world views locally, nationally and globally, and at the individual, group and tradition levels. Pupils should also gain insight into how religions and secular world views form part of historical processes and are linked to social changes and cultural heritage. The pupils will become familiar with the diversity of religions and secular world views, as well as the diversity within the different traditions. The subject will provide a basis for reflection on majority, minority, and indigenous perspectives in Norway. (Pedlex, 2018, p. 69, my translation)

10 The core elements (Norwegian, *kjerneelementer*) are presented on this website (only in Norwegian): https://www.regjeringen.no/no/aktuelt/fornyer-innholdet-i-skolen/id2606028/.

11 In Norwegian documents, it does not say knowledge (Norwegian, *kunnskap*) but awareness (Norwegian, *kjennskap*).

The second, 'Exploration of religions and secular world views with different (research) methods', reads:

> Pupils should be able to examine and explore religions and secular world views as complex phenomena, through the use of varied (research) methods. Their understanding of religions and secular world views is deepened and challenged through analysis of and critical reflection on sources, norms and the power of definition. Knowledge of different views and definitions of religions and secular world views is part of the core element and is essential for understanding and managing diversity. (Pedlex, 2018, p. 70, my translation)

The 'core elements' clearly signal that religion and secular world views are things that appear different in different contexts and discourses. The approach is critical and aims to explore different sides to religions and secular world views. The idea that pupils should learn to analyse and think critically about sources, norms and the power of definition, I find very important. In the core elements lie important ideas about dealing with epistemological questions that pupils will face and can only learn about in RE.

Based on these 'core elements', the draft issued in March 2019 by the curriculum committee for RE presented curricula for KRLE and Religion and Ethics, introducing new formulations for competencies in RE, i.e., what should be taught. In the latest draft, there are eleven formulations about competencies in the curriculum for stages 8-10 and thirteen in the curriculum for upper-secondary schools.[12] The formulations of competencies appear to be similar for secondary and upper-secondary schools, albeit on a more complex taxonomical level in upper-secondary schools, with competencies such as analysis and comparison, which do not appear in the secondary school curriculum.

Even if there will also be a quantitative bias towards Christianity in the curriculum for 2020, and the draft implies that a primary focus might be more on general competencies, I find it significant that competencies concerning analysis and interpretation are included in the core elements. The pupils should be enabled to explore, explain, present, reflect (think), use, and critically assess information and knowledge about religion and secular world views.

12 However, the Norwegian educational context has its paradoxes. In 2015, it was politically decided that 'About half of the teaching time of the subject will be used for Knowledge of Christianity' (Andreassen, 2013, p. 148; Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training, 2015, p. 2). This will also apply to the new curriculum in KRLE in 2020 and was something that the curriculum committee working with the new curriculum could alter. This does not apply to Religion and Ethics in upper-secondary school. This quantitative emphasis on Christianity in KRLE is related 'to the significance of Christianity as cultural heritage in our [the Norwegian] society' (ibid.).

Developing general understanding and being able to take another's perspective are also part of the skills and competencies. For Religion and Ethics in upper-secondary schools, the skills and competencies are similar but somewhat more advanced, as the pupils should be enabled to explore, describe, investigate, explain and problematise, analyse, and compare information and knowledge about religions and secular world views.

I find the new curricula in RE in Norway interesting. How the final documents will look remains to be seen. However, there will definitely be a need for competent teachers with specialised training in RE in order to approach the ideas formulated in the core elements. Additionally, there is a risk that teaching in RE, influenced by the 21st-century skills movement, will focus on general competencies and skills, without dealing with the more epistemological questions in RE, such as questions of representation and power.

Closing remarks

'Knowledge about religion' might be described as a nodal point in teaching RE. However, in curricula, ideas and intentions about how this knowledge should be framed and used are not unambiguous. It may be related to general aims of creating social cohesion, understanding and tolerance, and it can be related to a strategic use of what is essential in a nation's cultural heritage. I find it interesting that some of the skills in the Norwegian curricula that are currently developed find their parallel in the thinking of the study-of-religion scholar, Jonathan Z. Smith. Applied in RE, the skills advocated by Smith are necessary, in order to develop and frame 'knowledge about religion' and how it may vary in different contexts and might be interpreted differently. An RE subject for the future must, of course, draw on general competencies and skills that are also relevant in other school subjects. In addition, competencies and skills that analyse religion and secular world views as epistemological entities, subject to strategic interpretation, are crucial for maintaining RE's legitimacy as a separate and vital school subject in public education.

References

Alberts, W. (2007). *Integrative religious education in Europe. A study-of-religions approach.* Berlin: De Gruyter.

Alberts, W. (2017). Reconstruction, critical accommodation or business as usual? Challenges of criticisms of the World Religions Paradigm to the design of teaching programmes in the study of religions. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion, 29*(4-5), 443–458. doi:https://doi.

org/10.1163/15700682-12341404

Andreassen, B.-O. (2013). Religion education in Norway: Tension or harmony between human rights and Christian cultural heritage? *Temenos, 49*(2), 137–164.

Andreassen, B.-O. (2014). Christianity as culture and religions as religions. An analysis of the core curriculum as framework for Norwegian RE. *British Journal of Religious Education, 36*(3), 265–281.

Andreassen, B.-O. (2017). Hvordan kan vi forstå kristendommens sentrale plass i skolens religionsfag? [How can we understand Christianity's central position in RE?]. In M. von der Lippe & S. Undheim (Eds.), *Religion i skolen. Didaktiske perspektiver på religions- og livssynsfaget* (pp. 35–53). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Avalos, H. (2009). Is biblical illiteracy a bad thing? Reflections on bibliolatry in the modern academy. Council of Societies for the Study of Religion. *The CSSR Bulletin, 38*(2), 47–52.

Berglund, J. (2013). Swedish religion education: Objective but marinated in Lutheran Protestantism? *Temenos, 49*(2), 165–184.

Cotter, C. R., & Robertson, D. G. (2016). The world religions paradigm in contemporary religious studies. In C. R. Cotter & D. G. Robertson (Eds.), *After world religions. Reconstructing religious studies* (pp. 1–20). London, UK: Routledge.

Fujiwara, S. (2010). On qualifying religious literacy. Recent debates on higher education and religious studies in Japan. *Teaching Theology and Religion, 13* (3), 223–236. doi:https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9647.2010.00615.x

Gosh, R., Manuel, A., Chan, W. Y., Dilmulati, D., & Babaei, M. (2016). *Education and security. A global literature review on the role of education in countering violent religious extremism.* Tony Blair Institute for Global Change. Retrieved from https://institute.global/sites/default/files/inline-files/IGC_Education%20and%20Security.pdf

Greenlaw, J. (2015). Deconstructing the metanarrative of the 21st century skills movement. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *47*(9), 894–903. doi:10.1080/00131857.2015.1035156

Greenlaw, J. C., & Fox, M. (2007). *The New Brunswick dedicated notebook research report: Final report*. Fredericton: New Brunswick Department of Education.

Hervieu-Léger, D. (1999). Religion as memory. Reference to tradition and the constitution of a heritage of belief in modern societies. In J. G. Platvoet & A. L. Molendijk (Eds.), *The pragmatics of defining religion. Contexts, concepts and contests* (pp. 72–93). Leiden: Brill.

Hilt, L. T., Riese, H., & Søreide, G. E. (2019). Narrow identity resources for future students: The 21st century skills movement encounters the Norwegian education policy context. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, *51* (3) 384–402. doi:10.1080/00220272.2018.1502356

Hovdenak, S. S., & Stray, J. H. (2015). *Hva skjer i skolen? En kunnskapssosiologisk analyse av norsk utdanningspolitikk fra 1990-tallet og frem til i dag* [What happens in school? A Knowledge-Sociological analysis of Norwegian educational policies from the 1990s until today]. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.

Husebø, D. (2014). Tro- og livssynsfag i Skandinavia – en sammenligning [RE in Scandinavia – a comparison]. *Norsk pedagogisk tidsskrift, 98*(5), 364–374.

Jackson, R. (2004). *Rethinking religious education and plurality*. London, UK: Routledge Falmer.

Jackson, R. (2007). The interpretive approach. In J. Keast (Ed.), *Religious diversity and intercultural education: A reference book for schools* (pp. 79–90). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Jackson, R. (2012). The interpretive approach as a research tool: Inside the REDCo project. In R. Jackson (Ed.), *Religion, education, dialogue and conflict. Perspectives on religious education research* (pp. 84–102). London, UK: Routledge.

Jackson, R. (2014). *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Jensen, B. E. (2009). Usable pasts: Comparing approaches to popular and public history. In P. Ashton & H. Kean (Eds.), *People and their pasts. Public history today* (pp. 42–56). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Jensen, T., & Kjeldsen, K. (2013). RE in Denmark – Political and professional discourses and debates, past and present. *Temenos, 49* (2), 185–223.

Kean, H., & Ashton, P. (2009). Introduction. In P. Ashton & H. Kean (Eds.), *People and their pasts. Public history today* (pp. 1–20). New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Keast, J. (Ed.) (2007). *Religious diversity and intercultural education: A reference book for schools.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Kruse, T., & Warring, A. (2015). Historiebrug på kryds og tværs – afrunding [Crisscross use of history – a summary]. In T. Kruse & A. Warring (Eds.), *Fortider tur/retur. Reenactment og historiebrug* (pp. 109–113). Fredriksberg: Samfundslitteratur.

Lippe, M. von der, & Undheim, S. (2017). Hva skal vi med et felles religionsfag i skolen? [Why common compulsory RE in school?]. In M. Von der Lippe & S. Undheim (Eds.), *Religion i skolen. Didaktiske perspektiver på religions- og livssynsfaget* (pp. 11–24). Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Milot, M. (2007). Co-operative learning. In J. Keast (Ed.), *Religious diversity and intercultural education: A reference book for schools* (pp. 51–56). Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Moore, D. (2007). *Overcoming religious illiteracy. A cultural studies approach to the study of religion in secondary education*. New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

The Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2015). *Curriculum for knowledge of Christianity, religion, philosophies of life and ethics* [KRLE]. Oslo: Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no/klo6/RLE1-02?lplang=http://data.udir.no/klo6/eng

NOU - Official Norwegian Reports [Norske offentlige utdredninger]. (2015). *The school of the future. Renewal of subjects and competences*. Oslo: Ministry of Education and Research.

OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). (2018). *The future of education and skills*. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/education/2030/E2030%20Position%20Paper%20(05.04.2018).pdf

OSCE (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe). (2007). *Toledo guiding principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools.* Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR. Retrieved from https://www.osce.org/odihr/29154?download=true

Owen, S. (2011). The world religion paradigm. Time for a change. *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, *10*(3), 253–268. doi:10.1177/1474022211408038

Pedlex (2018). *Dybdelæring og kjerneelementer i fag* [Depth learning and core elements in school subjects]. Oslo: Pedlex.

Prensky, M. (2010). *Teaching digital natives: Partnering for real learning*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.

Prothero, S. (2007). *Religious literacy: What every American needs to know – and doesn't*. New York, NY: Harper Collins.

The Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. (1994). *Core curriculum*. Oslo: The Ministry. Retrieved from https://www.udir.no/globalassets/filer/lareplan/generell-del/core_curriculum_english.pdf

Smith, J. Z. ([1991]2013]. The introductory course: Less is better. In C. I. Lehrich (Ed.), *On teaching religion. Essays by Jonathan Z. Smith* (pp. 11–19). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for life in our times*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Weissman, D. (2009). Teaching religion in an inter-religious context: A form of peace-building. In L. Roos & J. Berglund (Eds.), *Your heritage and mine. Teaching in a multi-religious classroom* (pp. 121–132). Uppsala: Swedish Science Press.

Weninger, C. (2017). The "vernacularization" of global education policy: Media and digital literacy as twenty-first century skills in Singapore. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *37*(4), 500–516. doi:10.1080/02188791.2017.1336429

Whitlock, A. (2017). The role of religious education in addressing extremism. In M. Castelli & M. Chater (Eds.), *We need to talk about religious education. Manifestos for future RE* (pp. 185–200). Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London.

Biographical note

Bengt-Ove Andreassen, PhD, is a professor in the field of study of religions (with didactics of religions as one of his specialties) at the Department of Education, UiT – The Arctic University of Norway. His main areas of research are: curriculum and textbook analysis, representations of religions in RE, religion in educational policies, and the professional development of RE teachers.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.693

Religious Symbols in Public Schools as Teachable Controversies in Religious Education

Christian Moe[1]

This focus issue of CEPS Journal raises two topics usually treated separately, Religious Education and the use of religious symbols in public schools. Both involve the challenge of applying liberal democratic principles of secularism and pluralism in a school setting and refract policies on religion under conditions of globalisation, modernisation and migration. I take this situation as a teachable moment and argue that it illustrates the potential of a particular kind of Religious Education, based on the scientific Study of Religion, for making sense of current debates in Europe, including the debate on religious education itself. However, this requires maintaining a spirit of free, unbiased comparative enquiry that may clash with political attempts to instrumentalise the subject as a means of integrating minority students into a value system.

Keywords: religious education, religious symbols, public schools, secularism

1 Ljubljana, Slovenia; mail@christianmoe.com.

Religiozni simboli v javnih šolah kot poučne kontroverze v religijskem izobraževanju

Christian Moe

Tematska številka revije CEPS izpostavlja dve temi, ki se običajno obravnavata ločeno – pouk o religijah in uporaba religijskih simbolov v javni šoli. Obe zaznamuje izziv apliciranja liberalnodemokratičnih načel sekularizma in pluralizma v šolskem okolju, skozi obe se tudi lomijo politike glede religije v razmerah globalizacije, modernizacije in migracij. Takšne razmere predstavim kot priložnost za poučevanje in argumentiram, da ilustrira potencial specifičnega, na religiologiji utemeljenega predmeta o religijah, za osmišljanje trenutnih razprav v Evropi, vključno z razpravami o pouku o religijah. To pa zahteva ohranjanje duha svobodnega, nepristranskega primerjalnega raziskovanja, ki lahko trči ob politične poskuse instrumentalizacije predmeta kot sredstva integracije učencev iz manjšinskih skupnosti v sistem vrednot.

Ključne besede: religijsko izobraževanje, religiozni simboli, javne šole, sekularizem

Introduction

This special issue of CEPS Journal raises two topics, Religious Education (RE) and religious symbols in public schools, which are usually treated separately, by different disciplines – respectively, those concerned with religion and teaching, and those concerned with law and public policy. Still, the two topics are linked in at least two ways.

First, both are concerned with the challenge of applying liberal democratic principles of secularism and pluralism in the public institutions of societies increasingly characterised by a plurality of religions and world-views. The school is a microcosm of the broader problems of multicultural coexistence and a subject of political contention. School policy on these issues is thus a helpful prism through which we can see refracted current European policies on religion and discern a spectrum of ideological positions.[2]

Second, both issues have taken on increasing salience in Europe in recent decades due to the perceived role of religion in problems with integrating immigrant minorities; the 'securitisation' of religion, especially Islam; and the rise of political movements that privilege native identities and reject liberal principles in a defensive reaction to globalisation, modernisation, and migration.[3] A perceived need to integrate new (especially Muslim) minorities into a national culture of shared values is seen in the turn to 'civic integration' of immigrants since the 1990s, not only in residence/citizenship requirements but also in public schools, including RE (e.g., Fernández & Jensen, 2017). This is to be expected, as public schools are society's main institution of secondary socialisation and cultural reproduction, and religion is still (despite secularisation) widely seen either as a 'social glue' or as a source of social discord that must be carefully controlled. European institutions have thus become increasingly concerned that intercultural education, including RE, should foster tolerance and other liberal values to promote social cohesion and prevent religious conflict (Committee of Ministers, 2008; Faas, Hajisoteriou, & Angelides, 2014; OSCE/ODIHR, 2007; PACE, 2005; REDCo, 2009). Meanwhile, national authorities across Europe have invoked integration into a national culture, conflated with Christian religious heritage and/or secular liberal values, to regulate various symbolic religious expressions in schools, and in a few cases to introduce new

2 E.g. the tentative distinction in Kuburić & Moe (2006) between Slovenia's 'liberal' approach to RE, Bosnia's, Croatia's and Serbia's 'multiculturalist' approach and the 'communalist' approach emerging in Macedonian debates.

3 While most far-right populist parties in Europe have not historically been particularly concerned with religion, they have become rhetorical defenders of Christendom through their opposition to immigrant Islam (Marzouki, McDonnell, & Roy, 2016).

teaching standards (Britain) or even new RE subjects (Norway). As discussed below, these measures have often been controversial, and some have ended in court, producing no less controversial judgements.

In this essay, I take this situation as a teachable moment and ask: How can educators respond *pedagogically* to these controversies as an opportunity to teach about religion? Relevant expert recommendations have focused on *rights* and *process* (Jackson, 2014, chapter 8) more than educational *content*. I outline study questions, discussion topics, and examples for conceptualising the public role of religious symbols, with suggestions for specific knowledge aims and thinking skills, and argue why the RE framework I consider is suited for making sense of these debates.[4]

The kind of RE considered here is a knowledge subject *about* religions which, like other school subjects, is taught to all pupils regardless of confession ('integrative' RE) and is rooted in an academic discipline, the scientific study of religion (Alberts, 2008, 2010; Jensen, 2008, 2010). A cross-disciplinary field that draws on the methods of history, philology, anthropology and sociology, the Study of Religion (SR) takes religion as empirically available social and cultural phenomena, studies these phenomena comparatively across cultures and over time, and develops concepts and theories to describe, analyse and account for them within a naturalistic framework, treating religious/supernatural truth claims as data to be explained, rather than as explanations. Like other academic disciplines, SR engages in a continuous process of self-critical reflection on method and theory, not least on such relevant problems in the present political context as the roles of *insiders and outsiders* (McCutcheon, 1999) and the *representation* of religious others (on textbooks, see, e.g. Andreassen & Lewis, 2014).

Part of this process is an ongoing debate over what constitutes 'religion' itself as an object of study. Here, I take as my theoretical starting point a reflection on SR in the (university) classroom by Martin S. Jaffee, who begins by rejecting two influential understandings (religion as psycho-social 'experience' or phenomenological 'essence') in favour of a cultural-systems perspective in which religion is understood in a hermeneutic circle between theory and observation. Jaffee suggests that research-based teaching of comparative religion offers 'a certain sharpening of perception or education of taste', enabling students to grasp the role of religion in historical cultures and individual lives (Jaffee, 1999, p. 279). While I think SR offers a bit more than this, an educated taste is in itself a fine aim of a liberal education, and it could in time lead to more well-informed public debate and policy on religion than we find in the cases discussed below.

4 This is not to suggest, however, that understanding current events should be the primary purpose of, or justification for, RE.

In the first section, I outline salient features of the controversies, focusing on prominent cases in European religious-freedom law as condensed expressions of public policy and debate: Norway's RE subject (the *Folgerø* case) and Italy's classroom crucifixes (the *Lautsi* case) in conjunction with several headscarf cases. I argue that there is a paradox in the authorities' handling of these cases that reveals deficiencies in the public understanding of religion and religious symbols. Therefore, I go on to highlight key theoretical concerns, analytical categories and findings from SR, to outline how SR-based RE can engage with the religious-symbols debate. In the concluding discussion, I consider how the increasing concern with integration in multi-religious societies represents an opportunity to implement integrative SR-based RE, but also a challenge to the vision of a subject exploring world-views rather than imparting them.

RE and religious symbols: controversies and contradictions

Diverse political dynamics favour RE that seeks to integrate pupils into a national identity by inculcating shared values, based on problematic equations between dominant religious traditions and national communities. Here I briefly consider the case of the compulsory integrative RE subject introduced in Norway in the 1990s (see also Andreassen, this focus issue).

In Norway, a state with an established church since 1537 (disestablished in 2012), elementary-school RE had been a mandatory 'Christianity' subject for members of the state Lutheran Church; since the 1970s, other children could take an alternative 'Worldviews and Ethics' class. In the 1990s school reforms, both options were replaced by a new mandatory, integrative subject on 'Christianity, Religions and Worldviews'. The new subject was not intended to preach one faith, but to teach about different religions through a common pedagogy, though with a quantitative focus on the majority religion. In effect, it represented a 'halfway house' between Christian religious instruction and a multi-religious RE subject (Thomassen, 2006, p. 259).

The legislative record[5] shows that the new religious diversity and the integration of immigrants were central concerns motivating the new RE policy, which must be understood in terms of the 'ingrained political desire to use the public school system as a tool for creating societal cohesion and national solidarity' (Thomassen, 2006, p. 258), led by the Labour Party, which was secular but

5 The official study (Pettersen, 1995), the government's White Paper (St. meld. nr. 14 [1995–96] Om kristendomskunnskap med religions- og livssynsorientering) and the parliamentary committee report (Innst. S. nr. 103 [1995–96]).

comfortable wielding the instrument of state religion. It was argued that successful integration depended on minorities mastering the 'cultural code' of Norwegian society by learning about its 'deep current' of Christianity. Pupils would also learn more about five minority worldviews (Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Humanism), but as 'other' and apparently less important religions.

Ironically, this policy succeeded in fostering dialogue and unity across religious lines by bringing minority religions together on a common platform for the first time – to *protest* the new RE subject.[6] A group of Humanist parents sued the government all the way to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). It should be kept in mind that the ECtHR, when interpreting the right to freedom of opinion and religion and the scope for legitimate restrictions on that right (Nowak & Vospernik, 2004), has applied a form of power analysis to proselytism and indoctrination. While proselytising for one's religion is a protected exercise of religious freedom, it violates the religious freedom of others when the proselytiser holds authority over the proselytised.[7] Public schools must, therefore, allow exemptions from subjects that are 'indoctrinating', in order to prevent the state from infringing on the *right of parents* to an education for their children in accordance with their convictions. However, schools may teach compulsory subjects, even if they clash with parents' convictions, as long as the subject is taught in an 'objective, critical and pluralistic way'.[8] In *Folgerø v. Norway*, the court by a 9–8 majority found that Norway had violated the parental right (ECtHR, 2007). The judgment turned on the restrictive exemption regime for the subject, its residual elements of Christian religious practice, and a legal framework that required schools to assist parents in the Christian upbringing of their children.

The subject has since been revised several times, the law changed, and the Church separated from the state. The subject has continued to evolve from its Christian-instruction origins, with carefully vetted contents, growing attention from SR scholars (von der Lippe & Undheim, 2017), and elements of a thematic approach, despite the current right-wing government's policy to devote more than half the subject to Christianity. Its troubled history, however, offers a cautionary tale about using RE as a tool of integration into 'national values'.

6 The Council for Religious and Life Stance Communities in Norway was formed as an umbrella organisation for interfaith cooperation in 1996, in connection with protests against the new RE subject. As of 2019 it counts 15 member communities and works on a range of issues (https://www.trooglivssyn.no/english/).

7 *Larissis v. Greece* (1998), contrast *Kokkinakis v. Greece* (1993). For discussion see Nowak and Vospernik (2004, pp. 160–161).

8 The parental right is set out in the first Optional Protocol to the ECHR, art. 2; the 'objective, critical and pluralistic' test was set out in a Danish case on sex education in 1976, and has recently been applied to religious education (ECtHR, 2007, 2011).

Controversies over religious symbols in public schools in Europe, too, have escalated from headmasters' offices through governments all the way to the ECtHR. They have mainly concerned whether Christian crucifixes or crosses may be displayed in classrooms and whether Muslim teachers or pupils may wear various forms of covering (hijab) including headscarves. Because states are required to make non-discriminatory laws, however, attempts to regulate these two religions and symbols tend to result in wider impacts, as with the French law against 'ostentatious' religious attire (Bowen, 2007) that clearly targets hijabs but also affects Jewish pupils with kippas, Sikhs with turbans and Christians with large crosses. Related issues that can only be mentioned in passing here include collective prayers, prayer spaces, exemptions from swimming lessons, and shaking hands with the other sex. As we will see, these are somewhat different kinds of symbols, subject to different ritual rules that are differently gendered, and used by different kinds of actors.

When conflicts escalate beyond the individual school, they must be resolved according to the abstract, universal, neutrally applicable principles of the secular state. This reduces the scope for individual adaptations, flexibility, and compromise that exists in face-to-face negotiations in the school setting. The 'thick' meanings of religious symbols and behaviour are translated into the 'thin' language of the secular legal order, notably into the vocabulary of human rights. Much is lost in translation.

Based on the same kind of power analysis used for 'indoctrinating' subjects (see above), one might expect the ECtHR to uphold pupils' religious freedom both to wear headscarves and to have classrooms free from crucifixes. Crucifixes are, after all, displayed in classrooms by state institutions holding authority over children. The hijab, in contrast, is worn by individual girls and women, and disputes arise when the state seeks to restrict it. The court might reasonably see a teacher with a headscarf as a more complex case, requiring a balanced consideration of her two aspects as both an individual believer and a state agent with authority over children. It might further highlight the intersection of gender discrimination and religious discrimination at play when the state excludes Muslim minority girls or women from schools for conforming to religious norms, impairing their right to education or work.

The ECtHR, however, has done the opposite. In *Lautsi and others v. Italy* (ECtHR, 2011), it ultimately upheld Italy's Fascist-era decrees mandating the display of crucifixes in public schools; in *Dogru v. France* (ECtHR, 2008), it upheld the expulsion of a schoolgirl for wearing a headscarf; and in *Dahlab v. Switzerland* (ECtHR, 2001), the case of a teacher prohibited from wearing a headscarf while teaching, it simply dismissed her application as unfounded.

This paradox is mostly explained by the court's deference to state authorities in religious matters (states' 'margin of appreciation') and the difficulty of developing a consistent European jurisprudence on religion when states have markedly different traditions of secularism and state-church relations. However, to justify their decisions, both national and international authorities have also resorted to contrived interpretations of religious symbols.

In Lautsi, the Italian Administrative Court went to the astonishing lengths of arguing that the crucifix actually symbolised secularism (for a detailed critique, see Gedicks & Annicchino, 2013). It held that the modern notions of tolerance and liberties were historically linked to a Christian emphasis on 'charity over faith' and 'rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar's'. Though the link was non-obvious, like an underground stream, the court was able to identify such principles, even religious freedom, in the 'central core of Christian faith'. All religious convictions were inherently exclusive except one – Christianity 'as properly understood'. Besides national identity, the crucifix thus also symbolised 'liberty, equality, human rights and religious toleration, and [...] the secular nature of the State'. It should be affirmed in order to transmit 'the refusal of any form of fundamentalism' to 'numerous pupils from outside the European Union' (probably meaning Muslims and stereotyping them as prone to 'fundamentalism'). Therefore, it would be 'something of a paradox' to exclude it from a public institution in the name of secularism (Administrative Court, quoted in ECtHR, 2011, para. 15). On appeal, the Supreme Administrative Court held that the crucifix symbolised 'the religious origin of' values which 'characterise Italian civilisation' (tolerance, rights, etc.) without detracting from their secular value, which could be affirmed by all. The crucifix could, therefore, fulfil 'a highly educational symbolic function, irrespective of the religion professed by the pupils' (Consiglio di Stato, quoted in ECtHR, 2011, para. 16).

The final ECtHR judgement considered the crucifix 'above all a religious symbol' and wisely avoided further interpretations, except to call it 'an essentially passive symbol' (ECtHR, 2011, para. 72). In the Dahlab case, however, the same court had argued that a headscarf could be a 'powerful external symbol' with a proselytising effect on young children (ECtHR, 2001). What made a crucifix on a classroom wall 'passive' and a headscarf on a teacher's head 'powerful'? The ECtHR sought to dismiss the contradiction by saying the facts of the two cases were entirely different (2011, para. 73), without explaining how the difference was relevant.

Observations of similar court cases on religion, and of the 'murky mixture' of arguments about religious symbols that inform judges' decisions, have led some to declare 'the impossibility of religious freedom' as a justiciable legal right (Sullivan, 2005, esp. pp. 5–8).

Teachable controversies

Unlike Sullivan, I am optimistic that religious freedom can be meaningfully protected by liberal democracies through knowledge-based state regulation of religious practice and identity. However, as conflicts in this area involve essentially contested concepts and 'thick doctrines', in modern plural societies they are better seen as tensions to manage and learn from than as problems to solve once and for all.[9] They can serve as 'teachable controversies':[10] studying and discussing such conflicts is a democratic exercise. While this can be done in Citizenship classes, an RE framework allows exploring the religious convictions behind the symbols as well as the classifications that guide policy (religious/secular, sacred/profane). This can be a learning experience both for pupils and for the educators who are first in line to manage the issues when they arise. In the following, I outline discussion topics reflecting the strengths of SR-based RE as a laboratory for analysing religious-symbol issues.

Interpreting ambiguity, assessing authority

SR training helps resist the trap of reducing symbols to any one authoritative meaning. Religious symbols tend to be highly *multivocal* or *polysemous* (Turner, 1967, p. 50): they can stand for multiple, seemingly contradictory meanings, which can also emerge and change over time. For example, there is a traditional Islamic legal discourse that explains hijab in terms of women's *duty* to avoid arousing male passions and causing seduction/social strife (*fitna*), and a modern Muslim women's discourse of the hijab as an individual right, a personal choice, an expression of their Muslim identity and a protection against harassment; today, these discourses co-exist uneasily (see, e.g., Mir-Hosseini, 2007). Even the notion that the crucifix could stand for secularism should not be dismissed out of hand. However, some interpretations are more plausible than others, for example, in terms of being supported by contextual evidence.

Religious symbols are not interpreted in a vacuum, but with reference to context and to the relevant interpretive communities (Scharffs, 2012), which in turn adhere to established interpretive authorities and meanings. All of these,

9 Rules are needed, of course, but on this view, rules should not be fixed in national law; rather, they should be made on lower administrative levels; be subject to review in the light of experience; empower headmasters to experiment with compromises; and provide for processes of negotiation. An example of the latter is the Bavarian compromise that crucifixes may be displayed, but that parents can contest the display locally (ECtHR, 2011, para. 28, p. 13).

10 'Teach the controversy' is a slogan notoriously used by creationists and global-warming deniers, to cast doubt on settled science. It nevertheless seems an appropriate motto for conflicts over religious symbols, where not only policy choices but the symbolic meanings themselves are bound up with contested values.

however, may be plural and divergent in a given case. It is, therefore, essential to understand different traditions' *authority structures and interpretive methods*. There are practical limits to how far this diversity can be covered in RE, but it should be conveyed, for example. that Islam has no pope or central teaching authority; it has scholars, aligned with various traditional schools of thought, who derive religious norms from a widely agreed set of sources and methods but differ over many details and the importance placed on them. The student of Islam therefore quickly learns to ask 'Whose Islam?' and not to take the opinion of any one Muslim authority as dispositive for all Muslims, for example, as to whether a particular form of covering (niqab, burqa) is a religious requirement.

Comparison and classification: religious symbols

SR-based RE helps place symbols and policies toward them into a comparative perspective. *Comparison*, as well as the companion issue of *classification*, is a long-standing concern in SR, from the ethnographic miscellanies of early anthropologists through the phenomenology of religion to recent methodological reflections that have been sharpened by post-modernist and political critiques (Carter, 2004; Patton & Ray, 2000; Smith, 1982). RE often features units devoted to particular phenomena across religious traditions, such as pilgrimage, holy books, mystical experience or dietary rules. This *thematic* approach trains students to consider similar features in different religions and world-views, while the *systematic* approach to each religious tradition as a unit provides a check on the aptness of such comparisons.

Exploring hijabs and crosses in the classroom, one might start from pupils' own experience of how people express their identities through clothing and fashion: what one can tell from their attire, haircuts, and accessories.[11] One might go on to discuss other religious headgear (nun's habits, kippas, turbans), in what contexts religious people cover and uncover their heads, what the symbolism is, and whether there are also secular public rituals and symbols of a similar nature, for example, in the army or courtroom. (For a classic discussion along these lines, see Hallpike, 1969/1979.)

Such comparisons lead to analysis in terms of critical categories like 'the sacred' or 'gender', revealing differences between the symbols themselves that may or may not justify different treatment. For instance, the cross (and in some churches, the crucifix) is instantly recognisable not just as *a* Christian symbol, but as *the* symbol emblematic of the religion as a whole, much like a flag stands for the nation – a 'summarizing symbol' (Ortner, 1973/1979). Crucifixes and crosses are considered sacred items, used for ritual purposes and centrally

11 Preferably without putting minority students in the class on the spot as exemplars of their religion.

displayed in churches. However, the cross also features in secular contexts (e.g., medical signs). It may be casually worn (by both sexes) in any situation both as an expression of piety and as a profane ornament. The headscarf, in contrast, is a piece of cloth with no intrinsic sanctity. It is worn only by women, and Muslims widely consider it a religious duty for women to be covered in the company of men who are not closely related to them. Such a gendered expression of sexual modesty grounded in religious morality is also at stake in other public-school issues (swimming, handshakes). Since the 'Islamic awakening' of the 1970s, the hijab has taken on a range of meanings, including political ones, and the hijab-clad woman has become a symbol of Islam. Conversely, the kippa is worn as a religious duty by male Jews, and the turban mostly but not exclusively by male Sikhs (whose religious duty centres on the unshorn hair it covers). All of these symbols can express a person's piety and devotion, as well as their affiliation to a community set apart from others.

After this analysis, one can return to the issue of school dress codes with a better idea of the different stated and unstated reasons people might have for displaying religious symbols and reacting to their regulation. Considering sexual modesty, pupils might reflect on how they would feel if a school dress code required them to expose themselves indecently by Western cultural standards; considering identity, they might consider whether banning such items might cause more young people to wear them as a 'punk' sign of protest.

Comparison and classification: Regulating religion

Another line of comparison, requiring more specialised historical background knowledge, is how state authority in other times and places has treated the religious symbols of others, and how these policies have shaped public space. What are the similarities and differences between hijab laws in Iran, Turkey, and France? How do they compare with the 'hat laws' introduced in Turkey and Iran in the early 20th century? More generally, can we find points of comparison between today's secular toleration policies and very different regimes, like the Roman state's toleration of cults that venerated the Emperor, or the late Ottoman *millet* system? How do laïcist public dress codes that compel minorities to *hide* religious difference, compare with those in medieval Christendom and Islam that compelled religious minorities to *mark* their difference visibly (e.g., 'Jewish badges')?

Debates on the regulation of religious symbols often turn on broad classifications. As seen in the *Lautsi* case, it is often asserted that, for example, a crucifix is acceptable in classrooms because it should be understood as a *cultural* symbol, conventional in the majority culture, and not as an object of *religious*

veneration; therefore, the argument goes, it does not infringe on the separation between state and religion. A variety of similar, strategically inflected arguments may be brought to bear on other people's symbols: The Muslim headscarf can variously be portrayed as *religious* (and thus unacceptable in secular schools); as a *cultural* tradition (hence not protected by religious freedom), or as primarily a *political* statement (more often to paint it as a dangerous challenge to the Western constitutional order than to afford it protection under freedom of expression).

To assess these arguments, it is helpful to recall that symbols have multiple meanings, so they can belong to several spheres at once. Religion has often served as a source of political legitimacy as well as a medium for propagating political messages and a collective identity that can be mobilised for political ends. It is also helpful to recall the SR understanding of religion as a social and cultural phenomenon: there is no religious symbol that is not cultural. The converse is not true: we can and do classify cultural elements and social practices as religious or not (otherwise SR could not exist). Indeed, the differentiation of religion as a social subsystem is a key element of modernisation (e.g., Beyer, 1994). However, if the social dynamics of religion can be studied and accounted for by similar methods and theories as profane social phenomena (e.g., fashion, ethno-nationalism, etc.), distinctions between 'pure' religion and culture/society/politics may be seen less as analytical tools than as social constructions to be analysed.

Critical reading and thinking skills

By advocating RE as training in critical thinking, I do not mean to advocate a pedagogical approach that focuses on propositional reasoning about ethics or religious philosophy *from or through* religion. Instead, I think primarily of teaching pupils to apply source criticism and to identify and mitigate cognitive biases and fallacious modes of reasoning when learning about religion.

As an illustration, consider the courts' reasoning in *Lautsi*. To identify Christianity with religious freedom and tolerance, the Italian court had to exclude much historical evidence *ad hoc* from the 'core' of Christianity as 'properly understood', thus committing the 'no true Scotsman' fallacy. The court's exceptionalist claim for Christianity as uniquely non-exclusionary makes highly selective use of religious texts ('charity above faith', 'render unto Caesar'). It also exhibits the fallacy of *religious congruence* (Chaves, 2010) or *scriptural determinism* (Appiah, 2018): the empirically ill-supported assumption that believers' behaviour will accord with their beliefs and texts. In short, the court identified its in-group (Italian Christian civilisation) with uniquely positive values and

virtues by resorting to special pleading. Training in SR sensitises students to such special pleading about religion.

This is in part because SR-based RE adds a dimension to the source criticism that is already taught, for example, in History classes. SR is also concerned with what people have *believed* happened in the far past and what it has *meant* to them, not only with *what actually happened*. That is, it is concerned with the second-order hermeneutics of understanding religious interpretations of the religious sources, not only with interpreting those sources themselves. Moreover, due to its comparative bent, SR has greatly concerned itself with peoples distant in space, culture and power from the researcher, and has had to reflect on its role and biases in representing others (e.g., in response to Said, 1978/1995).

Nuancing the secular

SR offers analytical and historical insight into the religious and the secular, secularisation, and secularism. With regard to secularisation, pupils can learn that while sociologists had long expected religiosity to decline in the modern world, developments in the last few decades have called secularisation theory into question (e.g., Berger, 1999), and that more careful distinctions have lately been drawn, for example, between secularisation as decline, differentiation, and privatisation (Casanova, 1994), or between religiosity as believing or belonging (Davie, 1994). In this perspective, one may discuss whether the hijab-as-women's-right and crucifix-as-secularism arguments represent a remarkable, ironic secularisation, or a re-assertion of religion as collective and public identity.

With regard to secularism, pupils can learn to distinguish between secularism as the institutional neutrality of the state towards the religions of its citizens, and secularism as laïcism, a thicker ideology requiring the religious neutrality of citizens in their relations with the state (as well as vigilant state control of religious expression). They should be aware that notionally secular European states differ widely in their approaches to religion, from laïcism to state religions (established churches) with accommodations for other religions, and they should be able to apply this knowledge, for example, to the widely differing approaches of the UK and France to religious dress in school.

Pupils might also learn about a third option mediating between state religion and state irreligion, namely 'civil religion', a '*sui generis* hybrid of religion and national communality' that is 'intricately intertwined with nationalism' (Hvithamar, Warburg, & Jacobsen, 2009, p. 5). First suggested by Rousseau as a 'purely civil profession of faith' that governments should impose to make loyal, law-abiding citizens (Rousseau, 1999, pp. 166–168), a civil religion has

been identified in American public speeches and ceremonies (Bellah, 1967), and in a variety of other contexts. When public authorities use religion to foster national cohesion and tolerance – whether in the form of common symbols and rituals or in the form of a specific kind of RE – the question arises whether they are promoting a form of civil religion rather than a non-confessional education.

Discussion

Educators can respond to controversy over religious symbols in schools by 'teaching the controversy' through RE, drawing on the resources of the scientific Study of Religion as outlined above with reference to the Lautsi and headscarf cases. The concern with national cohesion that is driving the controversies represents both an opportunity and a challenge for SR-based RE.

The opportunity is a clear imperative for 'integrative' RE about different religions taught to all pupils the same way. Religion is widely conflated with morality, and migrant identities with religion, which makes RE prone to becoming the designated 'values-and-integration subject'. Indeed, RE can be made to integrate students into 'national values', whether understood as a cultural identity and its religious tradition(s), a set of democratic-secular values, or a mix of both. This is a temptation for policy-makers both on the right and the left. The challenge, then, is that RE may be geared more to 'integration' than education.

The politics of immigration after the 2015 'surge', the securitisation of immigrants' religion and the rise of populist nationalism will likely continue to reinforce pressures both to police the display of minority religious symbols and to use RE to promote 'integration' through 'national values' and prevent 'extremism'. This will not necessarily take the blatant form of a nativist demand that immigrants assimilate to the majority religion. Instead, it may take the form of a subject heavily geared towards teaching, for example, gender equality or other civic values that immigrants are supposed to lack. It might not result in a wholesale revision of RE, as in 1990s Norway, but instead come as piecemeal programmes and requirements, such as the teaching standards introduced in the UK in the early 2010s that require teachers to promote 'Fundamental British Values' (see criticism in Richardson, 2015; Farrell, 2016), or the increased stress on Christianity in Denmark (Fernández & Jensen, 2017).

I suggest, however, that an overemphasis on shared values and identity would be detrimental to the kind of RE that I have discussed here. First, given finite time and resources, a strong emphasis on *values* will come at the expense of learning about other religions. This trade-off is too easily ignored due to the

widespread failure to recognise religion as a field of *knowledge* (as opposed to moral sentiment, existential wonder, and subjective experience). Second, an overemphasis on *imparting* values rather than *exposing* students to a range of values and ideas would detract from the subject's mission of fostering critical enquiry. This holds whether the values in question are liberal, national, or confessional.

Third, to use RE to *integrate* pupils into a shared, approved worldview is to miss the unique qualities SR-based RE can bring to education. SR has evolved as a comparative discipline that ultimately takes different human worlds of meaning as its subject of comparison. Like few other academic disciplines, SR has the knack of 'making the familiar strange and the strange familiar' (Muesse, 1999; cf. Smith, 2004, p. 389). By doing so, it offers students a chance to *dis*-integrate themselves from their cultural matrix and to look at their own society and culture from new vantage points before *re*-integrating these insights within an academic framework. The above discussion offers several examples of such perspective shifts.

'By reflecting upon the most comprehensive constructions of the world's order, one cannot escape an impression of the historically contingent character of all worlds, including one's own', Jaffee notes in the paper cited in the introduction. Accordingly, he sees his university classroom as 'a place to model a theoretically articulate pluralism regarding the cultural definition of Truth', including 'the moral consequences and rhetorical dimensions of the very theoretical positions which enable our perspective' (Jaffee, 1999, p. 280).

Within the constraints of a school subject, RE can perform a similar service for children. If it is too concerned with fostering shared identity and values, however, it not only risks encroaching on religious freedom, as in the Norwegian case, and further alienating the minorities it is meant to integrate. It also misses its chance to give majority pupils insight into other people's worlds and an outside perspective on their own.

References

Alberts, W. (2008). Didactics of the study of religions. *Numen*, *55*(2-3), 300–334.

Alberts, W. (2010). The academic study of religions and integrative religious education in Europe. *British Journal of Religious Education*, *32*(3), 275–290. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2010.498621

Andreassen, B.-O., & Lewis, J. R. (Eds.). (2014). *Textbook gods: Genre, text, and teaching religious studies*. Sheffield, UK & Bristol, CT: Equinox.

Appiah, A. (2018). *The lies that bind: Rethinking identity, creed, country, color, class, culture* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation.

Bellah, R. N. (1967). Civil religion in America. *Daedalus*, *96*(1), 1–21.

Berger, P. L. (1999). The desecularization of the world: A global overview. In Berger (Ed.), *The desecularization of the world: Resurgent religion and world politics* (pp. 1–18). Washington, D.C: Ethics and Public Policy Center & William B. Eerdmans.

Beyer, P. (1994). *Religion and globalization*. London, UK & Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Bowen, J. R. (2007). *Why the French don't like headscarves: Islam, the state, and public space*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Carter, J. (Ed.). (2004). Special issue: Comparison in the history of religions. *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*, *16*(1), 3–101.

Casanova, J. (1994). *Public religions in the modern world*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Chaves, M. (2010). Rain dances in the dry season: Overcoming the religious congruence fallacy (SSSR presidential address). *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *49*(1), 1–14. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2009.01489.x

Committee of Ministers. (2008). *Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 of the Committee of Ministers to Member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.* Council of Europe.

Davie, G. (1994). *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without belonging*. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

ECtHR (European Court of Human Rights). (2001). *Dahlab v. Switzerland: decision on admissibility* (Application No. 42393/98). Strasbourg: European Court of Human Rights.

ECtHR. (2007). *Folgerø and others v. Norway: Grand Chamber judgment* (Application No. 15472/02). Strasbourg: European Court of Human Rights.

ECtHR. (2008). *Dogru v. France: Judgment* (Application No. 27058/05). Strasbourg: European Court of Human Rights.

ECtHR. (2011). *Lautsi and others v. Italy: Grand Chamber judgment* (Application No. 30814/06). Strasbourg: European Court of Human Rights.

Faas, D., Hajisoteriou, C., & Angelides, P. (2014). Intercultural education in Europe: Policies, practices and trends. *British Educational Research Journal*, *40*(2), 300–318. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1002/berj.3080

Farrell, F. (2016). 'Why all of a sudden do we need to teach fundamental British values?' A critical investigation of religious education student teacher positioning within a policy discourse of discipline and control. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, *42*(3), 280–297. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1080/02607476.2016.1184460

Fernández, C., & Jensen, K. K. (2017). The civic integrationist turn in Danish and Swedish school politics. *Comparative Migration Studies*, *5*(1). Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-017-0049-z

Gedicks, F. M., & Annicchino, P. (2013). *Cross, crucifix, culture: An approach to the constitutional meaning of confessional symbols* (Working Paper No. RSCAS 2013/88). European University Institute.

Hallpike, C. R. (1979[1969]). Social hair. In W. A. Lessa & E. Z. Vogt (Eds.), *Reader in comparative*

religion: An anthropological approach (4th ed., pp. 99–105). New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

Hvithamar, A., Warburg, M., & Jacobsen, B. A. (Eds.). (2009). *Holy nations and global identities: Civil religion, nationalism, and globalisation*. Leiden & Boston, MA: Brill.

Jackson, R. (Ed.). (2014). *Signposts: Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Jaffee, M. S. (1999). Fessing up in theory: On *pro*fessing and *con*fessing in the Religious Studies classroom. In R. T. McCutcheon (Ed.), *The insider/outsider problem in the study of religion: A reader* (pp. 274–286). London, UK & New York, NY: Cassell.

Jensen, T. (2008). RS based RE in public schools: A must for a secular state. *Numen*, *55*(2), 123–150. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1163/156852708X283023

Jensen, T. (2010). Integrative religious education in Europe: A study-of-religions approach. *Religion*, *40*(1), 63–65. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.1016/j.religion.2009.04.001

Kuburić, Z., & Moe, C. (Eds.). (2006). *Religion and pluralism in education: Comparative approaches in the Western Balkans*. Novi Sad: CEIR.

Marzouki, N., McDonnell, D., & Roy, O. (Eds.). (2016). *Saving the people: How populists hijack religion*. London, UK: Hurst & Company.

McCutcheon, R. T. (Ed.). (1999). *The insider/outsider problem in the study of religion: A reader*. London, UK & New York, NY: Cassell.

Mir-Hosseini, Z. (2007). The politics and hermeneutics of hijab in Iran: From confinement to choice. *Muslim World Journal of Human Rights*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.2202/1554-4419.1114

Muesse, M. W. (1999). Religious studies and "Heaven's Gate": Making the strange familiar and the familiar strange. In R. T. McCutcheon (Ed.), *The insider/outsider problem in the study of religion: A reader* (pp. 390–394). London, UK & New York, NY: Cassell.

Nowak, M., & Vospernik, T. (2004). Permissible restrictions on the freedom of religion or belief. In T. Lindholm, W. C. Durham Jr., & B. G. Tahzib-Lie (Eds.), *Facilitating freedom of religion or belief: A deskbook* (pp. 147–172). Leiden: Brill.

Ortner, S. B. (1979[1973]). On key symbols. In W. A. Lessa & E. Z. Vogt (Eds.), *Reader in comparative religion: An anthropological approach* (4th ed., pp. 92–98). New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers.

OSCE/ODIHR (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights). (2007). *Toledo guiding principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools: Prepared by the ODIHR advisory council of experts on freedom of religion or belief*. Warsaw: ODIHR.

PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe). (2005). *Recommendation 1720 (2005). Education and religion*. Retrieved from http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=17373

Patton, K. C., & Ray, B. C. (Eds.). (2000). *A magic still dwells: Comparative religion in the post-modern age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Pettersen, E. (1995). *Identitet og dialog: kristendomskunnskap, livssynskunnskap og religionsundervisning* [Identity and dialogue: Knowledge about Christianity, knowledge about

worldviews and religious education]. Oslo: Statens Forvaltningstjeneste.

REDCo. (2009). *Religion in education: Contributions to dialogue: Policy recommendations of the REDCo research project.* Retrieved from https://patternsofgoverningreligion.weebly.com/uploads/2/7/0/3/27037565/redco_policy_recommendations_eng.pdf

Richardson, R. (2015). British values and British identity: Muddles, mixtures, and ways ahead. *London Review of Education*, *13*(2), 37–48. Retrieved from https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.13.2.04

Rousseau, J.-J. (1999). *Discourse on political economy and the social contract*. Oxford, UK & New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Said, E. W. (1995[1978]). *Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient* (reprinted with a new afterword). London, UK: Penguin Books.

Scharffs, B. G. (2012). The role of judges in determining the meaning of religious symbols. In J. Temperman (Ed.), *The Lautsi papers: Multidisciplinary reflections on religious symbols in the public school classroom* (pp. 35–58). Leiden & Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Smith, J. Z. (1982). In comparison a magic dwells. In J. Z. Smith (Ed.), *Imagining religion: From Babylon to Jonestown* (pp. 19–35). Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Smith, J. Z. (2004). *Relating religion: Essays in the study of religion*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Sullivan, W. F. (2005). *The impossibility of religious freedom*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Thomassen, E. (2006). Religious education in a pluralistic society: Experiences from Norway. In M. Pye, E. Franke, A. T. Wasim, & A. Ma'sud (Eds.), *Religious harmony: Problems, practice, and education* (pp. 257–266). Berlin & New York, NY: Walter de Gruyter.

Turner, V. (1967). *The forest of symbols: Aspects of Ndembu ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.

von der Lippe, M., & Undheim, S. (Eds.). (2017). *Religion i skolen* [Religion in school]. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.

Biographical note

Christian Moe is an independent researcher in the History of Religions based in Ljubljana, Slovenia. His research interests include contemporary Islam, religious reform and human rights.

Religious Symbols in Public Schools: Key Issues and Debates

Aleš Črnič[1] and Anja Pogačnik[2]

When discussing Religious Education, the topic of religious symbols in educational spaces is largely overlooked in academic literature and often side-lined in political considerations as well. This paper examines the issue of religious symbols in public schools by highlighting two foci: how the Muslim veil is managed in public schools in select European countries and zooming in on specific suggestions for managing religious symbols in public schools in Slovenia. By combining a broader, comparative perspective with practical, small-scale policy suggestions, the paper highlights the need to include a discussion of religious symbols in public schools in our academic and political considerations of religion and education.

Keywords: Muslim veil, public school, policy recommendations, religious symbols, Slovenia

1 Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; ales.crnic@fdv.uni-lj.si.
2 Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; anja.pogacnik@fdv.uni-lj.si.

Religiozni simboli v javnih šolah: ključna vprašanja in dileme

Aleš Črnič in Anja Pogačnik

V akademskih obravnavah religijskega izobraževanja je tematika religioznih simbolov v šolskih prostorih pogosto spregledana, podobno pa je tudi v političnih premislekih. Članek analizira problematiko religioznih simbolov v prostorih javne šole, tako da se najprej osredini na reguliranje zakrivanja muslimank v javnih šolah izbranih evropskih držav, potem pa še na primer konkretnih strokovnih priporočil za reguliranje religioznih simbolov v slovenskih javnih šolah. S kombiniranjem širše primerjalne perspektive in praktičnih priporočil za politično regulacijo avtorja poudarita potrebo po vključevanju problematike religioznih simbolov v akademske in politične premisleke religije in izobraževanja.

Ključne besede: zakrivanje muslimank, javna šola, politična priporočila, religiozni simboli, Slovenija

Introduction

While the content of and provisions for religious education in public schools is an oft-examined topic, another, hidden – though arguably more visible – side of religious education is the management of religious symbols in public educational spaces. With the advent of modern secularity and the increased pluralisation of the 21st century, the marking of school spaces with Christian symbols is no longer a foregone conclusion. Simultaneously, pupils (and to a lesser extent teachers) are increasingly entering educational spaces with visible symbols of their minority religious affiliation (e.g., Muslim girls and women wearing veils), which challenge the – until recently – prevailing image of a religiously homogenous European society, as well as problematises the principle of equality ensured by modern democratic societies (see Evans, 2009). National public schools are responding to these new challenges of growing plurality in different ways: some (like France) by altogether abolishing religious presence in public schools, while others (like Italy) by embracing Christian symbols as a cultural presence on the walls of their public schools, but at the same time much more strictly regulating symbols of minority religions.

Little has been written on the topic of religious symbols and public schools. Malcolm D. Evans's book *Manual on the Wearing of Religious Symbols in Public Areas* is one of the few monographs that address the topic explicitly, although only as a subsection of a more extensive discussion. Other authors have dealt with smaller areas of the broader debate, whether focusing on particular countries (e.g., Howard, 2009), specific notable examples like the Christian crucifix (e.g., Temperman, 2012) or Muslim veil (e.g., Criscola, 2018), or focusing on other issues with a symbolic religious dimensions, such as the availability of religious diets in school cafeterias (e.g., Twiner, Cook, & Gillen, 2009). With this paper, we hope to add a piece to the small but growing mosaic of scholarship on religious symbols in public schools and highlight the need for both academic and political attention to be given to this 'hidden' intersection of religion and education.

This paper will address the fundamental debates around encounters between religious symbols and public educational spaces by focusing on two nexuses of policy adoption: firstly, a broader bird's-eye view of different ways European countries are dealing with the management of Muslim veils in their school spaces, and, secondly, focusing on a single country – Slovenia – and the expert recommendations presented to its Ministry of Education on religious symbols and practices in public schools. As will be shown in the broader

comparative analysis, countries choose different ways to promote democratic values of religious freedom and equality. And the practical, small-scale example of Slovenian recommendations for the systemic handling of such dilemmas will highlight the need for regulation as well as the more principled and inclusive management of religion in public schools.

Contexts and concepts

Historically speaking, European societies were predominantly Christian, which made the question of religious presence in educational spaces unproblematic. After all, many countries trace the start of their educational systems to church-run schools. However, two developments have problematised the previously normalised marking of public spaces with Christian symbols: the modern secular state (presupposing at least a minimal distance between state and religion) and the growing pluralisation of contemporary societies (despite the fact that most European states continue to have at least nominally Christian majorities). Crucifixes on school walls now pose questions of religious freedom and the equality of religious and non-religious views, since such Christian markings of public spaces potentially symbolically exclude all those (non-Christians and non-religious) who do not identify with them. In this way, the symbolic marking of public educational spaces with Christian artefacts could mean a violation of the fundamental human right to religious freedom, which is inseparable from the right to alternative – including non-religious – beliefs.[3]

The second dilemma facing religiously ever more plural European societies is the question of visible[4] religious symbols brought into school spaces by pupils and teachers. In the past, the marking of classrooms with crucifixes and the presence of clerical garb among teachers was customary in European schools yet has more recently become understood as the symbolic equation of public education with Christianity, in consequence excluding all other religious and non-religious traditions. Conversely, pupils (and to a lesser extent teachers) are ever more frequently entering school spaces with visible signs of their other/minority religious affiliation; for example, Muslim girls and women wearing

3 The complexity and arguments for and against religious symbols in public schools were well presented in the Lautsi case (*Lautsi and others v. Italy*), which the European Court of Human Rights deliberated twice, with radically different outcomes: the Lower Chamber of the ECtHR agreed with the plaintiff that crucifixes on walls of Italian schools represented a human rights violation, while the Grand Chamber ruled that crucifixes do not breach the plaintiff's right to raise her children according to her own beliefs, nor the child's right to the freedom of thought, conscience. and religion (see Andreescu & Andreescu, 2010; Temperman, 2012).

4 Technically, the problem of religious symbols in public schools does not originate in their presence, but their visibility; the problem arises, when/if symbols are recognised as religious (Kodelja, 2011, pp. 7–8).

veils, or Sikh boys and men wearing turbans (or – more contentiously – ritual daggers, called *kirpan*s).

Formal regulation of the above issues, of course, differs between European countries, and individual solutions are dependent on a number of factors. Chiefly, it depends on the religious characteristics of the society in question; whether it is a mono-, bi-, or multi-confessional society and into which religio-cultural pattern we could position it: the Latin (predominantly Catholic) pattern, the Scandinavian/Lutheran pattern, mixed (with equivalent numbers of Catholics and Protestants), or Orthodox (see Martin, 1978). Different countries developed different legal systems under the influence of the mentioned socio-religious dimensions; therefore, today's Europe has countries with close relationships between church and state (some even have state religions,[5] e.g., Denmark and the United Kingdom) as well as explicitly secular countries with constitutional separation between church and state (e.g., France and Slovenia).

Regardless of the heterogeneous historical and cultural traditions impacting the various formal regulations of European countries, almost all are signatories of different international documents that enshrine the foundational principles of modernity (such as human rights, tolerance, pluralism, etc.) and that are underpinned by the precondition of a neutral state (and its public school). These international declarations[6] ensure the respect of religious freedoms for children and their parents, which consequentially also impacts the field of educational policies. All the declarations and conventions respect the different historical, cultural, and legal specificities of their signatories and thus allow for a level of autonomy in the formulation of regulations within national borders. That means that they allow for the curtailment of religious freedom, but only under strictly specified and legally defined conditions, such as if one's religious freedom was to interfere with other human rights and freedoms, or jeopardise public peace, public health, or general safety of the public (see Evans, 2009, pp. 89–95). Nevertheless, the signatory countries have to consistently respect the fundamental principles of these international documents, though, in practice we witness different interpretations and implementations of the above international regulations in national environments.

5 There are ever fewer such countries; for example, in 2000 Sweden finalised a long-coming plan to abolish a state church (Pettersson, 2011), followed in 2012 by Norway (Morland, 2018).

6 Universal Declaration of Human Rights from 1948, European Convention on Human Rights from 1953, Convention Against Discrimination in Education from 1960, International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights from 1966, and Convention on Rights of the Child from 1989.

If we look in particular at the European Convention on Human Rights[7] (ECHR) and its Article 9,[8] there have been numerous court cases brought before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) (which oversees the implementation of the Convention and issues judgements and advisory opinions); several cases involved restrictions on religious symbols, whether they allegedly happened in prisons,[9] hospitals,[10] courtrooms,[11] schools,[12] or public spaces in general.[13] The vast majority of these cases involved religious head-covering or the Muslim veil[14] in particular. When considering the sphere of public education, the dominance of cases centring on Muslim headscarves is apparent – five out of seven cases concerning religious symbols in educational institutions involved girls and women restricted from wearing Muslim headscarves (the other two involved crucifixes displayed in classrooms and a prohibition on wearing the Sikh *keski* or under-turban for six French boys). Italy (with one case), Switzerland (with one case), Turkey (with three cases), and France (with two cases) were the countries against which these violations of Article 9 of the ECHR were alleged. If the cases brought before the ECtHR are to be any indication, the issue of Muslim veiling is a pertinent one, not only on the international/European level but also on national levels.

The Case of the Muslim Veil

The issue of the Muslim head-covering is, of course, an intensely politicised one, correlated with wider political swings towards nationalism, populism, and Islamophobia noticeable in many European countries. Therefore, it should

7 Formally known as the *Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms*, adopted in 1953 and signed by forty-seven countries.

8 It states: (1) Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. (2) Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

9 *Austarianu v. Romania*, *Kovalkovs v. Latvia*, for a cultural analysis see McIvor, 2015.

10 *Eweida and others v. UK*.

11 *Barik Edidi v. Spain*, *Hamidović v. Bosnia and Herzegovina*, *Lachiri v. Belgium*.

12 *Lautsi and others v. Italy*, *Dahlab v. Switzerland*, *Kurtulmus v. Turkey*, *Leyla Sahin v. Turkey*, *Köse and 93 others v. Turkey*, *Dogru v. France*, *Kervanci v. France*, *Aktas, Bayrak, Gamaleddyn, Ghazal, J. Singh, R. Singh v. France*.

13 *Ahmet Arsian and others v. Turkey*, *S.A.S. v. France*, *Belcacemi and Oussar v. Belgium*, *Dakir v. Belgium*.

14 In this paper, we use 'Muslim veil' as a catchall term for Muslim covering of female body parts, while also using headscarf (for covering of the hair), face veil (covering the face in addition to hair; also *niqab*), and *burqa* (referring to a set of clothing that cover the wearer's hair, face, and entire body) to refer to specific items of clothing.

be no surprise that countries in which xenophobia, Islamophobia, and nationalism have grown in visibility over the past few years are also the countries where we encounter more numerous and wide-ranging calls for general or specific bans on Muslim women wearing veils.

Erica Howard (2009) identified five general arguments typically invoked when promoting such bans on (Muslim) religious symbols and clothing (both in schools and public spaces): 1) safety/security reasons as a measure against terrorism; 2) to reduce the separation/segregation signalled by the Muslim veil and encourage integration; 3) to enable better communication (including verbal and non-verbal); 4) to prevent oppression of women (symbolised by the Muslim veil) and promote gender equality; and 5) to preserve state secularity and the separation between church and state (ibid., pp. 10–12). These five arguments for bans are typically countered with a range of arguments against them, but four major ones argue that a ban would be: 1) a breach of the human right to freedom of religion (in relation to schools it would also breach the right to education); 2) an interference with a woman's right to equality and protection against discrimination; 3) it would be based on stereotypes about Muslim beliefs and practices, and 4) there is no evidence that such bans would actually increase safety and/or improve social cohesion (ibid., pp. 12–13).

Although some countries have instituted general bans on wearing face veils (*niqab* or *burqa*) in public spaces (e.g., Austria, Belgium, and France), others have for now more or less skilfully avoided the capture of the public political space and individual religious freedoms by the proponents of such bans (e.g., the UK and Germany). However, there are many more that are at present exhibiting shifts and drifts that are either evidently moving towards the explicit regulation of Muslim women's headwear, or are in danger of doing so: Denmark, Italy, and Spain are among them.

The authors of this paper, while not proposing a one-size-fits-all solution or even propagating a single idea of how countries and their national educational systems should approach the issue of Muslim head-covering, nevertheless do believe that general bans on Muslim headscarves (such as the one implemented in France under their strict *laïcité* policy) are infringing on people's – specifically, women's – ability to practice their religion and tend to do more harm than good. They might further alienate an already infringed group and further legitimise Islamophobia within the country's borders. Nevertheless, we recognise the need for regulation of clothing within educational institutions and that co-existence of different beliefs, practices, and lifestyles necessitates a degree of compromise and adjustment.

Strategies and Policies Adopted by Different European Educational Systems

Approaching the topic of Muslim veils in the spaces of public schooling, we can highlight several aspects that tend to influence the guidelines for dealing with their presence. The guidelines' legal status (whether they are legally binding or only indicative), their scope (applying to teachers, teachers and pupils, or even to the pupils' parents entering educational premises), the approaches to handling regulation (whether it approaches problems on a case-by-case basis, or seeks to manage them with general rules), the influence of the broader public discourse on their substance (such as the problematic portrayals of Muslims as dangerous, backward, or less entitled to their democratic rights), or even their mere existence (many countries do not currently have any official guidelines on managing religious symbols in public schools, including Muslim veils). For the sake of brevity, the following analysis will focus on the most fundamental aspect of regulating Muslim veiling in public schools, that is the nature of such guidelines: whether they are liberal or restrictive towards the women entering schools with their heads covered for religious reasons. We will look at a select number of cases that fall somewhere along the spectrum from very restrictive to very liberal regulatory policies on religious head-covering in public schools and examine their specific features.

Restrictive policies

When thinking about examples of restrictive policies towards Muslims, France is almost the paradigmatic example. It was the first country in the European Union to legalise a ban on Muslim face veils in public spaces, invoking the foundational concept of *laïcité* as its basis. The groundwork for this prohibition was first established in 1983, when France adopted a blanket ban on religious clothing and symbols for all employees of all its public institutions (including public education). France later introduced a law banning 'ostentatious' religious symbols (like the headscarf, large crosses, turbans, etc.) in public spaces in 2004, and then in 2011 specifically targeted public displays of Muslim face-veiling with the act *On the Prohibition of Concealing the Face in Public Space* (see Criscola, 2018, pp. 37–44). Although the 2004 adoption of the national ban on Muslim headscarves (and other 'ostentatious' religious symbols) included public schools and legally restricted pupils' rights to manifest their religion, it was not the first time such a regulation was introduced. Ten years earlier (in 1994) the Minister of Education published a circular, which officially allowed

public schools to ban 'ostentatious' religious symbols thought to be intrinsically proselytising and discriminatory. Yet even earlier than that individual schools refused enrolment or expelled students for wearing religious symbols and numerous legal cases arose from 1989 onward around pupils who refused to take off their headscarves and were consequently expelled from schools. Two secondary school students, who were expelled after refusing to take off their headscarf during physical education in 1998/1999 took their cases all the way to the European Court of Human Rights, although the Court did not find in their favour (see *Dogru v. France* and *Kervanci v. France*).

Belgium is likewise a country with restrictive policies towards its Muslim inhabitants wearing a headscarf. In the post-9/11 world, the Belgian rhetoric against Muslims has intensified, and in 2011 the Belgian federal parliament adopted a legal ban on face veiling in public spaces with unanimous support. They cited public security and the liberation of women as two main reasons for such a ban, although Muslim head-covering was not directly mentioned in the wording of the law (the law was nevertheless widely regarded as 'the *burqa* ban'). Recently, there have been further efforts to institute a ban on veiling for all public employees.

The Belgian educational system is uniquely fragmented (into three language groups and between the public and private sectors, in the latter of which the majority of pupils attend schools run by the Catholic Church [see Torfs, 2011]), although there is nevertheless a tendency towards banning visible (non-Christian) religious symbols. 'The French-, Flemish-, and German-speaking communities in Belgium all have decrees demanding neutrality from teachers in public schools that are part of the community network' (Criscola, 2018, p. 22) and the majority of primary and secondary schools do not allow religious symbols for either teachers or pupils. Exceptions are made for teachers of religion or moral ethics classes, who are allowed to wear visible and explicit religious symbols, yet there have been cases in which Muslim RE teachers have been asked to remove their headscarves outside RE classes, or an RE teacher that was refused the job for wearing a veil. Furthermore, certain schools also ban parents of pupils from wearing headscarves when volunteering for school activities and extreme cases have been reported of children not being allowed to wear hats in winter because it could be used as a justification for Muslim head-covering (ibid., pp. 22–25).

The Netherlands, a country in which only about one hundred women consistently wear a face veil, four hundred do so occasionally, and none are reported to wear a *burqa* (Moors, 2009), approved a partial ban on face-veiling in June 2018, which applied to public transport, educational spaces, healthcare,

and public government buildings. Although no complaints or problems were ever raised around women wearing face veils, the far-right Freedom Party (PVV) led by Geert Wilders had been advocating for different kinds of bans on Muslim headwear since their first proposed '*burqa* ban' in 2005; Wilders even proposed a special tax on headscarves in 2009, giving it a derogatory name of 'head rag tax' (Criscola, p. 61). Yet the ostracising of Muslim women wearing head-coverings has not been limited to political posturing and media discourse. Certain schools and universities (e.g., the University of Leiden) prohibit wearing face veils for their staff and students for communication and identification reasons (ibid., p. 63).

Liberal policies

While the countries with general or partial bans on Muslim veils are the exception rather than the rule in the European Union, truly liberal policies are also a rarity and even the countries that will be discussed here, under the 'liberal' heading, embrace diversity within their societies and schools to limited extents. It should be said, therefore, that there are no fully liberal policies, just as there are no fully restrictive ones (though there are certainly some *very* restrictive ones, as discussed above). Nevertheless, we can draw distinctions between different groupings of policies on an ideal-typical level.

The United Kingdom is a country typically heralded as one of the most accepting of visible religious symbols.[15] Religious clothing like the Muslim veil and the Sikh turban are incorporated into the uniforms of public servants, pupils, and even royal guards, and although less common, the Muslim face veil is allowed in public spaces and certain occupations as well. At the time of writing, there were no bans pertaining to Muslim veiling in the UK, despite the recent rise in Islamophobia and occasional debates about Muslim veiling.[16] The vast majority of British schools allow and actively incorporate headscarves in their school uniforms, yet every school has the authority to dictate their own dress, which has led to a handful of cases in which visible religious symbols led to heated debates and expulsions from schools (see Howard, 2009). In most cases in which legal action was taken on behalf of girls and women wearing veils, their expulsions were deemed lawful, because alternative schools were available in the area allowing the wearing of the item of Muslim clothing in question and, therefore, the ability of pupils to obtain an education had not been interfered with (Criscola, 2018, p. 76).

15 Which can also be attributed to its specific imperialist history bringing people from multiple cultures and religious traditions to the British Isles since the very beginning of the British Empire.

16 The UK Independence Party and the British National Front failed in their attempts to ban veils, as the proposals they put forth between 2010 and 2013 were rejected by the parliament.

Although fragmented among its sixteen federal states in their level of Islamophobia, Germany is another example of a somewhat liberal policy towards Muslim veiling in public spaces as well as schools, at least on the national level. Eight out of its sixteen states (Bundesländer) have enacted some sort of bans relating to Muslim face veils, and Islamophobic attacks have been on the rise, yet national politics have so far avoided adopting a ban on face veiling (although Chancellor Angela Markel came out in support of '*burqa* bans' in schools, courts, and state buildings in December 2016). In our context, however, a case to highlight is the ruling of the Federal Constitutional Court in March 2015, when it 'decided that a blanket ban on headscarves and other visible religious symbols for teachers at a state school violates the freedom of religion, and is not compatible with the Constitution because it is disproportionate' (ibid., p. 46). Unless a school can prove wearing a Muslim headscarf poses a danger to the school's peace or the state's neutrality, a general ban is unjustified.

The in-betweens

As already pointed out, the countries mentioned above are not solely 'restrictive' or solely 'liberal', and there are many more that fall somewhere in between. They either tend towards the liberal end of the spectrum or the restrictive one, although recently a trend towards a more restrictive set of policies can be detected in Europe. These 'in-between' countries, therefore, represent the battleground of ideologies for the future of European responses to the presence of Muslim veils and other non-Christian religious symbols in their educational spaces. At present, restrictive policies appear to be gaining ground.

The starkest example of this slide toward restrictive policies not only in schools but also in public spaces is Denmark. In May 2018, the Danish parliament passed a law banning face veils in public spaces, despite the fact that only a very small number of Muslim women in Denmark wear the face veil, many of them Danish converts. The 2018 general ban was built on the 2009 law that bans judges from wearing religious or political symbols (including crucifixes, headscarves, skullcaps, turbans, etc.) and the 2016 call by the Danish People's Party to extend the law to public schools and hospitals (ibid., p. 32). Although the 2018 general ban is relatively new, there have been cases of adult students banned from wearing face veils and Denmark has seen a general rise in Islamophobia, especially after the Jyllands-Posten controversy involving the caricatures of the prophet Muhammad in 2005.

A Practical Example of Systemic Guidelines: Slovenian Expert Recommendations

We now want to turn to a more practical side of policy dealing with religious symbols in public schools: an example of recommendations for systemic guidelines in Slovenia. The county would mostly fit in the above category of 'in-betweens,' as it does not have a coherent policy on religious symbols in public spaces, yet most of its practices would fit into a liberal type: there are no general or partial bans on Muslim veils (or other ostentatious religious symbols), and there are no guidelines prohibiting the wearing of religious symbols (including Muslim veils) in public schools for pupils or teachers. In fact, there are no guidelines on the management of religious symbols in public schools in general. This poses a problem when school principals encounter religious symbols or practices and do not know how to act, potentially leading to, on the one hand, curtailing of religious expression for Muslim pupils and, on the other, invitations to Catholic benedictions of new buildings.[17] Such a loose and unregulated field thus gives autonomy to individual schools to dictate their own policies in relation to religious symbols/actions, which sometimes poses a problem: an issue that is slowly being recognised by the Slovenian state as in need of addressing.

When Slovenia declared independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, the initial decision of the state was not to regulate the relationship between public school and religion (i.e., the Roman Catholic Church, with which the majority of Slovenes affiliate),[18] especially since restrictive regulation could paradoxically provoke new problems (Kodelja, 2011, p. 57). Since 1991, Slovenian society has gradually changed in its religious composition, becoming slightly more diverse, and the Ministry of Education has started receiving requests from school principals to advise them on how to act in concrete cases of (non-Christian) religious symbols entering school spaces, while the pressure of the Catholic Church for a more visible presence in schools has not abated. Noticing the need to revise its initial decision to not regulate the field of religion and education, the Ministry of Education engaged a handful of experts to prepare expert opinions as the basis for solving such dilemmas in a systematic way and in accordance with the Slovenian constitution and its cultural traditions. In the past

17 Although illegal, Catholic benedictions of public schools nevertheless happen in Slovenia, arguably due to the unclear reinforcement of the law (ZOFVI, §72) through practical guidelines and policies.

18 Around 70% of Slovenes express affiliation to the Roman Catholic Church. The second biggest religious group is the Muslim community (around 4%), followed by the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Evangelical Church with under 2% each (see Črnič et al., 2013).

decade, the Ministry of Education thus invited one of the authors of this paper to participate in two expert commissions on religion in public schools. The first one (see Smrke, Črnič, & Kodelja, 2009) was to provide the basis for a 'more precise determination of the relationship and/or boundaries between public school and religion' (ibid., p. 1), while the second (see Črnič & Kodelja, 2017) was to produce an expert recommendation for 'a constructive engagement of the public educational system with the growing challenges of a religiously plural society' (ibid., p. 1).

However, none of the expert reports has resulted in any formal guidelines, regulations, or policies. The results of the first expert commission ended up in a ministerial drawer without any practical results and the recommendations of the second were swept up in the 2018 general elections without leading to any official documents or regulations (though internal sources say the Ministry does utilise them as a basis for formulating responses to problems facing individual schools). Recently the Ministry did, however, order a smaller research project (with this paper being its interim result) to acquire conceptual and comparative bases for the formulation of a comprehensive strategy around this issue. The question remains whether such a strategy will actually see the light of day.

Recommendations of the Two Expert Commissions

Despite the fact that the Slovenian state did not yet form any official guidelines based on the two expert commissions it appointed, we will nevertheless present some of the basic frameworks they proposed below, not so much because they would be universally applicable to other contexts, but to present them as an example of an expert recommendation on the problem at hand in a specific cultural and legal context of Slovenia and the Slovenian society. In that we are referring primarily to the legal separation of State and Religion (and religious communities in general) that is written in the Slovenian constitution, and in the cultural sense the historical connection with Christianity (primarily Catholicism, though Protestantism also played a role in the formation of the Slovenian language and its national identity), which is displayed even today in the dominant position of the Catholic Church in the religious structure of Slovenian society.[19]

19 As mentioned above, a little more than two thirds of Slovenes affiliate with the Roman Catholic Church (RCC), and the RCC, as a value-driven religio-political entity, often interjects in political, social, and cultural debates occupying the public space, such as women's reproductive rights, legalisation of homosexual marriage, or general elections and referenda.

The commissions based their opinion on:

> interlocking constitutional principles of freedom of religious expression, the separation of church and state, state neutrality to religious and non-religious worldviews, equality of religious communities, and the principles of public school autonomy, the primacy of educational goals, and avoiding interfaith conflicts in school spaces (Smrke et al., 2009, p. 1).

The report of the second expert commission also emphasised 'the foundational maxim of the public school: to be accessible under uniform conditions to all, no matter their financial situation, social status, nationality, gender, language, religious, political or other affiliation etc.' (Črnič & Kodelja, 2017, p. 1). For further emphasis they added:

> In Slovenia public schools are secular. Secular schools, which realise the constitutional separation of state and religious communities, have to be neutral in relation to worldviews. Such a worldview-neutral school is a school that does not force anyone to accept a particular worldview, while at the same time offering elements enabling everyone to build a worldview of one's own choosing. Therefore, it is not the task of the public school to form Catholics, Liberals, Protestants, Atheists, etc. That can only be done by private schools, families, churches, and so on, not the public school, which has to be a space of unification based on shared fundamental values, providing cultural identity and social integrity to the future generations, a space of learning about democratic behaviour, tolerance, and respect for those who think differently (ibid.)

The first expert commission focused primarily on questions surrounding benedictions at public schools, religious symbols in public schools, and the advertising of religious activities in spaces of public education. Based on the above rationale, the commission suggested a ban on benedictions (of any religious organisation),[20] a ban on religious symbols (e.g., on walls), as well as a

20 The report especially highlights the problem of equating the state with (one) religion: 'If such benedictions were allowed, they should – in the spirit of our constitution – be possible for all religious communities present in any greater number in the school's catchment area. Only such a clear (temporal and spatial) separation of the religious ritual from the state/civil ceremony of inauguration and the equal opportunity for all religious communities would not express the equation of state with the church. Yet providing such equality for religious communities would in practice be incredibly difficult if not impossible, as it would necessitate a pronouncement from parents/children of their religious affiliation, which is constitutionally impermissible' (Smrke et al., 2009, p. 1).

ban on any form of religious advertising and propaganda in spaces of public education (Smrke et al., 2009, p. 1–2). In the concluding segment of the first report, the authors emphasised that the question of pupils and teachers wearing religious symbols in the form of dress and/or jewellery required a more precise approach and regulation and the second report built on that question as its central element. The authors argued that pupils and teachers should be dealt with separately, allowing pupils to display symbols of religious affiliation (including veiling and religious dress), while teachers should be allowed only 'discrete signs/symbols of whichever religious affiliation and not conspicuous signs/symbols that would very visibly announce the connection between an individual teacher with one of the religious traditions/communities. The same holds true for dress' (Črnič & Kodelja, 2017, p. 1). They justify the greater tolerance towards pupils by writing:

> The public school must not obstruct the basic personal expression of faith/religion. […] It has to be a space of adaptation to diversity, difference, and exceptions. The secularity of public school ensures its neutrality, in turn assuring the equal participation to all subjects, regardless of worldview or other differences (it ensures this by creating a neutral space into which the subjects enter in their difference, without being forcibly uniformed). Therefore, pupils can enter public schools with more noticeable religious symbols, clothes, and so on (ibid.)

Discernibly stricter restrictions in the case of teachers are justified with the argument that teachers 'represent the institution of public school, which is secular and neutral, and they have to express this with their appearance as well. Therefore, more conspicuous religious symbols, clothes, and so on (e.g., Muslim veils, Catholic habits, etc.) cannot be allowed' (ibid., p. 2). Yet even pupils' ability to wear religious symbols in schools is curtailed in the expert recommendations by two limitations: that such clothes/jewellery must not interfere with the pupils' ability to participate in the general curriculum (with customised clothing like the *burkini* being allowed), and that they must not prevent the personal identification of pupils (consequently, prohibiting face veiling) (ibid., pp. 1–2). With such a combined approach of permission and restriction, the recommendations aimed to satisfy both the need to accept religious diversity within schools, while at the same time acknowledging the secularity of public schools and the practical constraints of education.

Conclusion

When children enter public school spaces, they learn about the place of religion in their country and society not only through the curricula of Religious Education classes or other subjects covering content on religion (such as History or Literature), but also through observing how expressions of religious belief and affiliation are managed by people in places of authority. Even countries that do not have a designated RE curriculum nevertheless implicitly teach their pupils about what expressions of religiosity are acceptable and normalised within a society and which are deemed out of place and marginalised. It is therefore vital that we – either as academics, policy-makers, or concerned stake-holders – take the topic of religious symbols in schools seriously when discussing, planning, and managing the education of children.

With this paper, we have taken a look at the diversity of responses to a particular religious symbol (the Muslim veil), as well as the specificities of a particular policy proposal (in the country of Slovenia) for dealing with religious symbols in schools more widely. Having examined some aspects of the breadth and depth of the topic at hand, we now want to draw attention to a few broad conclusions of the above discussion and some of its implications as a way of emphasising the importance of the issue and the scope of the challenge in addressing it.

1. The management of religious symbols in public schools is largely dependent on the wider political climate and policy-making in the country. Whether liberal or restrictive, the macro-national policies in the general field of religion also impact the meso-context of public educational facilities.

2. Not impacted only by broader political leanings, religious symbols in schools are also – and mainly – affected by a country's social and cultural specificities. Depending on the religio-cultural pattern of a country and its society (whether it is mono-, bi-, or multi-confessional; and whether it is of a Latin, Scandinavian/Lutheran, mixed, or Orthodox pattern), the way a country deals with expressions of religious belief and affiliation in its public schools will differ from one state to the next. When formulating guidelines, regulations, or policies, it is paramount that these social and cultural factors to be taken into account.

3. When discussing religious symbols in public schools, we are not only talking about highly visible and emotionally charged symbols such as

the crucifix or a *hijab*. The variety of issues covered include potential reservations of pupils/parents to certain elements of the public school curriculum (e.g., mixed-gender swimming lessons (see Walseth, 2015; ECtHR case Osmanoğlu and Kocabaş v. Switzerland)), to the general interaction between genders (e.g., the Swiss controversy related to the traditional pupil-teacher handshake (see Hetmanczyk et al., 2018)), and the above-mentioned question of religious diets in school cafeterias (see Twiner, Cook, & Gillen, 2009). Although these are examples that were not covered in this paper (due to the constraints of space), they are nevertheless equally pertinent to the discussion of religious symbols in educational spaces and merit equal consideration.

4. With the gradual increase in religious diversity of countries around Europe in recent decades, and with the rise in nationalistic, restrictive, and Islamophobic sentiments and policies in recent years, the need for explicit regulation or guidelines on the handling of unexpected or unfamiliar cases of religious symbols in individual schools will likely increase, and academic and political discussion around it will become ever more pertinent.

5. Yet, as evident from the Slovenian example, the achievement of political movement towards the management of religious symbols in public schools in any explicit ways is likely to be difficult, laborious, and slow. Therefore, the responsibility of thoughtful discussion rests not only with decision-makers on national levels, but also with academics, educators, parents, religious communities, and other stakeholders. Although it is true that formal regulation of religious symbols in public schools is not necessary in some cases (or might even cause problems), the need for rigorous research and analysis on the issue of religiously motivated behaviours and religious symbols in public schools is nevertheless high and pressing.

We wish that our paper will not only be a small contribution to the academic discussion on religious symbols and education, but also a call to action for academics working in related fields to step up to the challenge of finding ways to address the various dimensions and issues surrounding the presence of religious symbols in public schools and help shape the way pupils, parents, teachers, principals, and regulators deal with the topic of religion's visible presence on and within the walls of their public schools.

Acknowledgements

The research was funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport, and the Slovenian Agency for Research.

References

Andreescu, G., & Andreescu, L. (2010). The European Court of Human Rights' *Lautsi* decision: Context, contents, consequences. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies,* 9(26), 47–74.

Črnič, A., & Kodelja, Z. (2017). *Strokovna izhodišča in priporočila za konstruktivno soočanje šolskega sistema z rastočimi izzivi religijsko pluralne družbe* [Expert reflections and recommendations for a constructive engagement of the educational system with the growing challenges of a religiously plural society]. Ljubljana: Internal resource of the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Črnič, A., Komel, M., Smrke, M., Šabec, K., & Vovk, T. (2013). Religious pluralisation in Slovenia. *Teorija in praksa*, *50*(1), 205–232.

Criscola, J. (2018). *Restrictions on Muslim women's dress in the 28 EU member states: Current law, recent legal developments, and the state of play*. New York, NY: Open Society Foundations.

European Court of Human Rights. (2018). *Factsheet: Religious symbols and clothing*. Strasbourg: Press Unit of the European Court of Human Rights.

Evans, M. D. (2009). *Manual on the wearing of religious symbols in public areas*. Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing.

Hetmanczyk, P., Bürgin, M., & White, T. (1918). The Therwil affair: Handshakes in Swiss schools. *The Religious Studies Project. Retrieved from* https://www.religiousstudiesproject.com/podcast/the-therwil-affair-handshakes-in-swiss-schools/

Howard, E. (2009). School bans on the wearing of religious symbols: Examining the implications of recent case law from the UK. *Religion and Human Rights*, *4*(1), 7–24.

Kodelja, Z. (2011). *Med pravico in prepovedjo* [Between a right and a prohibition]. Ljubljana: Pedagoški inštitut.

Martin, D. (1978). *A general theory of secularization*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.

McIvor, M. (2015). Carnal exhibitions: Material religion and the European Court of Human Rights. *Ecclesiastical Law Society*, *17*(1), 3–14.

Morland, E. (2018). New relations between State and Church in Norway. *European Journal of Theology*, *27*(2), 162–169.

Pettersson, P. (2011). State and religion in Sweden: Ambiguity between disestablishment and religious control. *Nordic Journal of Religion & Society*, *24*(2), 119–135.

Smrke, M., Črnič, A., & Kodelja, Z. (2009). *Strokovna izhodišča za razpravo o natančnejši določitvi odnosa/meje med javno šolo in religijo* [Expert reflections for a debate on a more specific determination of the relationship/boundary between public school and religion]. Ljubljana: Internal resource of the Slovenian Ministry of Education, Science and Sport.

Temperman, J. (Ed.). (2012). *The Lautsi papers: Multidisciplinary reflections on religious symbols in the public school classroom*. Leiden & Boston, MA: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.

Torfs, R. (2011). Religious instruction in public education in Belgium. In Gerhard Robbers (Ed.), *Religion in public education* (pp. 63–71). Germany: European Consortium for Church and State Research.

Twiner, A., Cook, G., & Gillen, J. (2009). Overlooked issues of religious identity in the school dinners debate. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, *39*(4), 473–488.

Walseth, K. (2015). Muslim girls' experience in physical education in Norway: What role does religiosity play? *Sport, Education and Society*, *20*(3), 304–322.

Moors, A. (2009). Gezichtssluiers: Draagsters en debatten [Face Veils: Wearers and Debates]. Amsterdam: Amsterdam School for Social Science Research, University of Amsterdam. Retrieved from https://www.parlementairemonitor.nl/9353000/1/j4nvgs5kjg27kof_j9vvij5epmj1ey0/vi9wbodwaltd/f=/blg21667.pdf

Biographical note

Aleš Črnič, PhD, is a Professor of Religious Studies at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Among other things, he published two books on alternative religiosities in contemporary Western world. He served as secretary general and vice-president of the International Study of Religion in Central and Eastern Europe Association and for fifteen years as president of the section for Religious Studies of the Slovene Sociological Association.

Anja Pogačnik, PhD, is a junior researcher in the field of religion and public education at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. Her research interests include religion and migration, South Asian diaspora, anthropology of religion, and more recently Religious Education (RE), and religious symbols and manifestations of religious belief in public schools.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.303

Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship and Employability through Non-Formal and Informal Learning: The Latvia Case

Tamara Pigozne[1], Ineta Luka[2] and Svetlana Surikova*[3]

This paper presents some results of the research on 'Adult education resources to reduce youth unemployment', which is a part of the project 'Implementation of the European agenda for adult learning'. The research applies a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative data analysis). The purpose of the paper is to identify the most/least-efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia as well as to show the relationship between the profile of young adults and their opinion on these methods, forms, and initiatives. The findings show that the young adults stressed the importance of cooperation with employers in organising educational activities, field trips as well as the necessity of having internships, projects, and meetings with entrepreneurs to learn from their experience. The most efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia are as follows: internship in a company or institution, projects, other persons' experience and success stories, and training enterprises. The least efficient ones are mentoring, business incubators, coaching, individual work/action plan for the young people, business clubs, and business start-up funds/grants. The opinion of young adults on all aspects of non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives depends on their profile (gender, education level, employment status, learning experience, etc.).

Keywords: employability, informal learning, Latvia, non-formal learning, youth entrepreneurship, youth unemployment

1 University of Latvia, Latvia.
2 Turība University, Latvia.
3 *Corresponding Author. University of Latvia, Latvia; svetlana.surikova@lu.lv.

Spodbujanje mladinskega podjetništva in zaposljivosti z neformalnim in s priložnostnim učenjem: primer Latvije

Tamara Pigozne, Ineta Luka in Svetlana Surikova

V prispevku so predstavljeni nekateri izsledki raziskave z naslovom Viri izobraževanja odraslih za zmanjšanje brezposelnosti mladih, ki je del projekta Izvajanje evropske agende za izobraževanje odraslih. Raziskava uporablja pristop mešanih metod (kvantitativna in kvalitativna analiza podatkov). Namen članka je opredeliti najučinkovitejše/najmanj učinkovite metode, oblike in pobude za neformalno in priložnostno učenje z namenom spodbujanja podjetništva in zaposljivosti mladih v Latviji ter prikazati odnos med profilom mladih odraslih in njihovim mnenjem o teh metodah, oblikah in o pobudah. Ugotovitve kažejo, da so mladi poudarili pomembnost sodelovanja z delodajalci pri organizaciji izobraževalnih dejavnosti, ekskurzije ter potrebo po pripravništvu, projektih in po srečanjih s podjetniki z namenom učenja iz njihovih izkušenj. Najučinkovitejše neformalne in priložnostne učne metode, oblike in pobude za spodbujanje podjetništva in zaposljivosti mladih v Latviji so: pripravništvo v podjetju ali ustanovi, projekti, izkušnje drugih in uspešne zgodbe ter usposabljanje podjetij. Najmanj učinkoviti so: mentorstvo, poslovni inkubatorji, »coaching«, individualno delo/akcijski načrt za mlade, poslovni klubi in zagonski kapital/sredstva za ustanovitev podjetja. Mnenje mladih o vseh vidikih, oblikah in o pobudah neformalnega in priložnostnega učenja je odvisno od njihovega profila (spol, stopnja izobrazbe, zaposlitveni status, učne izkušnje itn.).

Ključne besede: zaposljivost, priložnostno učenje, Latvija, neformalno učenje, podjetništvo mladih, brezposelnost mladih

Introduction

The twenty-first century has brought many challenges for people in all spheres and also impacted their employability, personal fulfilment, and well-being. In this context, the role of learning increases but approaches to learning are changing. Adult learning remains a topic of great interest in Europe (Cedefop, 2015; EAEA, 2014; European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; UNESCO, 2016a). The *Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe (EPALE)* funded by the European Commission is one of the latest developments in an ongoing commitment to improving the quality of the provision of adult learning in Europe. However, despite various improvements, adult learning in Europe still needs to become more flexible, accessible, inclusive and, attractive (Cedefop, 2015). According to Falasca (2011, p. 583), 'a fundamental aspect of adult education is engaging adults in becoming lifelong learners'. Criu and Ceobanu (2013) indicated four approaches for analysing adult education: 1) as practical training for an individual's career and professional life; 2) as an activity meant to enhance the quality of life; 3) as a form of democratic activity; and 4) as a form of social action. Considering these approaches, the current research encompasses the first two of them. This is in line with the general understanding of adult education in the country. In Latvia, adult education is perceived as a diverse process offering personal development and the capacity to cope in the labour market throughout life and its primary challenge is how to increase the participation rate in adult learning. Therefore, the enhancement of the second chance education opportunities, especially for social risk groups is recognised as a priority in adult education policy (EAEA, 2011). This premise is supported by the concept of lifelong learning, and in the context of Latvia, it specifically emphasises the role of continuing training and professional development mentioned in the *Recommendation on Adult Learning and Education 2015* (UNESCO, 2016b).

Buchert (2014, p. 174) stressed that '…education has a critical role to play for the life chances of youth and their inclusion in or exclusion from social opportunities. The issue of learning outcomes is therefore central to policy discussions nationally and internationally'. It should be specified that for the purpose of this paper the understanding of youth (Buchert, 2014) or young people (Hoskins, Janmaat, & Villalba, 2012; Murray & Mitchell, 2013) or young adults (Criu & Ceobanu, 2013; Knipprath & De Rick, 2014; Murray & Mitchell, 2013) or younger adults (Jordan, Carlile, & Stack, 2008) refers to the individual's development stage between adolescence and maturity (adulthood). Therefore, youth learning is understood as a part of adult learning, and it is defined as an early stage of adult learning.

The research on promoting youth entrepreneurship and employability through non-formal and informal learning is a small part of the study on adult learning conducted within the project 'Implementation of the European agenda for adult learning' (managed by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia (MoES) and funded by EC, 2012-2014, grant decision No 2012-3753/001-001) aimed at promoting collaboration and creating a network between all stakeholders involved in adult learning to enhance adults' skills, competencies and raise their qualification. The project covers five areas. This paper deals with the analysis of some findings on youth learning discovered in Part 2 'Adult education resources to diminish youth unemployment' (Pīgozne, 2014).

The focus of the current paper is on researching the various means of promoting youth entrepreneurship in Latvia and identifying the most/least-efficient ones in the context of adult learning.

Theoretical Background

Terminology Issues

The National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy (NRDC) has conducted a study for the European Commission on European terminology in adult learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector (NRDC, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). During this research project, a glossary of key definitions relevant to the adult learning sector has been developed, and a set of core data for better monitoring of the sector has been proposed. The project covered all 27 EU member states, plus six more countries. In total, 67 terms (listed alphabetically in English) were defined in the Level 1 glossary (NRDC, 2010b) and translated into 27 languages. The terms included in the Level 2 glossary (NRDC, 2010c) were organised conceptually within the framework used to structure findings from the data sources strand of the study. The study provided a pragmatic definition of an adult for the EU purposes, based on the fact that 16 is the age of maturity in some EU countries; namely, an adult is 'any person aged 16 years or older who has left the initial education and training system' (NRDC, 2010b, p. 14). According to the *Guidelines for the Development of Education for 2014-2020* (MoES, 2014), in Latvia, youngsters are people aged 13-25; therefore, anyone who is 26 years old or older is considered to be an adult in Latvia. According to the *Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007-2013* (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, 2007), the term 'adult' means a person aged 15 and older (i.e., after the age of acquiring compulsory education), who after a break continues general or professional education (formal, non-formal, informal). Thus, any person older than 15 who

has interrupted and later continues general or vocational education is considered to be an adult in the frame of lifelong learning policy in Latvia. It can be concluded that in Latvia a unified system of understanding the term 'adult' in the sense of biological age does not exist. In this paper, the term 'young adult' will be used to refer to the age of 15-29.

Young adults are in a transition stage between adolescence and adulthood. According to Baxter Magolda's theory, analysed by Jordan et al. (2008) as well as by Criu and Ceobanu (2013), young adults can quickly learn large amounts of material and easily memorise and retain knowledge; therefore, the efficiency of learning is high. Furthermore, their knowledge is transitional (facilitates the understanding and application of the knowledge acquired), independent (promotes the development of personal perspectives), and contextual (enables collaborative and situational learning). Considering the above-mentioned approach to analysing adult education (Falasca, 2011), the concept of the current paper supports such kind of learning, viewing adult education as a contributor to developing people's career and as a means to enhance their life quality.

Legislative Framework

Adult learning means 'the entire range of formal, non-formal and informal learning activities which are undertaken by adults after a break since leaving initial education and training and which result in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. This includes university-level or higher education undertaken after a break (other than for deferred entry) since leaving initial education and training.' (NRDC, 2010b, p. 15) According to the *Education Law* adopted by the Saeima of the Republic of Latvia on 29 October 1998, adult learning is a multiform process ensuring the development of personality and ability to compete in the labour market during one's lifetime. According to the *Lifelong Learning Policy for 2007-2013* (Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia, 2007), adult learning is formal, non-formal and informal learning that ensures personal development, social integration, civil participation and competitiveness in labour market during the whole life. Furthermore, as it is mentioned in EAEA report (2011, p. 5), 'the main goal of adult learning in Latvia is to provide individuals with the opportunity to obtain or complement to the existing learning based on needs and interests, irrespective of age, sex and previous education with an emphasis on up-skilling or re-skilling'.

Adult learning in Latvia as a part of the lifelong learning process includes all the types of formal (within the general, vocational and higher education), non-formal and informal education including further and interest-related education, professional upgrading, and in-service training. In 2007, the

Government of Latvia did not adopt the proposed *Law on Adult Education*. Instead, it was decided that Latvia will integrate adult learning within the *Education Law* (The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 1998), the *Vocational Education Law* (The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 1999), the *Law on Institutions of Higher Education* (The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia, 1995) and the *Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers. The National Development Plan of Latvia for 2014–2020* (MoES, 2012, p. 45) adopted by the Saeima on 20 December, 2012 within the priority 'Human Securitability' (a form of resilience), which aims at developing 'adult education promoting an increase in labour productivity in accordance with the needs of the labour market'.

Adult education in Latvia is administered at three levels – national, municipal and institutional. The main challenges of adult education are as follows: increasing the participation rate in adult learning, validating the non-formal and informal learning outcomes, increasing mobility opportunities for learners, matching the education with the labour market needs, creating opportunities for promoting and developing basic skills, reducing the dropout rate, and enhancing second chance education opportunities. Within the Latvian framework of the formal educational system, adult education extends over general education (basic and secondary), vocational education and training (VET), post-secondary education (further vocational training) and higher education. There is a wide range of non-formal adult education opportunities, provided by the state, local government and private education institutions. Adult education is available in a number of forms, including full-time, extramural education; extramural – distance learning (also for general education), or self-directed education (EAEA, 2011). As can be seen, the main challenges of Latvia coincide with those in many other countries and their solution is crucial to reaching the Sustainable Development Goal for Education as indicated in *Agenda 2030* (UNESCO, 2016a) on inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all in order to eradicate poverty and ensure sustainable development of the society.

The Specifics of Adult Learning

Adult learning has its specifics. Knowles, Holton and Swanson (2011) discussed new perspectives on andragogy emerging from the research and theory in different disciplines taking into an account the 'core andragogical principles' such as self-directed learning, problem solving, readiness to learn, prior experiences of the learner, the learner's need to know, motivation to learn, and orientation to learning. 'Andragogical principles must be sufficiently applied for adult learners […] in order to create and maintain experiences that are

inviting, engaging, motivating, and personally rewarding' (Finn, 2011, p. 39). As suggested by Foote (2015), adult education should liberate adult learners from passive, mindless, and uncritical acceptance of experience and how experience shapes knowledge. She also stressed that 'learning to re-evaluate and re-story prior learning experiences can lead adults to make sense of their experience and find a new sense of identity' (Foote, 2015, p. 84). Applying and transferring knowledge is one of the ultimate learning goals in adult education (Hung, 2013). Murray and Mitchell (2013) argue that the adult learning environment can both enhance and limit the engagement and re-engagement of young adults in education. An environment that promotes adult learning has to encompass freedom, autonomy and flexibility, positive and respectful adult learner-adult teacher relationships, 'in which young people feel that they are "treated like an adult"' (Murray & Mitchell, 2013, p. 114). Videos, competitions, interactive tools via digital and/or traditional platforms may support young adults' learning by simulating lifelike situations (OECD, 2017b, p. 38). Adult learning has to be transformative (Foote, 2015; Mirci & Hensley, 2010; Nohl, 2015, etc.) to engage young adult learners in a lifelong process of personal construction and transformation.

Entrepreneurship for Eliminating Youth Unemployment

The theoretical framework of the research is based on the existing theories and empirical findings in the field of youth learning, unemployment, entrepreneurship, and employability:

- Youth unemployment (Council of the European Union, 2014; Grinevica & Kovalevs, 2015; Grineviča & Rivža, 2015; Grineviča, Rivža, & Kovaļevs, 2015; OECD, 2015a, 2016, 2017a; Pīgozne, 2014; Starineca & Voronchuk, 2015);
- The definitions of entrepreneurship (Chell, 2007; Council of the European Union, 2018; Flora, 2006; Gibb, 2007; Neck & Greene, 2011; Oganisjana, 2010, 2012);
- Entrepreneurship as a solution to tackle youth unemployment (Council of the European Union, 2014; OECD, 2015a, 2017a, 2017b; Rastrigina, 2010; Wochowska, 2015);
- The role of formal, non-formal, and informal learning in promoting youth entrepreneurship and employability (Council of the European Union, 2014; European Commission, 2014; Eurofound, 2015; Oganisjana, 2010, 2012; Pīgozne, 2014; SALTO-YOUTH, 2016; UNESCO, 2016a; Wochowska, 2015, etc.).

The problem of youth unemployment in the European Union is not new, but in December 2013 youth unemployment rates were historically high, at 23.2% in the EU-28 and 23.8% in the euro area (Council of the European Union, 2014, p. 1). Although the situation has improved recently, youth unemployment rates remain high: 14.2% in the EU-28 and 15.8% in the euro area (Eurostat Statistics, 2019). Youth unemployment is also a significant social issue in Latvia (Grinevica & Kovalevs, 2015; Grineviča & Rivža, 2015; Grineviča et al., 2015; OECD, 2015a; Pīgozne, 2014; Starineca & Voronchuk, 2015). OECD Indicators on Education (OECD, 2016a) indicate that educational attainment significantly increases the employment rate. Limited employment possibilities and the threat of unemployment, job dissatisfaction or loss of paid jobs are the main 'push factors' which can facilitate youth engagement in entrepreneurial activity (Rastrigina, 2010). Entrepreneurship could be perceived as one of the solutions to tackle youth unemployment (Council of the European Union, 2014; OECD, 2015a, 2017a, 2017b; Wochowska, 2015).

The entrepreneurship competence is one of the updated eight key competences defined by the EU (Council of the European Union, 2018). It refers to an individual's capacity to act upon opportunities and ideas, and transform them into values for others. Creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, initiative, collaboration are significant therein. (Council of the European Union, 2018, p. C189/11).

In academic literature, entrepreneurship has been defined as a process (Neck & Greene, 2011); method (Neck & Greene, 2011); an individual's different qualities, skills, abilities, and traits (Flora, 2006); behaviour (Chell, 2007); and a combination of individual's behaviour and different qualities (Gibb, 2007). Oganisjana (2010) claims that entrepreneurship is a multi-component and multi-category dynamic system and it should be considered holistically. She defined entrepreneurship as 'a dynamic system of individual's causally interrelated personality traits, motivation, cognition, needs, emotions, abilities, learning, skills and behaviour, on the basis of which an individual or a group of individuals interact with the context for identifying, generating and realizing opportunities into new values' (Oganisjana, 2010, p. 54). In the current research, the definition of entrepreneurship by Oganisjana (ibid.) is adopted.

The critical role of formal, non-formal and informal learning in promoting youth entrepreneurship and employability is widely recognised (Council of the European Union, 2014; European Commission, 2014; OECD, 2017a, 2017b; Pīgozne, 2014; SALTO-YOUTH, 2016; Wochowska, 2015). The Council of the European Union (2014, p. 4) has invited the member states 'to recognise the importance of entrepreneurial education from an early age and highlight the role of non-formal and informal learning to ensure a holistic approach to the

personal development of young people and facilitate their successful integration into the labour market'. Literacy proficiency, including a highly developed sense of entrepreneurship, education and employment are interrelated. Moreover, 'proficiency plays an important and independent role as a determinant of success in the labour market' (OECD, 2016b, p. 122).

The three main challenges of supporting youth entrepreneurship and self-employment in Europe are fostering a more entrepreneurial mindset, attitudes and culture; providing information, advice, coaching and mentoring; removing practical barriers and easing access to credit (Eurofound, 2015, p. 2). The support provided to young adults in Latvia is targeted at eliminating youth unemployment and favouring the development of their entrepreneurship. Some of the initiatives available turn to be more efficient than others. Therefore, this paper will focus on analysing them from the aspect of young adults and education providers.

Method

Research Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the current paper is to identify the most/least-efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia as well as to show the relationship between the profile of young adults and their opinion on these methods, forms, and initiatives.

The objectives of the paper:

1. To analyse the terminology issues and the legislative framework of Latvia concerning adult education in order to explain the research context;
2. To analyse the findings obtained in the given exploratory research and, based on them and the literature review done, provide implications concerning the promotion of young adults' entrepreneurship in the country.

The research questions

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. Which are the most and least efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia?
2. Is there any relationship between the opinion of young adults concerning the methods, forms, and initiatives mentioned above and their gender, education level, employment status and non-formal and informal learning experience?

Procedure and Research Methods

To answer the research questions, *exploratory research* applying a web-based survey as a tool for data collection and a mixed-method approach (quantitative and qualitative) for data analysis was conducted (Collis & Hussey, 2009). The exploratory research was selected as it allows studying the trends and patterns of behaviour of young adults, whereas the mixed-method approach for data analysis provides more opportunities for data analysis and ensured more valid and reliable findings and conclusions (Collis & Hussey, 2009).

Instruments

The online survey containing a 4-point Likert scale ranking, category and open questions was created based on the theory on developing youth entrepreneurship (Oganisjana, 2010, 2012), as well as the analysis of the measures and opportunities available for adult learners in the country (SEA, 2016). The *Google Docs* platform was used for the survey. In the survey the respondents reflected on their previous learning experience focusing on formal, non-formal, and informal learning methods and forms, skills acquired, and their compliance with the labour market needs. In the open questions, they had to express their opinions on the ways to increase education quality, write their success story to getting a job, their extracurricular experience, tell why exactly they were successful – which skills, qualifications, initiatives, etc. had helped them.

Quantitative data were analysed using SPSS software (frequencies, crosstabs, hierarchical cluster analysis, etc.) (Arhipova & Bāliņa, 2003) and qualitative data were analysed using AQUAD software (frequencies, linkages, implicants) (Huber & Gürtler, 2013).

Sample

The survey was administered to the non-random handpicked (purposive) sample comprising 81 most experienced institutional representatives providing adult education services (see Table 1) and snowball sampling of 405 young adults aged 15-29 (see Table 2) involved in learning (Walliman, 2016). The handpicked sampling allows surveying individuals whose role and experiences provide relevant information in the field (O'Leary, 2010, p. 172) and the snowball sampling helped to increase the sample size of the young adults.

Table 1
The profile of the representatives of the institutions

Category	Profile
Institution type	5 universities/colleges; 14 general education institutions; 14 evening (shift) schools; 7 VETs; 10 private educational centres; 14 municipality organisations; 9 cultural institutions; 5 NGOs; 2 enterprises; 1 foundation

Table 2
The profile of the young adults

Category	Profile
Gender	326 female; 79 male
Education level	61 – lower secondary education; 109 – upper secondary education; 50 – vocational education; 185 – higher education
Non-formal and informal learning experience	111 have non-formal and informal learning experience; 294 do not have such experience
Employment status	172 employees; 31 entrepreneurs; 44 self-employed; 60 unemployed; 75 students from universities/colleges; 23 students from general education schools, vocational schools, evening (shift) schools

Findings and Discussion

The results of the web-based survey indicated that the respondents recognised internship in a company or institution (49.38%), projects (40.78%), other persons' experience and success stories (39.55%), and training enterprises (18.91%) as the most efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia. Such results may be explained by the fact that in Latvia employers increasingly require employees with work experience. The largest Internet job vacancy portal in Latvia *CV Online* shows that 801 job advertisements out of 2 298 vacancies available on August 8, 2017, required previous work experience in the field (CV Online, 2017). Consequently, having an internship in a company or institution, training enterprises and participating in projects are the ways to gain initial experience.

This significant finding confirms that the country is on the right track offering these initiatives. Moreover, as emphasised in 'OECD Skills Outlook 2017' (OECD, 2017a, p. 31) a strong work-based learning component that is important for enhancing youth entrepreneurship may be ensured by fostering cooperation between education providers and the private sector, i.e., industry.

The quantitative data obtained by collecting responses to closed-ended questions are in line with the qualitative data obtained by analysing the answers to open-ended questions. In their success stories on getting a job, young people stressed the importance of cooperation with employers to organise educational activities, field trips as well as internships, projects, meetings with entrepreneurs to learn their experience. The respondents also appreciated the importance of such kind of cooperation to gain the first work experience that facilitated their involvement in entrepreneurship, improved their professional self-determination, competitiveness, career development and quality of life:

> *At the end of my studies, it was necessary to undergo the internship, during which I have proven myself as a good employee. With the internship supervisor's recommendation letter, I applied for the selected post. So, I got the job.*

> *At first, I worked as a volunteer, helping to translate during the conference, I was noticed and invited to work full-time in this organisation.*

> *I went to pre-school to work as a cleaner and began to show my good qualities. When the teacher fell ill, there was nobody who could work with children, I had an opportunity and showed myself. I was offered to work as a nanny and then as a music teacher. Currently, I manage my own day centre.*

> *I was involved in the activity 'Workplace for a youngster' proposed by the State Employment Agency four years ago. During my internship, I proved myself as a potential employee, created contacts with customers, and after the internship, I got a job at another company.*

As the examples above demonstrate, pro-active behaviour on the part of young people has resulted in obtaining employment, which again underscores the significance of developing youth entrepreneurship skills. According to the representatives of institutions, youth involvement in the labour market is perceived as an added value to internships:

> *After internships, the best students become employees of the company.*

> *After qualifying for an internship in a company or institution, the student becomes an employee.*

Thus, as a result of successful collaboration with employers, the students found a full-time job.

Mentoring (6.63%), business incubators (5.89%), coaching (5.40%), individual work/action plan – the roadmap for the youngsters (2.70%), business clubs (1.19%), and business start-up funds/grants (1.96%) were considered the least efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia.

These results contradict those obtained in the recent OECD studies on skills (OECD, 2016b, p. 18; OECD, 2017a, p. 132) according to which mentoring, co-working spaces, and incubation facilities have been highly valued as well as both students and staff require them. This means that apparently these initiatives have not been sufficiently promoted in Latvia.

A statistically significant relationship was discovered between respondents' opinion and their gender, education level, employment status and non-formal and informal learning experience. For instance, according to the results of cross-tabulation (Chi-Square): χ^2=6.347 (1); p=.012, females participated in the projects more often than the males: 44.2% of females vs. 27.8% of males.

It has to be emphasized that this is a general trend in the country. The data by the State Employment Agency (SEA, 2017) point to a similar situation. In May 2017, out of all unemployed, 12,471 or 18.2% (7,312 female, 5,159 male) were aged 15–29. As to their education, most of the unemployed had vocational education which points to a gap between the supply and the demand. The second group was low qualified. The initiative *Measures to Increase Competitiveness* has been the most popular initiative targeted at unemployed people. On the third position is the initiative *Measures of the Youth Guarantee* that comprises nine different branches. Several of them also involve participation in projects, for example, *Workshops for the Youth* (SEA, 2016).

According to the results of cross-tabulation, young adults having vocational education more often used internship in a company or institution (χ^2=38.618 (3); p=.000) compared to those with lower and upper secondary education. This might be explained by the fact that VET graduates are familiar with practical training as the internship is a significant component of any VET study programme.

Young adults having obtained higher education more often used mentoring than those with vocational education did (χ^2=9.921 (3); p=.019). Moreover, compared to the young adults with lower secondary education they more often used individual counselling (χ^2=8.849 (3); p=.031), other persons' experience and success stories (χ^2=17.353 (3); p=.001), and meetings with the experts from different fields (χ^2=12.540 (3); p=.006). However, it has to be admitted

that mentoring has not been valued much, in fact, only 6.633% have used it. Drawing parallels with the studies conducted by the State Employment Agency (SEA, 2016) most initiatives include counselling (individual or group consultations), but the job-seekers give preference to various courses. Concerning other persons' experience and success stories, as well as meeting with experts, tertiary level students have direct contact with them in lectures and extracurricular activities organised at their universities. Their positive impact is also stressed in an OECD study on skills (OECD, 2017a, p. 31).

Next, the results of cross-tabulation showing the preferences of the self-employed young adults, entrepreneurs and employees are summarised in Table 3. These data confirm the relationship between the young adults' opinion and their employment status.

Table 3
Significant relationship between young adults' opinion and employment status

Learning methods, forms, and initiatives	Results of cross-tabulation (Chi-Square)	More often preferred by	Less often preferred by
Internship in a company or institution	χ^2=28.787 (3) p=.044	Self-employed	Students
Work camps	χ^2=11.212 (3) p=.004	Self-employed	Unemployed
Coaching	χ^2=12.052 (3) p=.034	Self-employed	Unemployed
Other persons' experience and success stories	χ^2=17.212 (3) p=.004	Self-employed	Students
Business forums	χ^2=11.921 (3) p=.036	Self-employed	Unemployed
Business start-up funds/ grants	χ^2=26.271 (3) p=.000	Self-employed	Employees
Individual counselling	χ^2=18.582 (3) p=.002	Entrepreneurs	Students
Projects	χ^2=13.073 (3) p=.023	Entrepreneurs	Unemployed
Meetings with the experts from different fields	χ^2=11.658 (3) p=.040	Entrepreneurs	Unemployed
Individual work/action plan – the roadmap for the youngsters	χ^2=12.121 (3) p=.033	Employees	Unemployed

The findings indicate that young adults involved in some form of entrepreneurship (self-employed, entrepreneurs) are more inclined towards using opportunities of self-development from hands-on-experience in business-related activities, e.g., internship, business start-ups, various projects, etc.

compared to other respondents, which might be explained by their readiness to act and risk, use every opportunity; in other words, they might be considered as more-pro-active.

In turn, according to the theory, it is pro-activity that enhances their competitiveness (Bakker, Tims, & Derks, 2012; Bertolino, Truxillo, & Fraccaroli, 2011; Dikkers, Jansen, de Lange, Vinkenburg, & Kooij, 2010; Parker, Bindl, & Strauss, 2010). Pro-active people take the initiative in acting, anticipating and preventing problems, improving the existing situation, using opportunities, creating new value and engaging in learning (Dikkers et al., 2010, p. 61; Parker et al., 2010, p. 827). Pro-activity draws innovation, change and moves society a step forward. Entrepreneurship, alongside other possible activities, such as volunteering, participating in social campaigns, giving a hand to those in need, etc., is a means to developing one's pro-activity.

The results of cross-tabulation also confirm a significant relationship between the opinions of young adults and their non-formal and informal learning experience (see Table 4).

Table 4
Significant relationship between the opinion of young adults and their non-formal and informal learning experience

Learning methods, forms, and initiatives	Results of cross-tabulation (Chi-Square)	More often were involved	Less often were involved
Internship in a company or institution	χ^2=16.828 (1) p=.000	Experienced young adults	Non-experienced young adults
Volunteering	χ^2=7.259 (3) p=.007	Experienced young adults	Non-experienced young adults
Individual counselling	χ^2=9.943 (1) p=.007	Experienced young adults	Non-experienced young adults
Workshops for youngsters	χ^2=4.221 (1) p=.040	Experienced young adults	Non-experienced young adults
Projects	χ^2=11.550 (1) p=.001	Experienced young adults	Non-experienced young adults
Business clubs	χ^2=9.372 (1) p=.002	Experienced young adults	Non-experienced young adults

These findings increasingly stress the significance of education, training and experience, which are significant preconditions for entrepreneurship.

Therefore, it is essential to increase youth motivation to engage in any form of learning, as any learning may be beneficial both to learners and society.

The results of hierarchical cluster analysis applying SPSS software indicate a more likely probability of promoting youth entrepreneurship and self-employment for the young adults having non-formal and informal learning experience. These results are in line with the results of the qualitative data analysed using AQUAD software. The main regularity identified during both qualitative and quantitative data analysis confirms that the young adults' involvement in the labour market is determined by their non-formal and informal learning experience. This again emphasises the role of lifelong learning, the necessity to 'promote flexible learning pathways in both formal and non-formal settings' (UNESCO, 2016a, p. 44), which is mentioned as one of the indicative strategies to attain Target 4 of the sustainable development of Education 2030. Moreover, the research highlighted certain initiatives that the young adults found more appealing than others. It is essential to use those success stories, such as using extra-curricular activities, also stressed by OECD (2015b, pp. 20–21) to enhance youth entrepreneurship.

Concluding Remarks

In Latvia, adult education is considered as a part of lifelong learning, and it is perceived as a diverse process offering personal development and the capacity to cope in the labour market throughout life, consequently ensuring adults' career development and contributing to their quality of life. Youth learning is understood as a part of adult learning, and it is defined as an early stage of adult learning. Adult education is regulated by the national legislation and is administered at three levels – national, municipal and institutional.

Young adults stressed the importance of cooperation with employers to organise educational activities, field trips, as well as internships, projects, and meetings with entrepreneurs to learn about their experience. Furthermore, the respondents appreciated the importance of cooperation to gain the first work experience, thus facilitating their involvement in entrepreneurship, improving their professional self-determination, competitiveness, career development, and quality of life in general.

According to the current research, the most efficient non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives to promote youth entrepreneurship and employability in Latvia are internships in a company or institution, projects, other persons' experience and success stories, and training enterprises. Whereas, the least efficient ones are mentoring, business incubators,

coaching, individual work/action plan for young people, business clubs, and business start-up funds/grants.

The opinion of young adults on all aspects of non-formal and informal learning methods, forms, and initiatives depends on their profile (gender, education level, employment status, learning experience).

The means of social pedagogical support, such as cooperation, encouragement and confidence contribute to the involvement of young adults in the labour market. A positive trend in Latvia has been observed – employers' participation in various initiatives and activities: in education policy-making through cooperation to elaborate education programs based on labour market demand and supply; in the organisation of the study process; in the modernisation of educational resources by providing financial support; in the evaluation of education quality, which enables balancing the proportion of theory and practice in the study process, as well as optimising, consolidating and using resources rationally.

Implications for Further Studies

The current research is connected with the following priorities set in national and international policy documents: youth as a priority target group in labour market policy measures; education as a means of combating poverty and social exclusion; promoting youth entrepreneurship and employment; developing the system of recognition of non-formal and informal learning in the EU in order to ensure all people an opportunity of recognising their knowledge, skills and competences acquired irrespective of mode of learning and environment; promoting knowledge partnerships and strengthening links and a dialogue between formal, non-formal and informal education providers. The added value of the current research is the opportunities identified for promoting young adults' entrepreneurship and employment using the initiatives and measures provided in non-formal and informal education in the post-crisis period as well as conducting comparative research, analysing their dynamics and participating in the monitoring of the implementation of policy planning documents long-term. In the future, it would be essential to study the feedback from employers evaluating the quality of the young adults' knowledge and competences acquired, as well as research the various new initiatives offered in the country and their compatibility with the labour market needs.

References

Arhipova, I., & Bāliņa, S. (2003). *Statistika ekonomikā* [Statistics in economics]. Rīga: Datorzinību centrs.

Bakker, A. B., Tims, M., & Derks, D. (2012). Proactive personality and job performance: The role of job crafting and work engagement. *Human Relations*, *65*(10), 1359–1378.

Bertolino, M., Truxillo, D. M., & Fraccaroli, F. (2011). Age as moderator of the relationship of proactive personality with training motivation, perceived career development from training, and training behavioral intentions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *32*(2), 248–263.

Buchert, L. (2014). Learning needs and life skills for youth: An introduction. *International Review of Education, 60*(2), 163–176.

Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia. (2007). *Lifelong learning policy for 2007-2013*. December 9, 2009 amendments incorporated. Retrieved from http://asemlllhub.org/fileadmin/www.asem.au.dk/LLL_Policies/Latvia_-_Ministry_of_Education_and_Science._Basic_guidelines_of_lifelong_learning_policy_for_2007_-_2013.pdf

Cedefop. (2015). Encouraging adult learning: Despite improvements, adult learning still needs to become more attractive, inclusive, accessible and flexible. *Briefing Notes,* 9099, August 2015.

Chell, E. (2007). Social enterprise and entrepreneurship: Towards a convergent theory of the entrepreneurial process. *International Small Business Journal, 25*(1), 5–26.

Collis, J., & Hussey, R. (2009). *Business research*. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.

Council of the European Union. (2014). *Conclusions on promoting youth entrepreneurship to foster social inclusion of young people.* Retrieved from https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/28269/142702.pdf

Council of the European Union. (2018). *Council Recommendation of 22 May 2018 on Key competences for lifelong learning.* (2018/C 189/01). Official Journal of the European Union. Retrieved from https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32018H0604(01)&from=EN

Criu, R., & Ceobanu, C. (2013). E-learning implications for adult learning. *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education-TOJDE, 14*(2), 56–65.

CV Online. (2017). *Portal of job vacancies in Latvia.* Retrieved from http://www.cv.lv/darba-sludinajumi/q-darba%20pieredze

Dikkers, J. S. E., Jansen, P. G. W., de Lange, A. H., Vinkenburg, C. J., & Kooij, T. A. M. (2010). Proactivity, job characteristics, and engagement: a longitudinal study. *Career Development International, 15*(1), 59–77.

EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults). (2011). *Country report on adult education in Latvia.* Retrieved from https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/latvia_country-report-on-adult-education-in-latvia.pdf

EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults). (2014). *Adult education in Europe 2014 – A civil society view.* Retrieved from https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ae-in-europe-2014_complete.pdf

Eurofound. (2015). *Youth entrepreneurship in Europe: Values, attitudes, policies.* Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from https://eaea.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Country-reports_Full-Report-09-12-2016_small.pdf

European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2015). *Adult education and training in Europe: Widening access to learning opportunities.* Eurydice Report. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. Retrieved from https://www.erasmusplus.sk/uploads/publikacie/2015_AEducation_LOAccess_Eurydice_Comparative_Report_en.pdf

European Commission. (2014). *Developing the creative and innovative potential of young people through non-formal learning in ways that are relevant to employability*. Expert Group Report. Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/youth/news/2014/documents/report-creative-potential_en.pdf

Eurostat Statistics. (2019). *Unemployment statistics. Data up to April 2019.* Retrieved from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics

Falasca, M. (2011). Barriers to adult learning: Bridging the gap. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 51*(3), 583–590.

Finn, D. (2011). Principles of adult learning: An ESL context. *Journal of Adult Education Information Series, 40*(1), 34–39.

Flora, C. (2006). Are entrepreneurs born or made? *Rural Development News, 28*(4), 1–7.

Foote, L. S. (2015). Transformational learning: Reflections of an adult learning story. *Adult Learning*, *26*(2), 84–86.

Gibb, A. A. (2007). Enterprise in education. Educating tomorrow's entrepreneurs. *Pentti Mankinen 2007*, 1–19. Retrieved from http://www.enorssi.fi/hankkeet/yrittajyyskasvatus/pdf/Gibb.pdf

Grinevica, L., & Kovalevs, R. (2015). Integration of young people into the Latvian labour market. *Economics & Business, 27*(1), 64–68.

Grineviča, L., & Rivža, B. (2015). Legal framework of youth unemployment and entrepreneurship regulation in Latvia. *Regional Formation & Development Studies, 1*(15), 56–64.

Grineviča, L., Rivža, B., & Kovaļevs, R. (2015). Youth social inclusion trends in the Latvian labour market. *Socialiniai tyrimai/Social Research, 1*(37), 57–66.

Hoskins, B., Janmaat, J. G., & Villalba, E. (2012). Learning citizenship through social participation outside and inside school: An international, multilevel study of young people's learning of citizenship. *British Educational Research Journal, 38*(3), 419–446.

Huber, G. L., & Gürtler, L. (2013). *AQUAD 7. Manual: The analysis of qualitative data.* Tübingen: Softwarevertrieb Günter Huber. Retrieved from http://www.aquad.de/materials/manual_aquad7/manual-e.pdf

Hung, W. (2013). Problem-based learning: A learning environment for enhancing learning transfer. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 137*, 27–38.

Jordan, A., Carlile, O., & Stack, A. (2008). *Approaches to learning. A guide for teachers.* New York, NY: Open University Press. Retrieved from http://www.principals.in/uploads/pdf/CurriculumDesignPlanning/Jordan_Approaches_to_Learning_0335226701.pdf

Knipprath, H., & De Rick, K. (2014). The economic benefits of adult learning to low-qualified young adults: Do participation and qualification decrease the risk of unemployment? *Vocations and Learning, 7*(1), 101–120.

Knowles, M. S., Holton, E. F., & Swanson, R. A. (2011). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Mirci, P. S., & Hensley, P. A. (2010). Leading for innovative practice: Melding theories of organizational change, adult learning, and conditions of learning. *CAPEA Education Leadership and Administration, 22*, 9–30.

MoES (The Ministry of Education and Sciences of the Republic of Latvia). (2014). *Izglītības attīstības pamatnostādnes 2014-2020. gadam* [Guidelines for the development of education for 2014-2020]. Retrieved from http://m.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=266406

Murray, S., & Mitchell, J. (2013). The 'double-edged sword' of the adult learning environment. *Australian Journal of Adult Learning, 53*(1), 111–128.

Neck, H. M., & Greene, P. G. (2011). Entrepreneurship education: Known worlds and new frontiers. *Journal of Small Business Management, 49*(1), 55–70.

Nohl, A. M. (2015). Typical phases of transformative learning: A practice-based model. *Adult Education Quarterly, 65*(1), 35–49.

NRDC (The National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy). (2010a). *Final report for: Study on European terminology in adult learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector.* Retrieved from http://languageforwork.ecml.at/Portals/48/documents/lfw-web_item-3a_nrdc_european-adult-learning-glossary-rept_en.pdf

NRDC (The National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy). (2010b). *European adult learning glossary, level 1. Study on European terminology in adult learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector.* Call Number: EAC 11/2008. Retrieved from https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/adultglossary1_en.pdf

NRDC (The National Research and Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy). (2010c). *European adult learning glossary, level 2. Study on European terminology in adult learning for a common language and common understanding and monitoring of the sector.* Call Number: EAC 11/2008. Retrieved from http://languageforwork.ecml.at/Portals/48/documents/lfw-web_item-3c_nrdc_european-adult-learning-glossary2_en.pdf

OECD. (2015a). *Entrepreneurship support for the unemployed in Latvia. Rapid policy assessments of inclusive entrepreneurship policies and programmes. Report*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from https://www.oecd.org/latvia/Rapid-Policy-Assesment-Latvia.pdf

OECD. (2015b). *Investing in youth: Latvia*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264240407-en

OECD. (2016a). *Education at a glance 2016: OECD indicators*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from https://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2016-en

OECD. (2016b). *Skills matter: Further results from the survey of adult skills*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264258051-en

OECD. (2017a). *OECD skills outlook 2017: Skills and global value chains*. Paris: OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264273351-en

OECD. (2017b). *PISA 2015 results (volume IV): Students' financial literacy*. Paris: PISA, OECD Publishing. Retrieved from http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264270282-en

O'Leary, Z. (2010). *The essential guide to doing your research project*. London, UK: SAGE.

Oganisjana, K. (2010). *Studentu uzņēmības veicināšana studiju procesā: promocijas darba kopsavilkums doktora zinātniskā grāda iegūšanai pedagoģijā* [The development of students' enterprise in study process] (Doctoral dissertation). Riga: University of Latvia.

Oganisjana, K. (2012). *Uzņēmējspēja un uzņēmība* [Entrepreneurship and enterprise]. Riga: RaKa.

Parker, S. K., Bindl, U. K., & Strauss, K. (2010). Making things happen: A model of proactive motivation. *Journal of Management*, *36*(4), 827–856.

Pīgozne, T. (2014). *Pieaugušo izglītības resursi jauniešu bezdarba mazināšanai*. Ziņojums „Eiropas programmas īstenošana pieaugušo izglītības jomā' ietvaros (Granta lēmuma numurs 2012-3753/001-001) [Adult learning resources to diminish youth unemployment. The report developed within the project 'Implementation of the European agenda for adult learning' (Grant decision No 2012-3753/001-001)]. Retrieved from http://www.muzizglitiba.lv/sites/default/files/06_Pigozne_jauniesu-bezdarbs.pdf

Rastrigina, O. (2010). *Global entrepreneurship monitor: 2008 Latvia report*. Riga: Stockholm School of Economics in Riga.

SALTO-YOUTH. (2016). *Recognition of youth work and of non-formal and informal learning within youth work: Current European developments*. Report. Retrieved from https://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-3335/5%20Overview%20of%20recognition%20policy%20developments%20April%202016.pdf

SEA (State Employment Agency). (2016). *Training and employment opportunities*. The webpage of the State Employment Agency. Retrieved from https://epale.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/adultglossary1_en.pdf

SEA (State Employment Agency). (2017). *An overview of the unemployment situation in the country in May 2017.* Retrieved from http://nva.gov.lv/docs/31_595f5005eaaaa3.21582742.pdf

Starineca, O., & Voronchuk. I. (2015). Peculiarities of young specialists on labour market: Case of Latvia. *Entrepreneurship and Sustainability Issues, 2*(4), 198–208.

The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia. (1995). *Augstskolu likums* [Law on Institutions of Higher Education. Approved by a decision of the Saeima on 2 November 1995]. Retrieved from http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=37967

The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia. (1998). *Izglītības likums* [Education Law. Approved by a decision of the Saeima on 29 October 1998] Retrieved from http://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=50759

The Saeima of the Republic of Latvia. (1999). *Profesionālās izglītības likums* [Vocational Education Law. Approved by a decision of the Saeima on 10 June 1999]. Retrieved from ttps://likumi.lv/doc.php?id=20244

UNESCO. (2016a). *Education 2030. Incheon declaration and framework for action for the*

implementation of sustainable development goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. Retrieved from http://uis.unesco.org/sites/default/files/documents/education-2030-incheon-framework-for-action-implementation-of-sdg4-2016-en_2.pdf

UNESCO. (2016b). *Recommendation on adult learning and education 2015*. ED-2016/WS/29. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning. Retrieved from http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0024/002451/245179e.pdf

Walliman, N. (2016). *Social research methods*. London, UK: SAGE Publications.

Wochowska, M. (2015). Non-formal learning and the acquisition of skills – How does the EU support youth employment? *Comparative Economic Research, 18*(2), 161–179.

Biographical note

Tamara Pigozne, Dr.paed., is a senior researcher at the Scientific Institute of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art of the University of Latvia. Her PhD Thesis was devoted to the issues of inclusive education. Currently her scientific interests encompass STEM teaching and learning, character education, e-learning, inclusive education, adult education, stress management, neuropedagogy and neuropsychology.

Ineta Luka, Dr.paed., is a professor and the head of the Language Department of Turiba University, Latvia, an expert in pedagogy and education management of the Latvian Council of Science, a member of Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Education and Research Hub for Lifelong Learning Research Network 4 on Lifelong Learning Strategies.

Svetlana Surikova, Dr.paed., is a senior researcher at the Scientific Institute of Pedagogy of the Faculty of Education, Psychology and Art of the University of Latvia. Her scientific interests are related to the research of professionalization of adult educators, effectiveness and quality assurance in adult and continuing education as well as interaction between social innovation and education, challenges faced to the promotion of social innovation from the perspective of education.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.727

The Educational Supervisor's Performance in Light of Applying the Knowledge Economy in the Education Directorates of Zarqa Governorate in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Mohammad Salman Fayyad Alkhazaleh*[1] and
Habes Mohammed Khalifa Hattamleh[2]

This study aimed at identifying the performance of the educational supervisor in the light of applying the knowledge economy in the education directorates of the Zarqa Governorate, Jordan. For this purpose, the researchers constructed a study instrument with 35 items distributed over four areas: (educational planning, educational management, teachers' professional growth, and curriculum building). Its validity and reliability were verified and later distributed to the study population, which consisted of 100 educational supervisors. The researchers utilised the descriptive method for its suitability to the study nature. The study found that the performance of the educational supervisor, in the light of applying the knowledge economy concept in the education directorates of the Zarqa Governorate, was medium. Furthermore, there were no statistically significant differences of the effect of the experience and directorate variables on all the study areas. Finally, the researchers made recommendations and suggestions relevant to the results.

Keywords: educational supervisor, directorate, education, educational supervision, knowledge economy

1 *Corresponding Author. Al Ain University for Science and Technology - College of Education, United Arab Emirates; dr.mohamadslman@yahoo.com.
2 Faculty of Education, University of Jadara, Jordan.

Uspešnost nadzornika izobraževanja z vidika uporabe gospodarstva, temelječega na intelektualnem kapitalu, v izobraževalnih direktoratih v pokrajini Zarqa v Hašemitski kraljevini Jordaniji

Mohammad Salman Fayyad Alkhazaleh in
Habes Mohammed Khalifa Hattamleh

Cilj raziskave je bil ugotoviti uspešnost nadzornika izobraževanja z vidika uporabe gospodarstva, temelječega na intelektualnem kapitalu, v izobraževalnih direktoratih v pokrajini Zarqa, Jordanija. V ta namen so raziskovalci izdelali instrument s 35 postavkami, razdeljenimi na štiri področja: načrtovanje izobraževanja, vodenje izobraževanja, profesionalni razvoj učiteljev in oblikovanje učnega načrta. Po potrditvi njegove veljavnosti in zanesljivosti so instrument razdelili stotim nadzornikom izobraževanja, ki so sodelovali v raziskavi. Raziskovalci so uporabili deskriptivno metodo, ker je bila primerna glede na naravo raziskave. Raziskava je pokazala srednjo uspešnost nadzornikov izobraževanja z vidika uporabe koncepta gospodarstva, temelječega na intelektualnem kapitalu, v izobraževalnih direktoratih v pokrajini Zarqa. Poleg tega ni bilo statistično pomembnih razlik glede vpliva izkušenj in spremenljivk direktorata na vsa raziskana področja. Ob koncu so raziskovalci podali priporočila in predloge glede na dobljene rezultate.

Ključne besede: nadzornik izobraževanja, direktorat, izobraževanje, izobraževalni nadzor, gospodarstvo, temelječe na intelektualnem kapitalu

Introduction

Educational supervision is an essential sub-system of the educational system in Jordan. It is linked to all the inputs of the educational process that are concerned with building the human mind, emotions, and all aspects of the personality. It is process that is the most closely connected with the educators' professional growth, in general (Al-Soud, 2002), through the supervisor's application of a behavioural system designed to interact with the teaching systems and goal achievement. In this concern, the supervisor provides the widest extent of assistance to the teacher and spares no effort to overcome the obstacles the teacher faces, allows the teacher the opportunity to his/her skills growth, concentration on his/her self-development, and assists in developing the kinds and means of learning. The supervisor can also provide the teacher assistance in teaching methods, educational aids, the art of classroom management, preparing the class tests and questions, making field research to explore the educational problems, developing the lessons, offering model lessons. He/she can contribute in: treating professional problems, making efforts to find solutions and alternatives that contribute to surpass the curricular problems, defining the pupils' problems, their characteristics and needs, helping the teacher to fulfil these needs, linking the school and teacher to the community needs and providing them desired services (Masa'adeh, 2000).

In this regard, Hill (1993) ensures that, in the light of the knowledge economy, the supervisor is required to concentrate on the use of inclusiveness in the objectives and educational and training methods, so that his/her diagnosis will be remedial, preventive, preservative, constructive, and developing.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education in Jordan sought to upgrade the levels of educational supervision and achieve its objectives effectively. It introduced many modern concepts and styles that raise the competence of the supervisor. For instance, it introduced the knowledge economy concept through the ERFKE project (Education Reform for Knowledge Economy). It concentrated on obtaining, sharing, using, employing, innovating, and producing knowledge. It also focuses on the use of the human mind as a valuable knowledge capital and on employing scientific research to create a pool of strategic changes in the nature and organisation of the economic environment. In so doing, it will be more responsive and consistent with the challenges of globalisation, information and communication technology, and the universality of knowledge and sustainable development in its holistic sense (Mrayyan & Alquda, 2009).

The ERFKE project further supports the concept of the educational supervisors as the first to engage the knowledge revolution and connect it to the

teachers, because they have the primary role in teaching the students first how to learn and think, instead of teaching them the knowledge itself. So, 'arming' the student with how to access knowledge and skills to deal with, in the light of the universal communication revolution, is a matter of utmost importance, instead of cramming abundant information in his/her mind, which may not benefit or enable him/her to assimilate all of it due to the limitations of time ("Research Management", 2002).

Mo'taman (2004) confirms that the knowledge economy (also termed the cognitive economy) requires the ministry to avail supervisors of high levels of academic preparation and training. They should also possess high degrees of enablement, care for professional growth, continuous self-education, and the ability to communicate, innovate, solve problems, and make decisions. The supervisors should possess well-integrated IT skills and be able to successfully employ technology. This is because the knowledge economy focuses on material, human and skill requirements, with which the supervisor should be equipped, in general:

1. It is essential to provide an infrastructure for the computer network and internet services, which provide the ability to realise effective research information and systems. A human environment should be developed to provide a supporting societal structure that will produce a learned community, able to question and link and use innovative thinking skills, on the one hand, and provide the legislative environment with laws and systems that facilitate the shift to a knowledge economy, on the other.
2. It is necessary to build learning on a foundation of creativity, productivity, and confidence and to encourage interactive learning that leads to the creation of enormous innovative abilities.

Al-Nae'emi (2007) indicated that the Ministry of Education, which engages with the knowledge economy, produces educators capable of developing learning and knowledge acquisition, employ, produce and exchange this knowledge. It develops the ability to research, explore and discover, to sponsor and augment the abilities, to accept responsibilities, and to develop mental and innovative abilities in support of excellence and productivity. The Ministry of Education employs information and communication technology. It develops abilities for deep understanding and critical thinking, analysis, education, linking, enhancing the ability to engage in positive dialogue, purposeful discussion, acceptance of others' views, and the ability to create change and development.

In light of this concept, the researchers, through their educational experience and communication with the educational supervisors, noted the

increase of routine works they are burdened with, and the complaints of some of them regarding this concept and its application mechanism. Therefore, the researchers conducted this study, 'Performance of the educational supervisor in the light of applying the concept of knowledge economy in the directorates of education in Zarqa Governorate.'

Many previous studies dealt with educational supervision; some explored the reality of the supervision; others dealt with the obstacles of the supervision, as well as the role of the supervisor in improving the teaching process and developing and qualifying the teachers. However, the researchers did not find a study with the subject of the current study, despite the shift of the Ministry of Education to apply cognitive economy in its educational directorates and focus on preparing and equipping the supervisors in the light of the knowledge economy concept. Thus, the researchers chose the studies that are closely related to this current study as shown below.

Al-Qateefi (1994), conducted a study titled 'Problems of the Educational Supervision in the Public Secondary Girls' Schools in the City of Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.' The study sample comprised 50 female supervisors, and the researcher employed the questionnaire for data collection. She concluded by determining the reasons that prevent achieving the supervision objectives, which included poor training of the educational supervisors, high numbers of the teachers they are required to supervise, and excessive managerial works that impede the supervisors from diversifying their supervision methods.

Al-Zagha (1998) made a study about the reality of the educational supervision on the West Bank, as viewed by the educational supervisors and teachers of the secondary stage. The study sample consisted of 36 supervisors and (200) teachers, and the researcher found many major problems facing the educational supervisor when applying modern and various supervision methods.

Narango (2000) conducted a study titled, 'Educational Supervision in British Columbia, Canada, and the Role of the Supervisor as Viewed by the Teachers.' The sample consisted of 1345 teachers, and the results emphasised the necessity of accurately defining practices and styles required from the supervisor. The study recommended the ministry to take the role of the director and planner for this supervisor so that educational supervision would not lose its effect in the educational process service.

Pajak (2002) made a study to identify the importance of the supervision tasks that the educational supervisors practice, which consisted of 1620 educational supervisors. The results showed that the most practiced supervisors' assignments are communication, teacher development, planning, participation in conferences, authoring the curricula, problem-solving, decision taking, and

relations with the local community. The results further showed that all the areas were highly valued by the supervisors.

William (2005) conducted a study in Toronto Canada titled, 'Raising the Promotion Condition for Upgrading to the Position of Supervisor', in which he sought to identify the views about promotion to the position of the educational supervisor as a career. The sample consisted of 55 male and female supervisors, and the results showed a need to train the new supervisors, teach them modern supervision methods, and educate them about their responsibilities.

Beach (2007) surveyed the perceptions of the teachers, school principals and educational supervisors of the public schools in Tennessee, USA, about the education services the supervisor carries out, regarding classroom observations, and meetings held following this observation. The sample comprised 381 teachers and 317 supervisors, randomly chosen. The study results showed that the performance and services provided by the educational supervisor are characterised by failure, inability to achieve the optimal results and that poor planning in supervision makes it incapable of solving the educational problems.

Atari (2007) conducted a study aimed at identifying the tasks and concepts the supervisor should carry out, as viewed by the teachers and supervisors in the State of Qatar. The study sample consisted of 80 teachers, and the results showed that there is no sufficient time for the supervisor to assist the teachers, due to the heavy managerial workloads with which he is burdened.

The study of Al-Hailat and Alquda (2008) aimed to identify whether the education supervisors in Jordan possess concepts of the cognitive economy. The sample consisted of 213 educational supervisors in different education directorates in the kingdom. The results showed that the educational supervisors possess a high degree of knowledge about the knowledge economy proportional to the subjects they supervise and that they were in favour of the scientific subjects. The results did not show statistically significant differences in the educational supervisors' possession degree of knowledge economy concepts attributed to the experience variable.

Alhulu (2009) conducted a study aimed at identifying the educational supervisors' practice degree of the supervision styles in Palestinian schools; the sample consisted of 565 male and female teachers. The results showed that the general educational supervisors' degree of practising the supervision styles with the study sample was medium; and that there are statistically significant differences attributed to the experience variable, in favour of those with 10 and more years of experience.

Altwaisi (2014) conducted a study aimed at identifying the vocational education teachers' degree of practising the cognitive economy competences

as viewed by the educational supervisors in Jordan. The results showed that the practice degree was medium, and there were statistically significant differences ascribed to the experience variable in the educational supervision, in favour of supervisors with recent experience.

The review of the previous studies, including both more recent and older ones relevant to the study topic, directly or indirectly, showed that all of them tackled a part of our study subject. Some dealt in the supervision styles, tasks, and services the supervisors practice, such as the studies of Alhulu (2009), Pajak (2002), Beach (2007), Atari (2007), and Narango (2000). Other studies emphasised the necessity of training and educating the supervisors on recent styles, such as the study of William (2005). Others focused on the reality of educational supervision, such as Al-Zagha (1999). Finally, the study of Al-Hailat and Alquda (2008) explored the Jordanian Ministry of Education supervisors' possession degree of the knowledge economy concept. However, most of the previous study samples consisted of supervisors, teachers, and school principals; meanwhile, the current study focus was to identify the teaching performance of the educational supervisor in light of applying the knowledge economy in the education directorates in Zarqa, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. It should be noted that the researchers benefited from the previous studies in discussing, interpreting, and analysing the results of the current study.

Objectives

This study aimed to:

1. Identify the educational supervisor's performance in the light of applying the knowledge economy concept in the directorates of education in Zarqa Governorate, Jordan.
2. Identify differences in the educational supervisor's performance degree, in the light of applying the knowledge economy concept in the directorates of education in Zarqa Governorate, ascribed to directorate and experience variables.

Study Significance

The significance of this study stems from the importance of the stage it dealt with and the problem it treated. In this concern, the educational supervisor is a most important component for developing and modernising the teaching/learning process. The importance of the study also stems from what the supervisor offers the teacher, which, in turn, would be reflected on the students

in the classroom, in the form of new and diversified teaching methods and factors that help in learning and perfecting achievement.

The problem it tackles lies in the study's attempt to link what happens in the education field in Jordan, such as courses and programmes carried out by the supervisors to provide service to the field, on one hand; with what is offered by the Ministry of Education in the diversification of styles and methods to qualify the supervisors and realise their professional growth, on the other.

The ministry's adoption of the knowledge economy concept requires a new 'dealing with knowledge', and how to employ the supervisors to assist and develop the teacher. This will be reflected in the classroom and in achieving growth in the student's personality, which enables him/her to 'generate' knowledge.

Qualifying the educational supervisor and equipping him with the most up-to-date methods, to become able to serve both the teachers and students accordingly, require assurance from the Ministry of Education to allow the supervisor a space to apply his educational role, within the framework of high quality educational concepts, leading to the development of the teaching-learning process. The importance of this study is also highlighted by the efforts the Ministry of Education makes to achieve the objectives of the knowledge economy. This calls for ensuring the efficiency and ability of the supervisors to gain the benefit of these abilities, as well as assuring the validity of their qualification course to serve the ministry's objectives in creating the desired shift.

Study Problem

The educational supervisor is a most important component in the Ministry of Education, relied upon in improving, controlling and upgrading the teaching/learning process. As such, the ministry has made efforts to introduce whatever is new and modern to the supervision system. For example, it introduced the knowledge economy concept to the system; to increase the competency of the supervisor and enable him to perform his role in the fullest and most modern manner. Nonetheless, the researcher, through meeting a number of supervisors, noted their complaints of the heavy routine workloads. They considered them negative, rather than positive, components for their performance, hindering their advancement, and do not realise the desired objectives of the Ministry through employing the knowledge economy; thus, impeding the development and improvement of the teaching-learning process. In connection with this, identifying and diagnosing the problems may contribute to the treatment of them, and put them on the right track. Accordingly, this study was made to identify the educational supervisor's performance in the light of

applying the knowledge economy concept in Zarqa Education Directorates, through answering the following questions:

1. What is the educational supervisor's performance in the light of applying the knowledge economy concept in Zarqa Governorate Education Directorates?
2. Does the supervisor's performance, in the light of applying the concept of the knowledge economy concept in Zarqa Governorate Education Directorates, differ by the Directorate and Experience Variable?

Terminology

Educational Supervisor: an educational leader seeks, with all stakeholders of the teaching/learning process, to optimise and develop this process.

Knowledge economy: knowledge selection and innovation, and choosing what would be employed to improve the teaching/learning process; realise upgrading of the educational system, through utilising the human mind; applying scientific research and different thinking styles, and information technology to bring about the aspired economic and social changes (Al-Khawaldeh, 2009).

Study Limits

1. **Spatial Limits**: the study was applied in the educational directorates of Zarqa Governorate: Zarqa/1, Zarqa/2, and Ruseifa education directorates.
2. **Time Limits**: the second semester of the 2015/16 academic year.
3. **Human Limits**: study population was limited to the educational supervisors in the three education directorates in Zarqa Governorate.
4. **Methodological Limits**: results of this study are defined by the accuracy of its individuals' responses on the supervision areas determined for the study purposes, namely: educational planning, educational management, professional growth, and curriculum. The results were determined by indications of the study instrument, in terms of its validity, reliability and procedures used.

Sample

The study population consisted of all the educational supervisors working in the three abovementioned education directorates in Zarqa Governorate (n=140).

The study sample consisted of 40 supervisors in the Zarqa/1 education directorate, 32 in Zarqa/2, and 28) in the Ruseifa directorate, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of the educational supervisors based on the variables (directorate and experience)

Directorate Variable	Experience Variable		No.
	1-5 Years	More than 5 years	
Directorate of Education/1	22	18	40
Directorate of Education/1	17	15	32
Directorate of Education/ Russeifa	18	10	28
Total	**57**	**43**	**100**

Study Instrument

To achieve the study objective, the researchers reviewed the educational literature related to the educational supervision and cognitive economy, as well as reviewing measures and questionnaires of previous studies. They paraphrased 35 items to measure the educational supervisor's performance in the light of applying knowledge economy, as viewed by the supervisors. The items were distributed at different rates over four (4) areas: educational planning, educational management, professional growth, and curriculum.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the study instrument was presented to a committee of arbitrates and specialists of the Jordanian universities professors and educational supervisors of the Ministry of Education. The agreement rate was 88%, and their comments were taken into account to amend or delete certain items. The instrument, in its final shape, consisted of 35 items distributed over four areas.

As for reliability, the researchers employed the two-halves split method, i.e., dividing the items into two groups: odd number items and even number items. The researchers calculated the grades of every supervisor on the odd items and even items. Thereafter, they calculated the correlation coefficient between the two grades, which was 0.86; a high coefficient, suitable for the purposes of the study.

Study Variables

The study had the following variables:

1. **Independent variables**: the descriptive variables consisting of:
   - The directorate: three levels (Zarqa/1, Zarqa/2, and Ruseifa Directorates).
   - Experience: two levels (1-5 years and more than 5 years).

2. **Dependent variables**: are those following the independent variables, with effects on the study results. In this research, they are the responses of the individuals and their evaluation of the supervisor's performance level, in the light of applying the knowledge economy concept in the education directorates, measured by the realised degree on every area of the study instrument.

Statistical processing

To answer the study questions, the data were entered into the SPSS software, as well as the use of the descriptive statistical method, i.e., means (Ms) and standard deviations (SDs). The researchers further applied appropriate explanatory methods that included the two-way ANOVA, to identify the teaching performance of the educational supervisor, in the light of applying the knowledge economy concept in Zarqa Governorate education directorates (Jordan).

Results Extraction

The researchers applied the instrument and employed a five-grade evaluation scale to indicate the performance degree of the educational supervisor. The highest grade is 5, and the lowest is 1; when the minimum represents 1 grade, then 0.8 is added to every grade, and the grades are arranged in descending order (5, 4, 3, 2, and 1). As such, the weights of the items became as follows: 1–1.8 = Very Low; 1.81–2.6 = Low; 2.61–3.4 = Medium; 3.41–4.2 = High and 4.21–5 = Very High.

Results and Discussion

Questions One: What is the educational supervisor's performance in the light of applying the knowledge economy concept in Zarqa Governorate Education Directorates?

Ms and SDs of each area of the study were obtained for answering this question, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Means and Standard Deviations of Each area of Study in a Descending Order by Ms

No.	Area	M	SD	Rank
1	Educational Planning	3.33	.35	1
2	Professional Growth	3.24	.46	2
3	Curricula	3.22	.60	3
4	Educational Management	3.05	.36	4
Total		**3.21**	**.26**	

Table 2 shows that the highest mean was 3.33 in favour of the educational planning area, reflecting a medium degree; and the lowest mean was 3.05 in favour of the educational management, also reflecting a medium degree. Furthermore, all the means of the responses about the supervisor's performance areas were medium; indicating the presence of obstacles hindering the educational supervisors in performing the desired roles. The researchers explain this by the fact that the currently applied supervision plans in the education directorates do not include, in most of their aspects, knowledge economy-related concepts, which ensure knowledge generation and production in a manner far from monotonous and routine works. This calls for a revision, amendment of the plans, and underpinning the role of the supervisor within a clear, purposeful and systematic vision, which leads to the promotion of the educational field, and achieves the efficiencies, skills and knowledge required by the cognitive economy. This study differs from that of Al-Hailat and Alquda (2008), which indicated that the supervisors possess concepts of the knowledge economy to a high degree.

To reveal the content of each area of the educational supervisors' performance, the researchers obtained Ms and SDs of the items of each domain as follows:

- **First Area:** Educational planning: as shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Ms, SDs and Ranks of the Sample Individuals' Responses on the Educational Planning Area

No	Item	M	SD	Rank
1	The educational supervisor uses a clear educational plan depending on knowledge economy standards.	3.29	1.09	5
2	He uses a plan based on teachers' requirements in the field and knowledge economy standards	3.22	1.011	8
3	He uses a comprehensive supervisory plan taking into account the concept of the knowledge economy and its objectives	3.35	1.20	3
4	He uses educational facilities in which he can achieve the objectives of the knowledge economy	3.16	1.43	10
5	He uses the knowledge economy vision to follow up teachers' plans on a daily basis.	3.23	1.23	7
6	He uses knowledge economy vision to participate with the school administration in developing school-related plans	3.18	1.45	9
7	He uses the knowledge economy vision to develop prior planning between him and the teacher about classroom visits.	3.30	1.24	4
8	He uses the knowledge economy vision to focus on means of modern technology that help him to develop a plan, train teachers, and the like.	3.27	1.37	6
9	He uses the knowledge economy vision to find proportionality between the number of supervisors and number of teachers they are required to supervise.	3.55	1.13	1
10	He uses the knowledge economy vision to adhere to the operational plan related to performance development.	3.45	1.19	2
Area as a Whole		**3.33**	**.35**	

The above table shows that the means of this area ranged between 3.16-3.55; and item No. 9 providing, 'Educational supervisor uses the knowledge economy vision to find proportionality between the number of supervisors and number of teachers they are required to supervise' ranked first, followed by item No. 10 with a 3.45 mean. In contrast, item No. 4 providing, 'The supervisor uses educational facilities in which he can achieve the objectives of the knowledge economy', came last with a 3.16 mean. The overall mean of the domain was 3.33, indicative of the medium degree of educational performance. The researchers ascribe this to the fact that planning mainly takes the theoretical dimension in terms of plan preparation, inclusiveness and suitability to the knowledge economy concept. Then, it is taken for granted that every supervisor will have his annual plan that fits the knowledge economy.

- **Second Area:** Educational management: Table 4 shows the Ms and SDs of the items of this area.

Table 4
Ms, SDs and Ranks of the Sample Individuals Responses on the Items of the Educational Management Area

No	Item	M	SD	Rank
11	The educational supervisor uses the knowledge economy vision to participate with the directorate of education when making administrative and technical transference among teachers.	2.98	1.01	6
12	He uses transportation means, which focus on the knowledge economy, to enable him to go to any school, any time.	3.07	.91	3
13	He uses the knowledge economy vision to perform administration and teaching work within his specialisation.	3.14	.86	2
14	He uses the knowledge economy vision to participate in decision making between him and the highest authority in the directorate.	2.95	.87	7
15	He uses knowledge economy vision to employ the foundations of public relations between him and teachers.	3.17	.59	1
16	He uses the knowledge economy vision to receive teachers in his office at the directorate.	3.00	.82	5
17	He uses his role in the knowledge economy to consider his opinion with respect to the validity or invalidity of the teacher.	3.04	.85	4
Area as a Whole		**3.50**	**.36**	

In Table 4, the means of this area ranged between 2.95 and 3.17, with item 15, 'Educational supervisor uses the knowledge economy vision to employ the basics of public relations between him and teachers', ranked first with the highest mean, at 3.17, followed by item 13 with a 3.14 mean. Meanwhile, item 14, 'Educational supervisor uses the knowledge economy vision to participate in decision making between him and the highest authority in the directorate', ranked seventh and last with a 2.95 mean. The overall mean of the domain was 3.05, implying a medium degree of educational performance. The researchers believe that this result does not match the aspirations of the Ministry of Education to obtain good results through applying the cognitive economy concept. This may be ascribed to the fact that the educational management domain needs to link the education directorate to the practical realities in the educational field. This could be achieved by the effective participation of the educational supervisor, taking his view in all the educational affairs that concern management, for instance, transferring a teacher from one school/directorate to another, or a teacher's unsuitability for teaching, and other educational affairs, in which the

knowledge economy emphasises highlighting the teaching performance of the educational supervisor.

- **Third Area**: Teachers' professional growth: as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5
Ms, SDs and Ranks of the Sample Individuals Responses on the Items of the Educational Professional Growth Domain

No	Item	M	SD	Rank
18	The supervisor uses modern supervisory methods of the knowledge economy concept.	3.00	.52	8
19	He uses the knowledge economy vision to perform various courses in all disciplines.	3.22	.55	4
20	He uses his role in the knowledge economy to brief teachers on the international supervisory methods related to the knowledge economy.	3.56	1.44	1
21	He uses the knowledge economy vision to hold training courses for teachers to train them on curriculum regarding the knowledge economy	3.15	1.67	6
22	He uses the knowledge economy vision to present an outstanding teacher to obtain personal incentives to contribute to professional growth	3.04	1.45	7
23	He uses the knowledge economy vision to support the teachers during his visit to the field	3.45	1.34	2
24	He uses the knowledge economy vision to conduct educational research that serves the educational field.	3.30	1.50	3
25	He uses the knowledge economy vision to apply standards that distinguish between creative and uncreative teachers.	3.20	1.31	5
Domain as a Whole		**3.24**	**.46**	

Table 5 shows the Ms and SDs of the sample individuals' responses on every item of the professional growth domain, which means ranged between 3.00 and 3.56. Item 20, 'Educational supervisor uses his role in knowledge economy to brief teachers on the international supervisory methods related to knowledge economy', ranked first, at a 3.56 mean, followed by item 23 with a 3.45 mean. In contrast, item 18, 'The supervisor uses modern supervisory methods of knowledge economy concept', came in the eighth and last place with a 3.00 mean. The overall mean of the domain was 3.24, reflecting a medium degree of the educational supervisor's performance. The researchers ascribe this to the constraints on the supervisors limiting their willingness to join educational professional development courses for them and the teachers they supervise. It could be further ascribed to the low morale and material return, and confining

their performance to the routine side that does not include all the objectives for which the knowledge economy concept calls.

- **Fourth area**: Building the educational curricula, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Ms, SDs, and Ranks of the Sample Individuals Responses on the Items of the Educational Curriculum Building Domain

No	Item	M	SD	Rank
26	The supervisor uses the knowledge economy vision to establish the modern educational curriculum.	3.02	1.27	7
27	He uses the knowledge economy vision to establish a curriculum based on the objectives of the knowledge economy.	3.01	1.33	8
28	He uses the knowledge economy vision to ensure that the curriculum includes Bloom's (knowledge, psychomotor, and emotional) domains	3.19	1.47	5
29	He uses the knowledge economy vision to establish a curriculum based on the growth stages of students.	3.72	1.30	1
30	He uses the knowledge economy vision to ensure that the curriculum includes educational activities that serve the educational concept of the knowledge economy.	3.38	1.33	3
31	He uses the knowledge economy vision to avoid unnecessary tautology in the curriculum.	3.14	1.33	6
32	He uses the knowledge economy vision in establishing the curriculum in logical sequence.	2.99	1.42	9
33	He uses the knowledge economy vision to harmonise the curriculum and the time allocated for its implementation.	3.27	1.28	4
34	He uses the knowledge economy vision to stress the curriculum's commitment to take into account the individual differences.	3.52	1.40	2
35	He uses the knowledge economy vision to put forward amendments suggested by teachers about the curriculum to the directorate of the curricula.	2.97	1.32	10
Domain as a Whole		**3.22**	**.60**	

Table 6 shows that the means ranged between 2.97 and 3.72, and item 29, 'Educational supervisor uses the knowledge economy vision to establish a curriculum based on the growth stages of students', ranked first with a 3.72 mean. Item 35, 'Educational supervisor uses the knowledge economy vision to put forward amendments suggested by teachers about the curriculum to the directorate of the curricula', was in the tenth and last place, with a 2.97 mean. Finally, the domain as a whole had a 3.22 mean, which means that the educational supervisor's performance is of medium degree. Such results may be attributed to the fact that the supervisors are not consulted in formulating the

curriculum. Sometimes, both the supervisor and teacher may be surprised by substituting the applied curriculum with a completely readymade one; and are required to follow the new one without having any role in developing it. In addition, the curriculum, even if based on the knowledge economy concept, is faced with many hindrances during application at schools. For instance, the rarity of scientific subject labs and libraries, lack of sufficient computer labs, the poor performance of some teachers at times, and poor or no activation of the curriculum at other times.

Question Two: Does the supervisor's performance, in the light of applying the concept of the knowledge economy concept in Zarqa Governorate Education Directorates differ according to the Directorate and Experience Variable?

To answer this question, the researchers obtained the Ms and SDs as per the experience and directorate variables, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for the Areas of the Experience and Directorate Variables on the Educational Planning, Professional Growth, Curriculum, and Educational Management

Variables / Areas		Educational Planning		Professional Growth		Curriculum		Educational Management	
Experience	Directorate	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
1-5	Zarqa/1	8.95	50.97	5.03	40.88	6.83	39.77	5.26	37.78
More than 5		6.33	54.56	4.99	42.19	6.02	40.55	6.13	38.12
1-5	Zarqa/2	6.00	51.88	4.89	42.66	5.65	41.44	4.98	40.88
More than 5		3.77	47.14	5.13	40.54	4.98	44.22	3.67	45.20
1-5	Ruseifa	9.10	44.15	6.23	43.11	5.39	41.76	7.13	42.53
More than 5		5.12	43.58	5.11	42.89	5.75	40.89	5.44	41.67
1-5	Overall	6.99	53.11	5.02	42.13	6.71	40.22	5.98	39.57
More than 5		4.14	48.23	7.21	39.11	5.49	41.55	5.74	41.17

To identify the effect of the differences, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed for the experience and directorate variables on the four domains (educational planning, professional growth, curriculum, and educational management). Table 8 illustrates this.

Table 8
ANOVA-Test for Educational Planning, Professional Development, Curriculum, and Educational Management

Areas	Source of Variance	Sum of squares (SS)	Freedom Degree	Squares' Mean	T	Sig. Level
Educational Planning	Experience	.277	1	.277	.003	.794
	Directorate	56.362	2	28.181	.451	.556
	Interaction between experience and the directorate.	202.681	2	101.341	1.585	.326
	Error	3989.134	98	40.705		
	Total	4241.547	103			
Professional Growth	Experience	7.405	1	7.405	.209	.313
	Directorate	6.88	2	3.44	.002	.767
	Interaction between experience and the directorate.	24.44	2	12.22	1.135	.250
	Error	687.835	98			
	Total	722.211	103			
Curriculum	Experience	12.778	1	12.778	.388	.675
	Directorate	24.880	2	12.44	.375	.532
	Interaction between experience and the directorate.	44.423	2	22.211	.631	.512
	Error	2123.503	98	21.668		
	Total	2201.223	103			
Educational Management	Experience	24.132	1	24.132	.824	.813
	Directorate	4.156	2	2.078	.067	.277
	Interaction between experience and the directorate.	14.089	2	7.045	.257	.370
	Error	1712.585	98	17.475		
	Total	1775.179	103			

Table 8 did not show statistically significant differences ascribed to the experience or directorate variables in the four domains (educational planning, professional growth, curriculum, and educational management).

Discussion of the data in Table 7

The results of Table 7 show that supervisors with one to five years of experience obtained a total mean of 53.11, in comparison to the mean of 48.23

for those with more than five years of experience. In the Zarqa/1 variable, those with more than five years of experience had a mean higher than those with one to five years of experience. In the Zarqa/2 and Ruseifa directorates, supervisors with one to five years of experience had higher means than those with more than five years. A 51.88 mean was obtained in Zarqa/2 by those with one to five years of experience, while the mean of those with more than five years of experience was 47.14. In the Ruseifa directorate, the mean of the supervisors with one to five years of experience was 44.15, while the mean of those with more than five years was 43.58.

As for the total means of the supervisors' professional growth domain, it was higher for those with one to five years of experience than those with more than five years (42.13 vs 39.11). In Zarqa/1, the mean of the supervisors with more than five years of experience was higher than those with one to five years; (42.19 vs 40.88). In contrast, in the Zarqa/2 and Ruseifa directorates, those with one to five years of experience had means higher than those with more than five years of experience: 42.66 vs 40.54 in Zarqa/2 and 43.11 vs 42.89 in Ruseifa.

In the curriculum area, the total mean of the supervisors with more than five years of experience was higher than those with one to five years; (41.55 vs 40.22). In the Zarqa/1 and Zarqa/2 directorates, the means of the supervisors with (more than five years of experience was higher than the supervisors with one to five years: 40.55 vs 39.77 in Zarqa/1, and 44.22 vs 41.44 in Zarqa /2. In the Ruseifa directorate, in contrast, supervisors with one to five years of experience had more means than those with more than five years: 41.76 vs 30.89.

Finally, in the educational management domain, the total means of the educational supervisors with more than five years of experience were higher than those with one to five years: 41.17 vs 39.57. As for the variables Zarqa/1 and Zarqa/2, the means of supervisors with more than five years of experience were higher than those with one to five years: 45.20 vs 38.12 and 40.88 vs 37.78, respectively. In contrast, the supervisors in the Ruseifa directorate with one to five years of experience obtained higher means than those with more than five years 42.53 vs 41.67.

Regarding the domains as a whole (educational planning, professional growth, curriculum and educational management), the researchers extracted the Ms and SDs by two variables: directorate (Zarqa/1, Zarqa/2 and Ruseifa) and experience (1-5 years and more than 5 years).

Table 9
Results of the Respondents in All Areas of Study

Directorate	Experience	M	SD
Zarqa/1	1-5 years	169.4	18.22
	More than 5 years	175.42	16.11
Zarqa/2	1-5 years	176.86	16.88
	More than 5 years	177.1	14.55
Ruseifa	1-5 years	171.55	17.44
	More than 5 years	169.03	17.88
Total	1-5 years	175.03	19.21
	More than 5 years	170.06	15.93

To identify the differences, the researcher utilised the two-way ANOVA-Test. (See Table 10)

Table 10
ANOVA-Test for the Variables: Directorate and Experience, Applied in All Areas of the Study

Source of Variance	Sum of squares (SS)	Freedom Degree	Squares' Mean	T	Sig. Level
Experience	142.560	1	142.560	.344	.522
Directorate	144.890	2	72.445	.277	.789
Interaction between experience and the directorate.	625.45	2	312.725	.844	.370
Error	20128.105	98	205.388	.745	.290
Total	22044.83	103			

In conclusion, Table 10 did not show statistically significant differences attributed to the two variables (experience and directorate) in any of the study domains. The researchers explain this in that almost all the work situations are similar, allowing no role for the experience and directorate in the supervisor's performance as the work is predetermined and routine from the education directorates and supervision department. In fact, no creative work of the supervisor exists, nor is there the activation of the cognitive economy to which the Ministry of Education aspires. This result is in line with that of Al-Hailat and Alquda (2008), which did not show statistically significant differences in the degree of the supervisors' possession of the knowledge economy concepts, which

may be ascribed to the experience variable. At the same time, it is not in line with the results of Alhulu's study (2009), which showed statistically significant differences attributed to the experience variable, which were in favour of those with ten and more years of experience. Finally, this study is also not in line with that of Altwaisi (2014), which showed statistically significant differences in the experience variable in favour of the supervisors with recent experience.

Conclusion

The researchers confirm that the performance of the educational supervisor in the light of the application of the concept of the knowledge economy in the directorates of education in Zarqa province was medium. Therefore, the researchers underscored the need to inform supervisors in the Ministry of Education of the characteristics and roles expected of them in schools in the transition to the knowledge economy. Through the holding of training courses, the Ministry of Education, explains to the supervisors how knowledge is generated, how to build and manufacture, how to improve the work and lead, the introduction of the principle of professional training for supervisors in the age of the knowledge economy in order to improve their professional and academic performance. The researchers also emphasised the necessity of training supervisors to think and train teachers on these issues, beyond the knowledge and creative practices of the supervisor, transferring them to the directorates and schools to teach them to teachers.

The study also indicates the importance of conducting more of these studies, including the roles of the headmaster, educational supervisor, and directors of education in the knowledge economy.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and literature, the suggestions made for further research:

The Ministry of Education should review and adjust plans and areas of its educational supervision so that it will be able to achieve knowledge and skills required for the knowledge economy. Consequently, it should add new disciplines that improve and develop the educational professions and apply them in directorates of education.

There is a need to provide all the requirements of the knowledge economy, such as qualified supervisors, as well as material, finance, and moral support.

The ministry should increase the effectiveness of the educational supervision in all areas through developing a sense of competition, advocated by the knowledge economy, between the directorates of education in the kingdom for those who provide the best level of educational supervision.

References

Atari, A. (2007). *Role perceptions and role performance of instructional supervisors as perceived by teachers and supervisors in the public schools of Qatar*. Durham, UK: University of Durham.

Alhulu, G. H. (2009). Supervisory modes degree that practiced by supervisors in secondary schools from teachers' points of view in Palestine. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Sciences*, *10*(3), 168–196.

Alnnueaymi, F. (2007). *Systematic program for the development of the institutional performance of the Directorates of Education and schools*. Amman: National Library.

Alquda, S. M., & M. Amin (2009). Attitudes government and secondary school principals and supervisors in the province of South Jordan towards professional development and training programs to achieve a knowledge-based economy. *Journal of Human Sciences*, *42*(7), 124–151.

Alssueud, R. (2002). *Educational supervision: Modern trends*. Amman: Tariq Center for University Services.

Altwaissi, A. (2014). The degree to which professional education teachers are practicing the knowledge economy skills, as perceived by the educational supervisors in Jordan. *The Jordanian Journal of Educational science, 10*(1), 37–54.

Al-Zagha, O. M. (1998). *Educational supervision in the west bank as perceived by both the supervisor and the high school teacher*. Nablus: An-Najah National University.

Beach, A. (2007). P*erceptions of teachers, principals and supervision, of the instructional support services in the public school of Tennessee*. Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee.

Alsueud, R. (2002). *Towards a future vision for the educational system in Jordan. Education forum in Jordan's future*. Amman: Tarek University Services Center.

Hill, W. (1998). *Evaluation of supervision*. New York, NY: Mc Grow.

Khawaldeh, A. A. (2009). Towards a model of knowledge management at the Jordanian educational system. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Sciences*, *10*(3), 89–109.

Musaeidah, W. A. (2000). *Obstacles of educational supervision: From educational supervisors' perspectives in Northern Directorates of education.* Irbid: Yarmouk University.

Mutaman, M. (2004). Role of the Jordanian educational system in the progress towards a knowledge-based economy. Teacher's Message, *43*(1), 9–37.

Naranjo, F. V. De. (1991a). *Educational supervision in Colombia: The role of the supervisor* (Dissertation abstract). Montreal: McGill University.

Pajak, E. (2002). Dimensions of supervision. *Educational Leadership*, 48(1), 78–81.

Qutaifi, T. A. A. A. (1994). *Problems of educational guidance in public secondary schools for girls.* Riyadh: King Saud University.

William, H. (2005). *On being promoted: The transition to supervisor*. Toronto: University of Toronto.

Biographical note

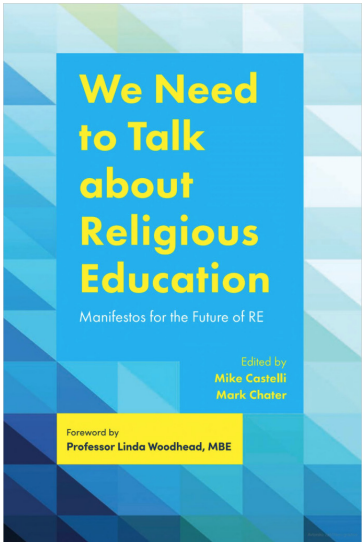
Mohammad Salman Fayyad Alkhazaleh, PhD, is an associate professor of educational administration at the Al Ain University for Science and Technology – College of Education, United Arab Emirates. He is a specialist in the fundamentals of education, educational administration, curricula and teaching methods.

Habes Mohammed Khalifa Hattamleh, PhD, is an associate professor of Educational Origins at the Faculty of Education, University of Jadara, Jordan. He teaches several undergraduate, graduate and doctoral educational courses. He is currently the Dean of the Faculty of Education and Assistant to the President of Jadra University.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.846

Mike Castelli and Mark Chater, *We need to talk about religious education: Manifestos for the future of RE*, Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London, UK & Philadelphia, PA, 2018; 264 pp.: ISBN: 9781785922696

Reviewed by Anja Pogačnik[1]



When discussing religious education (RE), the conversation in journals or monographs is often conducted by academics with particular agendas for what should or should not be included in the curriculum, how the content flow should be designed, and what the aims of the subject should be. That is what makes the book *We Need to Talk About Religious Education: Manifestos for the Future of RE* so refreshing and exciting; the book is academic in nature and writing style yet includes more than just individuals with academic experiences. There are several chapters written by current and/or former practitioners of RE – teachers and those implementing the curriculum into classrooms and teaching processes. This makes for an exciting look under the hood of RE and lends the topic immediacy, tangibility, and relevance.

We Need to Talk About Religious Education is edited by Mike Castelli and Mark Chater; both former RE teachers and RE curriculum advisers, now involved in executive-level organising of the UK Association of University Lecturers in Religion and Education (Mike Castelli), and Culham St. Gabriel's charitable trust that supports research, development, and innovation in RE (Mark Chater). The book has fifteen other contributors (Phil Champain, Dawn Cox, Gillian, Georgiou, Derek Holloway, Zameer Hussain, Richard Kueh, Clive A. Lawton, Andrew Lewis, Neil McKain, Mary Myatt, James Robson, Sushma Sahajpal, Peter Schreiner, Adam Whitlock, and Kathryn Wright), mostly current or former RE teachers, RE curriculum advisers, RE consultants, and religious

1 Faculty for Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; anja.pogacnik@fdv.uni-lj.si.

community representatives – all very passionate about RE and deeply involved with it on the ground.

The book is divided into two halves – *Context* and *Futures* – balanced quite equally with seven and eight chapters respectively. Framing everything are a foreword by Linda Woodhead, a general introduction by the editors, and a postscript by Zameer Hussain. Although the two parts nominally have a clear purpose – to set out and explain the context and the state of RE, and then to imagine the various futures into which RE could be taken with appropriate action – the titles are slightly deceiving, as the chapters in both halves include explanations of the context of a particular aspect of RE as well as calls to imagined futures for the subject, thus creating a whole that is only artificially and arbitrarily divided into two segments. The chapters do fall into two clusters: the first part offering chapters of a more 'theoretic' nature (such as the influence of Europe-wide educational policies or the issue with defining the purpose of RE) and the second part presenting chapters on the more 'practical' side of RE (making a case for structured dialogue, discussing 'safe space,' or examining teachers' online engagement), yet the two titles – *Contexts* and *Futures* – do not adequately capture the emphases of the two parts of the book.

It must be said that the title of the book is somewhat misleading as well. While the title mentions no geographical delineation of *which* religious education we need to talk about (Is it RE in general? Maybe RE in Europe?), the blurb on the back loosely refers to the UK, and it is indeed British Religious Education that the contributors are talking about and inviting us to discuss with them. Yet even that is not completely accurate, as the book addresses solely and exclusively RE as it is organised, implemented, and practised in *England*. There is no discussion (or even mention) of the fact that RE is organised differently in England than it is, for example, in Scotland, where it also exists under a different name, *Religious and Moral* (sometimes also *Philosophical*) *Education* (RME). The contributors to this collection have all with the exception of one (i.e., Peter Schreiner from the University of Mainz, Germany) been selected from England and – quite naturally – talk primarily about the context they are familiar with and the expertise they have acquired about *English* RE. Yet it is a failing on the part of the book's editors that they have not included any contributors from other parts of the United Kingdom, or even nodded to the fact that that is the case. It might be that experts or expert practitioners knowledgeable about Scottish RME are thin on the ground, but an acknowledgement from the editors and a brief explanation or speculation as to why that might be the case could nevertheless be expected from a book with such a broadly delineated title.

To return to the two sections of the book for my second major criticism of the collection; the context of the English RE is not well explained and is, in fact, poorly set out. While seven chapters purportedly deal with the *context* of RE in England, the book actually assumes a quite high level of familiarity with the English RE system. The first chapter in the collection – Clive A. Lawton's *Time to Abandon Religious Education: Ditching an Out-of-Date Solution to an Out-of-Date Problem* – provides some historical context for the English RE of today, but chapters that follow do not systematically present the regulatory, organisational, and/or practical context of RE. The reader collects bits and pieces of information as they go along, learning about NATRE (National Association for Teachers of RE) or SACRE (Standing Advisory Council on RE) without having much contextual information to tie it into a broader framework of understanding. This makes the book a bit uninviting to those not already familiar with English RE; a familiarity typically acquired either through the personal experience of being a pupil (or a teacher) in an RE classroom, or studying the English RE system as a researcher interested in religious education more generally. Again, I attribute this limitation of the book to its editors. Had they included another contributor with the explicit aim of writing a chapter that provides an introduction to the subject of RE the rest of the collection addresses – or better yet, written it themselves – the book would have been a much more informative and enjoyable read. It would also clearly invite foreign practitioners, researchers, and thinkers to engage with the material in its entirety without having to wade through the confusion of the English RE system unaided.

Nevertheless, the two shortcomings of the collection – its focus on England and its assumption of readers' familiarity with the English RE context – should not deter one from picking up this genuinely engaging book. Every chapter highlights a different aspect of the English RE system, raises different fundamental questions about the subject to consider, and invokes a different path toward a future incarnation of Religious Education. Although it is based on the English RE system, the questions and suggestions the chapters discuss are almost always universally applicable to other national contexts and provide a valuable starting point for a plethora of thinking streams and possible imaginings of the future for Religious Education anywhere. Particularly the chapters in the second part of the book would also be useful for those training future teachers of RE, as they focus on single issues from within the RE classrooms. Arguing for more difficult and challenging content in RE, highlighting elements of dialogue vital to RE teaching, suggestions for creating and conducting safe space for the discussion of 'unsafe' ideas in RE classrooms, challenging misconceptions and potential radicalisation within the context of RE, including first-hand

experience of religious communities for RE pupils, encouraging RE teachers to engage with ongoing academic research in the field of religious studies and theology, and the potentials and pitfalls of online social groups as continuing professional development for RE teachers – those should all be of interest and of value for RE teachers and those training and consulting them.

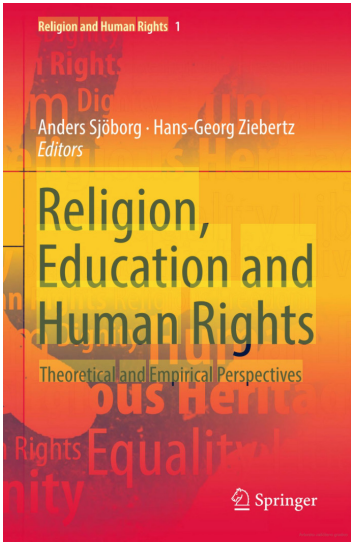
Conversely, the first part of the book will likely pique more interest amongst academics, who enjoy parsing through historical and cultural elements of contemporary RE organisation (in England), the hidden impact of international educational policies on national RE, the arguments for knowledge being the primary aim and orientation of the RE curriculum, calls for legislative change in the legal organisation of RE, discussion of confessional RE juxtaposed with its non-confessional counterpart, exploration of the balance between theology, philosophy, and social sciences in RE curriculum, and an enquiry into the possibility of a spiritual development emphases within an RE curriculum. The two halves together, therefore, invite both scholars and practitioners to the debate, as well as give food for thought to the decision-makers on local, national, and international levels.

The collection as a whole, as well as its individual chapters, are a useful tool to think with and to use in university classrooms. The chapters are engaging, to the point, and overall of very high quality. The depth and divergence of approaches to RE are definitely the book's strength, and I would recommend the collection to all those engaged in training RE teachers, intrigued by the imaginings of possible futures for RE, and interested in English RE in particular.

doi: 10.26529/cepsj.847

Anders Sjöborg and Hans-Georg Ziebert, *Religion, Education and Human Rights: Theoretical and Empirical Perspectives*, Springer International Publishing: Cham, 2017; 212 pp.: ISBN: 9783319540696

Reviewed by Anja Pogačnik[1]



This edited volume is a collection of contributions that loosely revolve around the fields of human rights, education, and religion. It grew out of an international workshop on those topics, held in Uppsala, Sweden, in March 2014, at which the contributors explored the relations between religion, human rights, and education to 'identify relevant areas for future research and develop meaningful research questions' on the topic (p. 2). While the contributing scholars come from a range of different fields and disciplines (including law, theology, religious studies, among others), what connects them is a focus on the countries around the Baltic Sea region – Sweden, Norway, Finland, Estonia, Belorussia, Poland, and Germany are all represented in this volume. A range of theoretical and empirical approaches is also represented in the book, with a few chapters employing statistical analysis, some focusing on discourse analysis, while others engaging with law, media, or common educational practices in various ways.

As this is a collection that stems out of a loosely-defined workshop, it is plagued by the problems many such volumes have – namely, a lack of clear focus in its content, wide swings in the quality of contributing chapters, and the absence of an overall aim. Let me tackle these in turn.

The coherence and quality of an edited volume depend (to a large extent) on its editors. While the individual contributors perform the bulk of the work in creating the content of the chapters, it is the responsibility of the editors to provide a clear vision for the book, guide the scholars towards producing an

1 Faculty for Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia; anja.pogacnik@fdv.uni-lj.si.

adequate contribution to the whole, and then summarise the volume's vision, contributions, and aims in a coherent way that frames the chapters within an overarching narrative. Unfortunately, the editors of this volume – Anders Sjöborg and Hans-Georg Ziebertz – have not been very successful in providing such vision, guidance, or framing of this volume. In their introductory chapter to the volume, they present a rather scant scaffolding for the book's content with nods to various declarations of human rights, clichés and personally motivated statements,[2] and by spending the bulk of the chapter summarising the subsequent chapters of the volume, without ever providing a framework for how they fit together. The general aim of the book and its focus are left undefined for the reader – and one would guess for the writers as well. Engagement with the wider literature on the topic and its adjacent fields is also incredibly limited,[3] although the fact that there is value in setting the stage for the subsequent discussions through an exploration of the state of the field and situating the volume in the larger corpora of religion, education, and human rights should go without saying.

Given that the editors' guidance as to the focus of the book was presumably less than ideal, it is no surprise that the contributing authors interpreted the key concepts of religion, education, and human rights in a range of different ways, sometimes with only tentative connections to one or two of the keywords[4] in the book's title and often without a clear focus for their chapters. Most of the chapters meander through loosely connected topics in the hope of it all adding up to an argument, without much clarity, vision, or purpose. Many chapters offer only limited critical engagement with the presented content, and the vast majority of contributions are incredibly short; whether that is due to the directive by the book's editors remains unclear. The chapters are typically cut off after about a dozen pages of text, apparently before the authors had time to dive into the depths of their topics after

2 '[R]eligious education has to develop programmes that do not cover the ambivalence [of religion being used to either affirm or deny human rights] but develop concepts *from the inner heart of the religion*, which can work as a religious source for modern liberties. A key concept is the dignity of every person, *given by the likeness of God*, who determined for people to have freedom and to live in charity with his/her neighbours' (p. 8, emphasis added).

3 The literature review from Hans-Georg Ziebertz's *How Young Muslims and Christians Structure Human Rights: An Empirical Study in Germany* (Chapter 9) would have found a better place in the introductory Chapter 1.

4 For example, Chapter 12 (*Good Practice in Human Rights Education in Schools* by Paula Gerber) mentions religion in one single sentence on its twenty-four pages, while the contributions of the editors (Chapter 9: *How Young Muslims and Christians Structure Human Rights: An Empirical Study in* Germany by Hans-Georg Ziebertz, and Chapter 10: *The Influence of the Socio-Cultural Environment and Personality on Attitudes Toward Human Rights: An Empirical Study in Reference to Human Rights Education* by Hans-Georg Ziebertz, Alexander Unser, Susanne Döhnert, and Anders Sjöborg) barely touch the topic of education.

swimming in the shallow waters of vagueness and a lack of clarity as to what exactly they would like to say.

A few contributions, however, should be singled out due to their clear focus, well-defined research questions, and well-argued content. Katarzyna Zielińska and Marcin K. Zwierżdżyński in their chapter *Sacred or Profane? Human Rights in Religion Education in Poland* (Chapter 2) give a comprehensive introduction to the Polish religious context and its organisation of (confessional) religious education (RE) in schools, before presenting a well-structured and in-depth analysis of the discourse Catholic, Orthodox, and Pentecostal RE textbooks employ when discussing the topic of human rights. Similarly, the chapter by Olga Schihalejev and Ringo Ringvee on the *Silent Religious Minorities in Schools in Estonia* (Chapter 5) compares three different modes of religious education – no RE, confessional RE, and non-confessional RE – and their relation to the level of respect for the right to freedom of religion and belief expressed by pupils. In this well-supported, quantitative chapter, they argue that RE (both confessional and non-confessional) is better for the promotion of human rights than the absence of RE in schools. Dan-Erik Andersson's chapter *Teaching the History of Human Rights* (Chapter 7) looks at how the history of human rights and its relationship with religion is presented in school textbooks. By discussing three examples of complexity in the above-mentioned relationship, he argues against a simplistic narrative of religion's role in the history of human rights, presenting an engaging, interesting, and strongly argued chapter. Lastly, we could also mention Kavot Zillén's chapter *Conscientious Objections in Clinical Healthcare Education as a Manifestation of Religion* (Chapter 11) as an example of a focused and clearly argued text, where she explores various dimensions of conscientious objection in healthcare education, though her contribution engages with the topic of education only to the extent that her general discussion of freedom of religion and conscientious objection in medical service is situated within the educational setting.

The rest of the chapters in this book mostly leave the reader with an impression that the ideas behind them were good but rather poorly executed. While singling out examples of particularly disappointing chapters would not serve any purpose, such oscillation between chapters of higher and lower quality is, unfortunately, an all too common feature of volumes that emerge out of conferences, panels, or workshops. The lack of a clear overall focus by the book's editors certainly could not have had a beneficial influence on the contributions made by the other authors.

Overall, this is a rather disappointing volume, which does not live up to the promise of its title – *Religion, Education and Human Rights*. While some

chapters will provide a worthwhile read to those engaged in similar research topics, the book as a whole would find readers only in those upon whom it was imposed as prescribed reading.

List of Referees in Year 2019

The members of the editorial board would like to thank the reviewers for their professional review of the contributions.

Milda Alisauskiene
Dominik Antonowicz
Paul Ashwin
Andreja Avsec
Karin Bakračevič
Kristyna Balatova
Fatlume Berisha
Fatlume Berisha
Vesna Bilić
Petra Bleisch Bouzar
Jelena Branković
Silva Bratož
Bob Bucat
Peter Childs
Zlatka Cugmas
Slavko Cvetek
Vesna Ferk Savec
Katharina Frank
Leni Franken
Nadja Furlan Štante
Slavko Gaber
Nikolaja Golob
Kaja Hacin Beyazoglu
Tatjana Hodnik
Sasa Horvat
Marián Kireš
Manja Klemenčič
Živa Kos
Katja Košir
Janez Krek
Simon Krek
Irena Lesar
Mojca Lipec Stopar
Alenka Lipovec
Zlatan Magajna
Antonio Magalaes
Vida Manfreda
Ankica Marinović
Ljubica Marjanovič Umek
Silvija Markic
Vesna Milanovic
Monika Mithans
Ines Nuic
Torjer Andreas Olsen
Predrag Oreški
Maria Chiara Passolunghi
Samo Pavlin
Jerneja Pavlin
Jesper Aagaard Petersen
Dunja Pivac
Karmen Pižorn
Olga Poljšak Škraban
Suzana Pulec Lah
Špela Razpotnik
Dusica Rodic
Tamara Roncevic
Alenka Rot Vrhovec
Blerim Saqipi
Lana Saric
Marjeta Šarič
Kristof Savski
Blaž Šeme
Marjan Šimenc
Darija Skubic
Klara Skubic Ermenc
Helena Smrtnik Vitulič
Stephan Sting
Marina Stojanovska

Darko Štrajn
Vita Štukovnik
Veronika Tašner
Roko Vladusic
Janez Vogrinc
Lidija Vujičić
Anja Zalta
Pavel Zgaga

Instructions for Authors for publishing in CEPS Journal (http://ojs.cepsj.si/ – instructions)

Submissions

Manuscript should be from 5,000 to 7,000 words long, including abstract and reference list. Manuscript should be not more than 20 pages in length, and should be original and unpublished work not currently under review by another journal or publisher.

Review Process

Manuscripts are reviewed initially by the Editors and only those meeting the aims and scope of the journal will be sent for blind review. Each manuscript is reviewed by at least two referees. All manuscripts are reviewed as rapidly as possible, but the review process usually takes at least 3 months. The CEPS Journal has an online-based review system via the Open Journal System. All submissions should be made via the OJS – http://ojs.cepsj.si/.

For more information visit our web page http://ojs.cepsj.si/.

Abstracting and indexation

Scopus | EBSCO - Education Source Publications | Cooperative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS) | Digital Library of Slovenia - dLib | DOAJ - Directory for Open Access Journals | Academic Journals Database | ERIH PLUS | ERIC | Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB (Electronic Journals Library) | Base-Search | DRJI - The Directory of Research Journal Indexing | GSU - Georgia State University Library | MLibrary - University of Michigan | NewJour | NYU Libraries | OhioLINK | Open Access Journals Search Engine (OAJSE) | peDOCS: open access to educational science literature | ResearchBib | Scirus | Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory; New Providence, USA

Annual Subscription (4 issues). Individuals 45 €; Institutions 90 €. Order by e-mail: **info@cepsj.si**; postal address: CEPS Journal, Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Kardeljeva ploščad 16, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Online edition at **http://ojs.cepsj.si/**.

Navodila za avtorje prispevkov v reviji (http://ojs.cepsj.si/ – navodila)

Prispevek

Prispevek lahko obsega od 5.000 do 7.000 besed, vključno s povzetkom in viri. Ne sme biti daljši od 20 strani, mora biti izvirno, še ne objavljeno delo, ki ni v recenzijskem postopku pri drugi reviji ali založniku.

Recenzijski postopek

Prispevki, ki na podlagi presoje urednikov ustrezajo ciljem in namenu revije, gredo v postopek anonimnega recenziranja. Vsak prispevek recenzirata najmanj dva recenzenta. Recenzije so pridobljene, kolikor hitro je mogoče, a postopek lahko traja do 3 mesece. Revija vodi recenzijski postopek preko Open Journal System (OJS). Prispevek oddaje na strani: http://ojs.cepsj.si/.

Več informacij lahko preberete na spletni strani http://ojs.cepsj.si/.

Povzetki in indeksiranje

Scopus | EBSCO - Education Source Publications | Cooperative Online Bibliographic System and Services (COBISS) | Digital Library of Slovenia - dLib | DOAJ - Directory for Open Access Journals | Academic Journals Database | ERIH PLUS | ERIC | Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB (Electronic Journals Library) | Base-Search | DRJI - The Directory of Research Journal Indexing | GSU - Georgia State University Library | MLibrary - University of Michigan | NewJour | NYU Libraries | OhioLINK | Open Access Journals Search Engine (OAJSE) | peDOCS: open access to educational science literature | ResearchBib | Scirus | Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory; New Providence, USA

Letna naročnina (4 številke). Posamezniki 45 €; pravne osebe 90 €. Naročila po e-pošti: **info@cepsj.si**; pošti: Revija CEPS, Pedagoška fakulteta, Univerza v Ljubljani, Kardeljeva ploščad 16, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia.

Spletna izdaja na **http://ojs.cepsj.si/**.

University of Ljubljana
Faculty of Education

CONTENTS

C·E·P·S Journal

Center for Educational Policy Studies Journal

Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij

Vol.9 | No4 | Year 2019

http://ojs.cepsj.si/

ISSN 1855-9719