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**A comparative study of religious education
in state schools in England and Norway**

by

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

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Abstract

In this thesis I present a systematic comparison of religious education in state schools in England and Norway. Comparative studies in related fields and pioneering works in comparative RE informed the formulation of a methodology, essentially a template for comparative religious education. This is a synthesis of two sets of ideas. The first is an idea of *three dimensions in comparative education*: supranational, national and subnational processes. In *supranational processes* I distinguish between *formal* and *informal* processes. *Formal* processes refer to formal international (educational) policymaking which takes place in international organizations. *Informal* processes include social and/ or political developments which take place both in and through the formal processes but also outside them and, partly independently of them - such as secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation. My perspective is that comparison in religious education is about the study of the impact of supranational processes on national processes. *Subnational processes* refer to variations between regions within a country.

The second set of ideas is *levels of curriculum*: societal, institutional, instructional and experiential. The thesis chapters explore these levels examining how they are affected by supranational, national and subnational processes. In discussing the *societal level*, the focus is on academic debates. The *institutional level* is represented mainly by relevant legislation plus key policy documents, the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE (QCA 2004) and Local Agreed Syllabuses in England, and the Norwegian National Curriculum for RE (UD 2005). The *instructional level* includes how teachers plan and deliver the curriculum and the *experiential level* corresponds to how learners receive the curriculum. The *societal* and *institutional* levels are explored through theory and documentary studies, while empirical studies are part of the material for the chapters concerning practice. *Civil enculturation*, *social imaginaries* and *national imaginaries* are important analytical concepts. The suggested methodology and some central findings are discussed further in a concluding chapter.

Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--|
| BBC | British Broadcasting Corporation |
| BJRE | British Journal of Religious Education |
| Cand. Mag. | Candiate Magistrata (lower university degree) |
| CD-ROMs | Compact Disc Read-Only Memory |
| DCSF | Department for Children, Schools and Families |
| DEF | Department for Education |
| DES | Department for Education and Skills |
| DCSF | Department for Children, Schools and Families |
| EDC/HRE | Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights |
| EU | European Union |
| ES1 | English School 1 |
| ES1-P | English School 1 – Pupils |
| ES1-T | English School 1 – Teacher ‘Sally’ |
| ES1-PG1 | English School 1 – Pupil, Girl 1 |
| ES1-PG2 | English School 1 – Pupil, Girl 2 |
| ES1-PB1 | English School 1 – Pupil, Boy 1 |
| ES1-PB2 | English School 1 – Pupil, Boy 2 |
| ES2 | English School 2 |
| ES2-P | English School 2 - Pupils |
| ES2-T | English School 2 – Teacher ‘Vicky’ |
| ES2-PG1 | English School 2 – Pupil, Girl 1 |
| ES2-PG2 | English School 2 – Pupil, Girl 2 |
| ES2-PB1 | English School 2 – Pupil, Boy 1 |
| ES2-PB2 | English School 2 – Pupil, Boy 2 |
| ES3 | English School 3 |
| ES3-P | English School 3 - Pupils |
| ES3-T | English School 3 – Teacher ‘Ruth’ |
| ES3-PG1 | English School 3 – Pupil, Girl 1 |
| ES3-PG2 | English School 3 – Pupil, Girl 2 |
| ES3-PB1 | English School 3 – Pupil, Boy 1 |
| ES3-PB2 | English School 3 – Pupil, Boy 2 |
| <i>et al.</i> | et alii (Latin: ‘and others’) (Webster2003) |
| GCSEs | General Certificate of Secondary Education |
| GCSE | Syllabuses for study for GCSE Exams syllabuses |
| HEF | Humanetisk Forbund (Norwegian Humanist Association) |
| IAHR | The International Association for the History of Religion |
| ICT | digital tools (Computer Technology) |
| IKO | Institutt for kristen oppseding (Institute of Christian Upbringing) |
| ICCS | Inter-European Commission on Church and School |
| IMER | International Migration and Ethnic Relations (the Norwegian Research Councils initiative to fund research into migration) |
| ISREV | International Seminar on Religious Education and Values |
| KIFO | Stiftelsen Kirkeforskning' (Church Research Foundation), a church related sociology of religion institute |

| | |
|-------------|--|
| KRL | 1997-2002: Kristendom med Religions og Livssynsorientering ('Christianity with orientation about Religions and Life views') |
| | 2002-2008: Kristendom, Religion og Livssynskunnskap. (the meaning of the acronym was changed to 'Knowledge of Christianity, Religion and Life views') |
| KUF | Det kongelige kirke-, utdannings og forskningsdepartementet/ Kirke-, utdannings og forskningsdepartementet |
| KUF 1996 | Det kongelige kirke-, utdannings og forskningsdepartementet (KUF) 1996) – The 1997 Norwegian National Curriculum |
| LA | Local Authorities (from 2007 replacing the LEAs) |
| LAS | Local Agreed Syllabus |
| LEA | Local Education Authorities (until 2007) |
| LS | Læringscenteret |
| LS 2002 | 2002 National Curriculum for RE in Norway |
| NoReFo | Norsk religionspedagogisk forskningsforum (Norwegian forum for research on pedagogy of religion) |
| NOU | Norsk Offentlig Utredning |
| NOU 1995: 9 | Norsk Offentlig Utredning 1995:9 <i>Identitet og dialog</i> (Identity and Dialogue) |
| NOU 2007: 6 | <i>Formål for framtida: Formål for barnehagen og opplæringen</i> (Purpose/ object for the future: purpose/ object of kindergarden and education) |
| NEKRIF | Nettverk for forskning på kultur, religion og identitet I en flerkulturell kontekst |
| NS1 | Norwegian School 1 |
| NS1-P | Norwegian School 1 - Pupils |
| NS1-T | Norwegian School 1 – Teacher 'Jon' |
| NS1-PG1 | Norwegian School 1 – Pupil, Girl 1 |
| NS1-PG2 | Norwegian School 1 – Pupil, Girl 2 |
| NS1-PB1 | Norwegian School 1 – Pupil, Boy 1 |
| NS1-PB2 | Norwegian School 1 – Pupil, Boy 2 |
| NS2 | Norwegian School 2 |
| NS2-P | Norwegian School 2 - Pupils |
| NS2-T | Norwegian School 2 – Teacher 'Ingunn' |
| NS2-PG1 | Norwegian School 2 – Pupil, Girl 1 |
| NS2-PG2 | Norwegian School 2 – Pupils, Girl 2 |
| NS2-PB1 | Norwegian School 2 – Pupils, Boy 1 |
| NS2-PB2 | Norwegian School 2 – Pupils, Boy 2 |
| NS3 | Norwegian School 3 |
| NS3-P | Norwegian School 3 - Pupils |
| NS3-T | Norwegian School 3 – Teacher 'Oline' |
| NS3-PG1 | Norwegian School 3 – Pupil, Girl 1 |

| | |
|-------------|---|
| NS3-PG2 | Norwegian School 3 – Pupil, Girl 2 |
| NS3-PG3 | Norwegian School 3 – Pupil, Girl 3 |
| NS3-PG4 | Norwegian School 3 – Pupil, Girl 4 |
| NTNU | Norges Teknisk Naturvitenskapelige Universitet |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development |
| Ofsted | The Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Service and Skills (Her Majesty’s Inspectorate) |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe |
| OSCE (2007) | <i>the Toledo Guiding Principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools</i> |
| Ped.Sem./ | Pedagogisk Seminar/ Praktisk Pedagogisk Utdanning |
| PPU | (‘Educational Science’) |
| PGCE | Post Graduate Certificate in Education (‘Educational Science’) |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| SHE | Personal, social and health education |
| RE | Religious Education |
| REDCo | The EC REDCo Project is a large comparative EU funded project launched in 2006 involving eight European countries |
| RI | Religious Instruction |
| RLE | Religion, Livssyn og Etikk (Religion, Life views and Ethics) |
| SACRE | Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education |
| SCAA | School Curriculum and Assessment Authority |
| Shap | The Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education |
| USA | United States of America |
| UD | Utdanningsdirektoratet (the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training) |
| UD 2005 | The KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity- religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1 st – 10 th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information |
| UD 2008 | The new National Curriculum for RE from 2008 in which the name was changed to Religion, Life views and Ethics (RLE) |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UN | United Nations |
| VS. | Versus |
| WRERU | Warwick Religious Education Research Unit |
| WTO | The World Trade Organization |
| QCA | Qualifications and Curriculum Authority |
| QCA 2004 | The Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education |

Chapter 1

Introduction

A comparative study of religious education in state schools in England and Norway

There is always a relationship between religion and society, but what that relationship is will change over time and be different from place to place.

What is that relationship at a given time and place and why is it different or similar in other places? This is a sociological and historical question.

Further, different actors will have different views about what this relationship is, descriptively, but especially about how it ought to be, normatively. This has serious bearings on the question of how religion/ life views should be taught in school. It is both a political and pedagogical question.

My point of departure is religious education (RE) in Norwegian state schools which from 1997–2008 was a subject called 'KRL'. From 1997–2002 the abbreviation KRL represented 'Christianity with orientation about Religions and Life views' (Det kongelige kirke-, utdannings og forskningsdepartementet (KUF) 1996). From 2002-2008 the meaning of the acronym was changed to 'Knowledge of Christianity, Religion and Life views'.¹ The content of the KRL curriculum was changed in 2002 (Læringscenteret (LS) 2002) and 2005 (Utdanningsdirektoratet (UD) 2005).

¹ 1997 – 2002: Kristendom med Religions og Livssynsorientering, 2002-2008: Kristendom, Religion og Livssynskunnskap.

In 2008 the name of the subject was changed to Religion, Life views and Ethics (RLE). Changes made in 2005 coincided with a general revision of the National Curriculum in 2006, but the changes in the KRL were advanced because the authorities needed to address a critique from a statement from the United Nations' (UN) Human Rights Committee that KRL was in violation of the convention for civil and political rights (see chapter 4). The changes in 2008 were about addressing a verdict with similar content in the Human Rights court in Strasbourg (Utdanningsdirektoratet (UD) 2008) (see chapter 4).

From 1997, Norwegian state school RE was intended to be a subject in which pupils with different religious and non-religious backgrounds could learn about religions, ethics, philosophy and secular life views together. It is important to distinguish clearly between religious groups' own RE, which could be about nurturing children into a particular faith, and the kind of RE that goes on in state schools (Norsk Offentlig Utredning (NOU) 1995:9, KUF 1996). In England a similar open and plural type of RE had been developing locally, through the system of Local Agreed Syllabuses since the 1970s, and this development was recognized in the Education Reform Act of 1988 (see for example Hull 1989, Jackson & O'Grady 2007). In England, the term 'religious education' has changed in meaning over time. In current usage, in relation to the subject in fully state-funded community schools, the subject involves both learning about religions and providing the opportunity for

pupils to learn from them. It is not about the transmission of religious culture.²

In being inclusive of different religious faiths as a response to the growing plurality in society, the two country's REs are similar, but there are also differences. One difference is that the Norwegian state school RE includes secular life views as an important part of the subject while in England secular life views have been marginal to RE. In some Local Education Authorities (LEA until 2007)/ Local Authorities (LA) something about secular life views has been included in locally Agreed Syllabuses, but this has not been very common (Copley 1997). There is no strong tradition for teaching secular life views in English schools but, in the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE, launched in the fall of 2004 (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) 2004), secular humanism is included. Another difference is that in English RE Sikhism is included in the religions usually represented; while in Norway Sikhism is marginal (see chapter 4). Philosophy and ethics are important parts in Norwegian RE, and ethics is also an important aspect in English RE. Other religions than those five or six which are considered major religions are marginal both in the Norwegian and English curricula and syllabuses. This includes for instance ethnic religions, nature religions, new religious movements and archaic religions.

The school systems in England and Norway are different in many important ways. For instance, in England there is variety of types of schools even

² On the ambiguities of 'religious education' and other terms, see Jackson (2008a).

within the state system, while this is not the case in Norway. The four main types of English state schools are: Community schools, Voluntary Controlled schools, Voluntary Aided Schools and Foundation schools and in addition a number of independent schools.³ Schools with a religious character are supported within the state system in England even if this is also disputed, see Jackson (2004a: 39-57).

In Norway there is only one type of state school, and in addition alternatives to the state schools are very marginal providing only for about 2% of school children (Skeie 2007). The Norwegian school is called “enhetsskolen”, which in this thesis will be referred to as the unitary school. For instance Telhaug (1994) describes the unitary school as four dimensional: 1. The resource dimension: that there should be equality in availability of resources (economically and otherwise). 2. The social dimension: The school should include all pupils within a geographic area to come together in heterogeneous groups. 3. The cultural dimension: pupils should acquire subject culture, in their subject learning, shared traditions, values and knowledge should be emphasised as a common frame of reference. 4. The dimension of difference: Unity school ideology includes respect for difference and plurality of backgrounds among its pupils. The education should be adjusted to their individual needs so that all receive education according to their different abilities.⁴

³ See <http://www.inca.org.uk/england-system-mainstream.html>

⁴ My translation and paraphrasing of Oftedal Telhaugs account.

Differences between the school systems are an important source of explanations for differences between English and Norwegian state school RE. In the thesis chapters however differences between the Educational systems as such is as a rule only addressed where it is directly relevant in the analysis of differences in English and Norwegian RE. However, in chapter 5 differences between the educational systems as such are focused through some illustrative points. Especially the role of inspection illustrates some deep-rooted differences in styles of civility in the school systems which affects RE.

To make sure that comparative studies in religious education (RE) are meaningful, it is necessary to narrow the focus to specific themes and also to find cases which share some basic similarities (Lijphart 1971: 687). England and Norway have state run schools which must be considered (informal) 'public spheres' (Habermas 2006); both offer RE as a separate subject (as opposed to for example France) and have non-confessional multifaith approaches to RE (as opposed to for example Germany) (see Jackson *et al.* (eds.) 2007, Alberts 2007). It is a basic similarity that the main aims of RE in public schools are educational, and also that multifaith RE has developed in response to secularisation and pluralisation, which are international trends.

Differences as well as similarities between the two countries' state school RE will be dealt with in more detail in the main parts of this thesis, but an essential point here at the outset is that both countries attempts a *non-*

denominational and *non-confessional multifaith* (inclusive/ integrative) RE in state schools.

The term *non-confessional* here connotes a form of religious education which is free of religious instruction or nurture into a particular faith. It is necessary to point out that this is not the same as *non-denominational*. In Norwegian language the word 'konfesjonelt' covers both 'denominational' and 'confessional'. In England Religious Instruction (RI)⁵ in state school was always non-denominational. However, until 1988 it had a confessional element. It was a form of non-denominational Christian instruction, - a generic, mainly Bible based form of teaching, derived from Protestant sources (Copley 1997), which could be described also as civil religion (Davie 2007).

Different Christian denominations such as Catholics and Methodist have had a strong presence in the British society besides the established Anglican Church (Protestant). However, Roman Catholics have often sent their children to mainly state-funded Catholic Voluntary Aided Schools, so they have taken little part in policy making and syllabus construction for religious education in fully state funded community (formerly County) schools (Jackson 2004a). In Norway, in contrast, other Christian denominations have been more marginal in society. RE in state schools was until 1969 instruction into a particular Christian denomination's faith, that of the

⁵ The name was changed from Religious Instruction to Religious Education in 1988.

Norwegian State Church (Protestant) (Haraldsø 1989). Alternatives to the state schools have been close to non – existing in Norway (see above).

From 1969 till 1997 RE in Norwegian state-schools was, in theory, a non-confessional but denominational Christian Instruction, emphasising Norwegian Lutheranism, which could be seen as civil religion as well. In practise it was to a great extent perceived as still being connected to the Norwegian State Church (Haakedal 1995: 9). This could be argued based on the continued existence of the school law preamble ('formålsparagrafen' see chapter 4), § 1-2 which is stating that the overall purpose of education as such was to aid parents in the Christian upbringing of their children.⁶ Confessional and denominational has in practice been two sides of the same coin in the Norwegian context and has come to mean the same in the language ('Konfesjon' = denomination, 'bekjennende' = confessional).

While there has been an important difference between confessional and denominational in England, in Norway there has not really been a difference.⁷ It is also an interesting difference that English RE was confessional but not denominational, while Norwegian RE was denominational but not confessional: and an interesting historical question which will not be pursued further here is how much difference this made in practical teaching of Christianity in schools in England and Norway. Did it for

⁶ But only if this is in agreement with parents wish, and therefore it has been argued, for instance in the court case against the state of Norway, that this is not in violation of the right to freedom of religion. Further details in chapter 4.

⁷ See also Schweitzer (2006: 8) on the different meanings of confessional and denominational in England and Germany.

instance mean that a certain style of civil religion was what was really on the curriculum?

By *multifaith* RE I mean descriptively with reference to English and Norwegian RE, a kind of RE where all children in school, regardless of faith background, are taught together; where the content of the teaching includes material from and about different religions (and life views and philosophy); and where the methods of teaching are such that it is not intended to nurture children and young people into a specific faith.⁸ This has been the aspiration of Norwegian state school RE since 1997 and of English state school RE since 1988 (and in some places before this, see chapter 3).

Scope and limitations

This thesis sets out to make some comparisons between religious education as understood in fully publicly funded community schools in England and as understood in state schools in Norway. It follows Professor Friedrich Schweitzer's plea for systematic comparative work in the field of religious education (Schweitzer 2004, see chapter 2). The increasing importance of the supranational context to education as such and to religious education (RE) in particular, creates a need for comparative studies (Schweitzer 2004, Karlsen 2006, Alexander 2000) (see chapter 2). For example, comparative work reveals questionable assumptions of exact conceptual equivalence, as

⁸Alberts (2007) calls this kind of RE integrative RE. Her choice of concept enhances the contrast to 'Seperative approaches' where children are not taught together about religion, but where children's RE are seen as the responsibility of the specific denomination/ religion they or their parents belong to, like in Germany.

already demonstrated with regard to the meaning of confessional/ denominational RE (see also Schweitzer 2004: 197). This draws the researcher's attention to the ways in which specific differences in national tradition (national dimension, see chapter 2), for example history of the relationship between religion and state, and religion and schooling, affect current assumptions about the aims and scope of religious education. There will also be variations below the national level, in local contexts of various kinds, which will be conceptualised here as a subnational dimension (see chapter 2 and 8).

In a study of this nature it would be impossible to compare every possible variable affecting RE within the two education systems. In this thesis, the scope, the range of domains and examples covered are limited in the following ways:

Firstly, although the study is framed within the wider context of the histories of state education in the two countries, the bulk of the thesis concentrates on recent developments, here meaning from the 1988 Education Reform Act in England when multifaith RE was sanctioned nationally, and the 1997 Curriculum Reform in Norway when multifaith RE was introduced. These are the points in time when multifaith forms of RE were sanctioned in law.

Secondly, the range of examples selected for comparison is deliberately selective. The framework for selecting examples is based on John

Goodlad's idea of 'levels' of curriculum: societal, institutional, instructional and experiential (Goodlad & Su 1992). Within these levels, particular examples have been selected for comparison (academic debates, educational policy, and curriculum practice). Academic debates relate to the societal level (chapter 3); educational policy relates to the institutional level (chapter 4), where sources will be documents and texts. Educational practice, including *teachers' perspectives*, relates to the instructional level (chapter 6), while *pupils'/ students' perspectives* and the ways learners interact with the material offered for study, relate to the experiential level, (chapter 7). In the case of 'instructional' and 'experiential' levels, particular use is made of empirical case studies conducted by the researcher in secondary schools in England and Norway, but I also refer to other empirical studies (see chapter 5).

I made use of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss [1967] (2008)). This is not a theory but a method for generating theory from empirical data, contrasted to the 1960s view of using empirics for testing pre-existing theory. It is research aiming at generating new theory that fits the facts. It can be situated as opposed to 'grand theories', but once a category is abstracted from the facts at hand, it can be used for theorizing on a more general level. Using grounded theory can mean a detailed systematic method (coding, see Robson 2002: 492ff.), but it can also be applied more generally (Robson 2002: 495). 'It is, of course, possible, to design a study which incorporates some aspects of grounded theory while ignoring others' (Robson 2002:193). I went to the field with certain questions, but where I found interesting

elements in the comparison, I have discussed those as findings. As I was looking for explanations for similarities and differences, I wanted to look for themes that emerged from the material (see chapter 8).

The study concentrates on the domain of culture, and I have an interest in looking for and comparing examples of ways in which religious education has come to be perceived as contributing to students' cultural understanding. This is sometimes expressed as religious education's contribution to 'multicultural' or 'intercultural' education.⁹ Relevant here too are perceptions of religious education as contributing to education for democratic citizenship or as a tool for promoting social or community cohesion (Jackson (ed.) 2003, or in the case of Norway generic formation ('*bygging*', see chapters 3 and 4).

That grounded theory is based on data means it is dynamic and open to change when new data challenge the findings. '(...) so the published work is not the final one, but only a pause in the never ending process of generating theory' (Glaser & Strauss 1967: 40). This quote aids the way this author thinks about this thesis as finished, even if it is also never ending. I hope that this study will contribute to discussions about methodology for the relatively new field of comparative study of religious education as well as bringing out

⁹ Although multiculturalism can be understood differently, as group plurality (see McIntyre 1978, Gravem 2004), others have more flexible and malleable idea of multiculturalism (Baumann 1996, Jackson 1997, 2004, Hylland Eriksen 1993, Davie 2007). In current political rhetoric in the UK (and in the White Paper on Intercultural Education from the Council of Europe), multicultural education is seen in a negative light as something to leave behind in favour of *intercultural education*, which allows more easily for cultural change and cultural interaction.

issues relating to the particular national situations of England and Norway, which both exemplifies multifaith RE; hopefully it also will inform wider debates about European policy regarding RE.

Main research question

My main research questions are ‘What are the main similarities and differences in English and Norwegian state school RE?’ and ‘How do we account for these?’ This can be broken down into sub-questions (see below). In the examples from different ‘levels’ that I have chosen to compare I move systematically from the general to the specific (see chapters 3-7). Thus, my sub-questions are: What principles should be applied in comparative studies in religious education? (Chapter 2): What are main similarities and differences in academic debates regarding RE in England and Norway? How do we account for these? (Chapter 3): What similarities and differences exist between English and Norwegian laws concerning religion and school? How do we account for these? (Chapter 4); What are the main similarities and differences in English and Norwegian policy as expressed in *the Non-statutory National Framework for RE* (QCA 2004) and *The KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity- religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information* (UD 2005).? How do we account for these? (Chapter 4): How does the empirical research (see chapters 5-7) fit into the overall methodology as outlined in chapter 2? (Chapter 5): What are important similarities and differences between the instructional level of curriculum in England and

Norway as expressed by teachers in this sample material? How do we account for these? (Chapter 6); how do we account for these with reference to the other levels (the institutional and societal) of curriculum? (Chapter 6): What are similarities and differences in English and Norwegian curriculum's experiential level as expressed by pupils in this sample? How do we account for these? (Chapter 7); How do we account for these with reference to the other levels of curriculum? (Chapter 7): What are important findings? How could this methodology be used further? (Chapter 8)

Methodology

In chapter 2, I present a suggested template for comparative religious education. Comparative studies in related fields and pioneering works in comparative RE informs formulating a methodology for comparative religious education (chapter 2). This template is a synthesis of two sets of ideas. The first is an idea of three dimensions in comparative education: supranational, national and subnational processes. In *supranational processes* I distinguish between *formal* and *informal* processes. *Formal* processes refer to formal international (educational) policymaking which is going on in various international organizations for example The Council of Europe. Both *general* educational policy and *specific* RE policy could be seen as relevant to RE. *Informal* processes include social and/ or political developments which go on both in and through the formal processes but also outside them and, in part independently of them, such as secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation. My perspective is that comparison in religious education is

about the study of the impact of supranational processes on national processes. *Subnational processes* refer to variations between regions.

The second set of ideas is of levels of curriculum: societal, institutional, instructional and experiential. The thesis chapters explore these levels looking at how they are affected by supranational, national and subnational processes. Relationships between these levels are also considered (see chapter 8). The *societal level* is seen as political, and includes public as well as professional debates about RE, but the focus here is on the latter (chapter 3). The *institutional level* in England is represented by the law, the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE and Local Agreed Syllabuses, while in Norway it corresponds to the law, the National Curriculum, and local work in schools (chapter 4). The *instructional level* includes how teachers plan and deliver the curriculum (chapter 6) and the *experiential level* corresponds to how learners receive the curriculum and make it personal (chapter 7). The societal and institutional levels are explored through theory and documentary studies; while empirical studies are part of the material for the chapters where the instructional and experiential levels are discussed (see chapter 5). *Civil enculturation*, *social imaginaries* and *national imaginaries* are important analytical concepts (see chapters 2 and 5). The suggested methodology and the central findings of the comparison are discussed in a final chapter (8). I suggest that this template provides a framework for capturing different levels of national processes within a supranational context. My key research methods are discussed specifically in chapters 2, 5 and 8.

Conclusion

In this introduction to my comparative study of religious education in England and Norway I have set the scene by presenting some immediate similarities and differences. The scope and limitations are made clear, and I have also made a basic introduction to the methodology, the way in which this research has been conducted. In the following chapter 2 I will proceed to discuss comparative studies in RE in more detail, and present the arguments for my suggested methodology.

Chapter 2

Towards a Methodology for Comparative Religious Education

Introduction

How can comparative studies in related fields, comparative religion and comparative education, illuminate and help formulate a view on comparative religious education (RE)? Insights from these two fields together with experiences from pioneering work in the field of comparative RE forms an important background for a suggesting that in comparative RE there should be an awareness of supranational processes, global and international (including European) processes, processes at the national level and also processes at the local level. Based on this and on Goodland's theories of levels of curriculum I suggest a template for comparative religious education that both take account of the international complexities like international trends and politics, and different levels of history, law, politics and practice nationally. My work will concentrate on national (and to some extent local) factors, but will take account of supranational factors, such as the trend towards the recommendation of studies about religions as part of education throughout and beyond Europe (for example Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) 2007; Council of Europe 2007). For the chapter at hand my research question is: What principles should be applied in comparative studies in religious education? (See chapter 1).

Comparative studies in related fields

In a conference in Lund, Sweden in March 2004 Friedrich Schweitzer made a plea for more comparative research in RE and pointed to the fields of comparative education (Schweitzer 2004: 198) and comparative religious studies (Schweitzer 2004: 192-193) as especially relevant. Comparative studies in RE is not about comparing religions, but education concerning religion, including education about religions. In a sense it is therefore closer to the field of comparative education than to comparative religious studies. Nevertheless, insights from both fields are valuable so far as they illuminate comparative RE. An aspect where comparative religious studies and comparative studies in RE particularly share interests is for example in relation to the question of how denominations or religions deals with the next generation, and how new generations respond to the expectations or even demands of older generations (Schweitzer 2004: 195).

In the development of these two disciplines one can recognize general developments in academia as well as in society. These moves from grand universal theories in the 1950/60s through a period of dispute and contest in the 1970/80s, to a post-modern eclectic, reflexive, inter textual and pragmatic orientation in the 1990s, with an ambivalent nostalgia for certainty and delight in diversity (Paulston 1994: 924). It follows the pattern of development from modern to post-modern/ late modern society.

‘Comparative educators and their texts are becoming more reflexive and

eclectic' (Paulston 1994: 932) and this could be said about recent trends in comparative religion as well, although the different positions, on the ways religions are represented in the late modern context, for example, are complex (see for example the sophisticated but rather different stances of Flood and Fitzgerald discussed by Jackson (2008b).

Since the origin of religious studies¹⁰ in the 1850s, there has been a tradition for comparison: 'He who knows one knows none' (Müller 1873: 16)¹¹: he who only knows one religion, his own, does not even know that, because he does not know what is unique or what is similar to elements in other religions. This could also be claimed for RE. Through comparing RE in different school traditions one should gain new perspectives on developments in RE in one's own country. Comparative education originated in 1808 when Basset called for exchange of educationalists so that they could become free from national and methodological prejudice (Epstein 1994: 918). In RE too, comparison between different countries RE could lead to new ideas which potentially could challenge set national perspectives on RE. With Alberts (2007) this is also an explicit goal of her comparative work. Comparison makes us think of questions which do not occur in our own context (Schweitzer 2004: 193).

For many years there has been an extreme self criticism in comparative religious studies. Typically researchers would not claim enough of an overview of more than one area to conduct valid comparisons (Stausberg

¹⁰ The discipline goes by many names: Religious Studies, Science of Religion, Comparative Religion, Phenomenology of Religions, and History of Religion.

¹¹ He argued that what Goethe had said about studying languages was also relevant for the study of religion. The Comparative Indo-European Study of Languages served as model.

2006). Schweitzer also warns that ‘this study could not have been done in a similar way by one researcher alone, (...) because of the required in-depth familiarity with two different contexts, locations, and traditions’ (Schweitzer 2004: 199) and seems to recommend inclusion of representatives of different countries in comparative studies as a joint enterprise. In the EC REDCo Project comparative studies are conducted as joint efforts from scholars from eight European countries (see below), but there are also examples of comparative studies in RE carried out by single authors (Haakedal 1983, 1986, Alberts 2007). It is important to be self-critical in RE as well, but not to the point that researcher refuse to attempt comparative studies.

One point in the self criticism in religious studies has been an awareness of the dangers of ethnocentric and biased comparison. Comparing religions have had different aims and goals, including being polemical towards other religions than one’s own, and in an evolutionist paradigm judging other religions as primitive.¹² Considerations to avoid biased and polemical focuses are also relevant to comparison in RE. Schweitzer (2006) responds to an article about RE in Germany and England (Hull 2005) with the criticism that this did not have a mutual two way perspective, and stresses the importance of contextuality in comparative analysis. On the one hand Schweitzer is convinced that it is ‘more and more important to work towards international agreements about basic criteria for what should be considered

¹² Much of the criticism of early comparisons in the discipline had to do with leaving the Darwinist evolutionary paradigm where religions were ranked according to how primitive or evolved they were, where the religions most like Christianity; those who had holy scriptures and only one god, were considered less primitive (Sharpe 1975: 47-71). The phrase ‘primitive religions’ still lingers in the language, often with not very helpful ‘quotation marks’.

quality religious education' but on the other hand he stresses that this can only be achieved through a mutual critical dialogue (Schweitzer 2006:141-142).

Schweitzer points to a number of contextual factors, like for instance different legal systems, different histories of relationship between state and church and degree of Church 'control' with RE in school. Schweitzer argues that a thorough contextual comparative analysis would be open to the possibility that what would seem in first instance like similarities might be differences and what appears in first instance to be differences can turn out to be more similar (Schweitzer 2006: 148). He gives the example that if two countries both have 'non-confessional' RE this would be a face value similarity, but since the term 'non-confessional' might have different meanings in different countries, important differences might surface if this is explored in more depth.

I take Schweitzer's point, and have in the introduction to this theses also demonstrated how the terms 'non-confessional' and 'non-denominational' can easily be a source of confusion in a comparison of RE in England and Norway (see chapter 1). In my comparison between English and Norwegian RE it would be inappropriate to use examples from the English context to be polemical towards Norwegian RE and vice versa. It is important to be sensitive to contextual reasons for differences. This does not mean that any insight from the one context could not be used in the other, but it is important

to try to keep the comparison impartial and to understand differences in light of the nation specific histories and school traditions. However, Alberts (2007), like Schweitzer a German, uses the comparative perspective to make points of criticism to RE in Germany. This brings out the point that comparative perspectives can also be a source of critique of national processes.

Comparisons, like all other kinds of academic studies, will always be guided by interests. It includes a relation between two items being compared, and the specific interest of the researcher (Smith 1990: 51 in Stausberg 2006: 34). This means that even if I attempt not to be biased in my comparison the examples of RE from both contexts are represented through my choice of foci and interpreted through my research questions and analysis. Because of the awareness that no comparison can be neutral, I would argue that today also comparison needs to be more contextual, strategic and reflexive. A comparison of religions Stausberg (2006:40) claims is always an interpretation and to a certain extent also an explanation'. In comparative studies in RE as well it is important to have an awareness of the interests and cultural backgrounds and values of the researcher conducting the study. (In my case this is a curiosity of research in English RE from the perspective of a Norwegian religious studies graduate coming into teaching RE to teacher students at a time when the revolutionary KRL replaced traditional teaching of Christianity in Norwegian state schools.) Even though to a certain extent all approaches are biased, I will attempt to be interpretive rather than normative or purely descriptive.

In comparative religious studies it has been essential to establish valid comparative categories. One did not try to compare, for instance, all of Islam with all of Christianity, which would be impossible, but restrained the comparison to certain categories, like for instance rituals, concept of 'god' etc (Sharpe 1975). In comparative education Kandel (1933) also argued that comparative approaches should use certain common concepts (Epstein 1994: 920). Examples of such concepts are church and state, rural education, adult education, higher education. To make sure that comparative studies in religious education (RE) are meaningful, according to Lijphart (1971: 687) it is necessary to narrow the focus to specific themes and also to find cases which share some basic similarities. In comparative RE as well it is not possible to compare every aspect of, for instance, RE in England with every aspect of RE in Norway. It is necessary to choose categories or themes to focus the study. Phenomena which are being compared must have something in common; they must be genuinely comparable. There is no point in comparing a cat to a dog, if you want to know more about different kinds of cats.¹³ In comparative religious studies there has been a distinction between typological and hermeneutical approaches. The typologists only wanted to categorize while the hermeneutists also wanted to make interpretations (Sharpe 1975: 220-250).

¹⁴ In comparative studies in RE the interpretive aspect is important. Analysis would set out to find reasons for and explain differences and similarities.

¹³ In the words of Schweitzer (2004: 192): apples are not oranges.

¹⁴ For the typologists the problem was how to compare without adding their own subjective interpretation while for the hermeneutics the question was how interpretations could be made.

Paden (1994: 1-12) points to two poles in the perspectives on comparison in religious studies while arguing for the possibility of a middle way. One pole would relate to the traditional preconceptions for doing comparison in religious studies, a focus on similarities: generally speaking that there is an essence to 'religion' as such and that all religions therefore essentially are the same type of phenomena and therefore comparable.¹⁵ The most radical critique of this led to almost abandoning comparisons as a strategy in religious studies and would be a focus on differences: generally speaking that religious traditions are completely unique phenomena which cannot be compared to each other.¹⁶ In RE as well it is important to raise the question whether the systems for RE of two different countries are really comparable, or completely unique.

In the light of this kind of critique Paden (1994) explores the possibilities of doing valid comparisons through taking account of the uniqueness of the different contexts and argues that the comparative should not be understood as an alternative to historical and contextual knowledge, but as a supplementary perspective. '(...) comparison is not an end in itself. It yields comparative *perspective*, the process by which overreaching themes on the one hand and historical particulars on the other get enriched by the way they illuminate each other' (Paden 1994: 4). It is important in RE to acknowledge a position between the two poles of essentialism and particularism, and consider comparative studies as complementary to close up studies of RE in

¹⁵ This has a reference to essentialist theories of religion as such: *sui generis*.

¹⁶ This perspective has reference to a contextual postmodernist view.

one context. The specific contribution of comparative studies would be the possibilities of adding overarching perspectives and explanations that can only be found in the supranational dimension (see below).

Paden's (1994) emphasis on context is evident in his main comparative concept: 'religious worlds'. He underlines that where similarities are pointed out, one must not think of this as identical but similar phenomena. Because of the uniqueness of the contexts they are not the same. Paden also points out that if the plural nature of the phenomena compared is to be maintained in the analysis, differences should be as much focused as similarities. In the same manner for instance the similarity that both English and Norwegian have a non – confessional multifaith approach to RE in state schools would also have to be understood in light of the different contexts, including school history and school systems, and the differences must be considered just as interesting to the analysis as the similarities.

Sadler, in a lecture delivered in 1900, stressed that comparative education required examination not only of schooling itself but also of the social context that the schools functioned in (Epstein 1994: 919). After the 2nd World War the social sciences came to play a paramount role in comparative education, and the discipline was refocused as a social science activity (Epstein 1994: 920). The field now views schools as integral parts of culture and social change. This makes demands on education and comparativists can study how these demands produce different results

among societies (Epstein 1994: 922). Also in comparative RE, perspectives from social science are important. For example, changes in RE across countries are closely linked to social changes such as secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation. The fact that these social changes are of a supranational character makes comparative studies/ perspectives necessary for those seeking to understand developments even in one country.

Some claim comparative education should include actual comparisons between two or more countries, and Alexander's (2000) book *'Culture and pedagogy: international comparison in primary education'* is an example of this. Alexander (2000) compares systems, politics and history as well as schools and classroom activities in France, Russia, India, the United States and England. Alexander is concerned with globalisation as a context and he for instance warns about borrowing educational politics from countries which are successful economic competitors as a political 'quick fix' of perceived weaknesses in a country's educational system (Alexander 2000: 2). The need for informed international educational comparison is now inescapable, he argues. In RE as well one should be cautious in borrowing elements from one country without an understanding of contextual differences, and also, in relation to RE, one could argue that thorough international comparative analysis is necessary now, because exchange of ideas is happening and we need to have better knowledge of this phenomenon. Schweitzer (2004: 194) also argues that comparative work in the field of RE is needed today because it potentially adds a theoretical level to ongoing international exchange (see also Alexander's (2000) discussion: 531ff).

Rather than seeing comparative education as a comparison of certain aspects of education on two or more countries, it is more common among comparative educationists now to have a broader definition (Halls 1990 in Buk-Berge 2005: 274). International developments that transcend the traditional nation state borders have given the discipline a new focus. In RE, international developments have led to the establishment of international networks, seminars and recently some international and comparative research. Comparative education is often described as the study of international problems in education (Epstein 1994: 922). Comparativists' interest is to explain why educational systems and processes vary and how they relate to various social factors. Comparative RE too could be seen as the study of international problems in the subject – the study of how RE varies across countries and reasons for this.

In religious studies today the comparative perspective is more than the explicit comparison of two or more religions. There is more awareness now of the inner diversity in religions (see for example Said 1993) and that even the study of one religion is a comparative project. In RE as well a comparative project could just as well be a comparison between elements of RE in different parts of a county or region within a country, differences between rural areas and city areas, or for instance between different political or religious interests regarding RE in one country.

Comparative education is not simply a process of comparing two educational systems, but may be an exploration of developments in one country in an international context. It could also be studies of how international processes affect various educational systems. The point would then be to offer interpretations and explanations of global phenomena on a national level, like for examples Karlsen's (2006) book about Norwegian educational politics in an international perspective. This approach could also be applied to comparative RE: it could be seen as an analysis of the developments in one country's RE in an international context. For instance R. Jackson's (2004a) *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality: Issues in diversity and pedagogy* does not explicitly compare two countries, but it is a comparative study in that it compares different approaches to RE in England in light of social developments which are international, especially pluralisation. It is in a sense a study of how international trends affect one country's RE. When a panel at the American Academy of Religion, inspired by Jackson's book, focused on the challenges of pluralism and religious diversity for RE in Europe and the United States it in a way became a supranational comparative project.¹⁷

¹⁷ The papers from this session were published in a special edition of the journal *Religion and Education*, spring 2005 see especially the papers by Grelle, Nord and Moore, all written from an American perspective.

Pioneering work in the field

Haakedal (1983)¹⁸ is an early Norwegian example of a comparative study in RE: she compared English RE and Swedish Life Views Education with the purpose to appreciate the elements from these in relation to the Norwegian context. At the time Norwegian state school RE included Christian Knowledge, which predominated, and the Life Views as an alternative subject. One point she makes is how different developments in society has led to kinds of RE which reflect specific societies (Haakedal 1983: 2).

Following this initial comparative work, Haakedal later wrote a booklet, a reader for the study of Pedagogy of Religion at the Norwegian School of Theology (Haakedal 1986)¹⁹. This builds on her masters' thesis (Haakedal 1983) and includes additional perspectives from West-Germany and Denmark in an expanded comparative analysis.

Haakedal's comparative work (1983, 1986) is written in a context where the problem at hand in Norway is seen to be secularisation rather than pluralisation.²⁰ A central problem area in her work is whether pedagogy of religion should be theologically or pedagogically based and whether RE (in Norway) should be confessional / denominational or not. One of the things she considers is the significance of the emancipation of the education

¹⁸A Norwegian masters thesis in Pedagogy of Religion.: Kristendomsundervisning, religionsundervisning, livssynsundervisning. En systematisk drøfting av problemer innen Engelsk religionspedagogikk i sammenligning med svensk religionspedagogikk. My translation to English: Christian Education, Religious Education, Life Views Education. A systematic discussion based on questions within English Pedagogy of Religion in comparison with Swedish Pedagogy of Religion

¹⁹ Trends in Pedagogy of Religion related to the development of education in Christianity, Religions and Life Views in some western European school systems in the 1960s and 1970s, (my translation to English). Original: Religionspedagogiske tendenser med hensyn til utviklingen av kristendoms-, religions- og livssynsundervisning i noen vesteuropeiske skolesystem under 1960- og 1970-årene.

²⁰ An English publication preoccupied with this same issue is Edwin Cox (1966).

systems as such from the Churches, and the general development in educational systems towards becoming more of a secular public enterprise (Haakedal 1993: 1). This question, despite the emergence of the KRL in 1997, is still relevant to the discussion of RE in Norway, especially in light of the Strasbourg verdict and the reasons for as well as the consequences of it, and in light of the discussion of and changes in the school law preamble, the school object clause: 'formålsparagrafen' (see chapter 4).

Haakedal's (1983, 1986) comparative perspective also brings in the problems of whether aims in RE should include addressing plurality, especially through the English material (Haakedal 1986: 188). She discusses the grounds for and the reasons given for RE in the different contexts as well as the different aims, content and form (methods and approaches). Haakedal's analysis is thorough in taking seriously the different context of RE in the different countries' religious traditions and school traditions. At the same time her argument for doing comparative analysis is that:

(...) in spite of national differences one can see that there is a general development in Western – European countries which means that several challenges in Pedagogy of Religion are the same (Haakedal 1986: 1).²¹

²¹ My translation to English, original: "Men på tross av nasjonale forskjeller kan en snakke om en generell vesteuropeisk samfunnsutvikling, or følgelig er mange av de problemer og utfordringer som religionsundervisningen i de forskjellige land står overfor, sammenfallende".

Despite its modest booklet (unpublished) form in my opinion Haakedal's comparative analysis is an impressive piece of early comparative work, raising questions which are still central to comparative work in the field, and giving arguments for doing comparative research which are still valid. In the Norwegian context it is of particular interest that her titles include "Christianity, Religions and Life views", referring to the for example Norwegian (Christianity), English (Religions) and Swedish (Life views), because this, 'Christianity, Religions and Life views' was the title of the revolutionary new RE, the 'KRL' which came about 10 year after these works. In the second of these texts Haakedal (1996: 187) distinguishes between confessional/ denominational types of RE in her material (Germany, Norway, Finland), and non – confessional/ denominational types of RE in her material (Sweden, Denmark, England). With the 1997 reform, Norway in theory shifted from being in the group supporting confessional/ denominational types of RE to being in the group embracing non-confessional/ denominational types of RE.

Twenty four after Haakedal's comparison of English and Swedish RE the German scholar Alberts (2007) publishes a thesis which also compares English and Swedish RE. Alberts is also taking account of RE in some other European counties, namely Norway, Germany and the Netherlands. An interesting similarity to Haakedal's work is that they both in the time of writing were situated in countries with predominately confessional Christian RE in schools, and from such a position choose to compare English and Swedish RE. Apart from that I would say their works are quite different.

While Haakedal is interested in discussing whether pedagogy for RE should be theologically or pedagogically based, Alberts wants an Integrative RE which is a study-of-religion-approach.

Alberts (2007) defines Integrative RE as identical to multifaith RE (Alberts 2007: 1), but prefers to call it Integrative since this does not emphasise a specific aspect of religion (faith). Initially she uses the term Integrative RE descriptively as opposed to Seperative RE, i.e. when children are not taught together but receive confessional RE in separate settings, like in most German schools. Then she sets out to investigate what she considers to be existing models of Integrative RE. The models she investigates, described as academic concepts of religious education, are evaluated as useful or less useful for Integrative RE. For example with regard to the Westhill project, she asks whether its aim of spiritual development of children is an acceptable aim for Integrative RE (Alberts 2007: 112). The gift to the child approach she considers not acceptable, because it favours a religious life view over a secular one (Alberts 2007: 127). The Interpretive Approach she says '(...) reflects recent developments in the study of religions' and it is evaluated as useful for Integrative RE and promising for further developments in the subject (Alberts 2007: 161). Andrew Wright's critique of contemporary liberal consensus she also considered helpful (Alberts 2007: 171). In my view this makes Integrative RE something else than a descriptive term, as it is clearly something else than those existing models that she is investigating. One of its defining criteria is that it is a study-of-religions approach (Alberts 2007: 353ff, see chapters 6 and 8).

Kuyk *et al.* (2007)²² is the latest of three versions of a book with *Religious Education in Europe* in its title which present information to educators to raise awareness of different arguments for RE in different European countries. These books have been central in the gathering of information on RE across the various educational systems in Europe which is important for gaining a basis for comparative analysis. Osmer & Schweitzer's (2003) *Religious Education between modernization and globalization: New perspectives on the United States and Germany* is one of few published comparative studies in the field of RE, and must be considered a pioneering analysis in the field. Osmer & Schweitzer's study present modernization, globalisation and postmodernism as key framework for focusing on different styles and methods for teaching religion in two countries. Their interest is to see how these international trends affect RE in Protestant churches in Germany and the USA. 'Religion in Education: A contribution to dialogue or a factor of conflict in transforming societies of European Countries?' The EC REDCo Project is a large comparative EU funded project launched in 2006 involving eight European countries (Weisse 2007: 10).²³ This is the most ambitious pioneering project in comparative RE yet, and among other things it aims at opening up the emerging field and encourage further research (Weisse 2007: 23). In addition to Haakedal's and Alberts comparisons of

²² The book presents information about RE in different European countries. It is published by the organisation Inter-European Commission on Church and School (ICCS) and the 'Institut for Kristen oppseding' (IKO): Institute for Christian upbringing.

²³ REDCo is connected to the EU program "Citizen and Governance in the knowledge based society" section for "Values and Religions in Europe" and involves ten projects from the following eight European countries: Germany, Great Britain, France, Netherlands, Norway, Estonia, Russia and Spain, is participating in. <http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html>

English and Swedish RE, these are the three main pioneering works in comparative RE I will consider in the further discussion.

In comparative attempts it is common to make distinctions and try to classify different types of RE in Europe. With reference to Hull, Schreiner (2007: 9) makes the distinction between educating *into*, *about* and *from* religion and also between 'Religious Studies approaches', of which he considers Norwegian KRL to be an example, and 'Denominational or Confessional' approaches which RE in Germany would exemplify (Schreiner 2007: 11). Albers (2006) distinguishes between Integrative RE which is based in religious studies and Seperative/ confessional, which is based in theology and then adds there are other kinds of RE which is 'some kind of mixture' (Alberts 2006: 267). She considerers Norwegian RE to be a 'half way house' between the two (Alberts 2007: 326). However Schreiner warns against labelling different countries' RE too quickly. Jackson (2007a: 29) makes the same basic distinctions but also points to a third possibility of geographical categorisation of difference in types of RE in Northern and southern European countries. Willaime (2007) initially also related to the distinction between confessional religious instruction and non-confessional religious education, and adds the third alternative which is unique for France: no religious instruction in schools (Willaime 2007: 60). He nuances this initial classification by noting that certain processes, which are supranational, like secularisation and religious pluralisation, have led to developments in all countries regardless of RE being formally confessional or non-confessional. In the case of secularisation this has led to seeing RE as a school project

rather than a church project even where a confessional frame for RE is kept, and in the case of plurality, developments in all countries towards taking account of religious plurality in what ever kind of RE is offered in school.

Schreiner (2007) underlines the importance of considering the reasons for particular types of RE in particular countries, for instance, the relationships between state and church (p. 10). Sometimes schools are secular public places, as in France, but church schools or faith based schools are also very common, for instance in England and the Netherlands, and is sometimes part of a state system. Schreiner (2007) enhances the significance for RE of differences in the educational systems, including the role and place of RE in that system. Willaime (2007) considers how goals of education in general include a religious dimension (like with the preamble to the Norwegian school law, the 'formålsparagraf' and with the obligation to have an act of worship in the English school, see chapter 4). In noting three current main developments across Europe, one is a growing integration of religious education with overall educational goals (Willaime 2007: 62).

Schreiner (2007: 14), Haakedal (1986) and others point out that the traditions for RE even though they are rooted in complex situations in each country are now challenged by common international developments.

Schreiner (2007: 11) claims there is a general tendency in the development of RE across Europe that it goes from confessional to non-confessional approaches because of the need to reflect the increasing plurality of cultures

and religions. Willaime (2007: 57) also claim that RE across Europe is converging. Even where confessional approaches are maintained, focus can no longer be exclusively on one faith tradition because it is challenged by radical changes in society due to issues such as secularisation, pluralism and globalisation (Schreiner 2007: 13). Willaime gives two types of explanations for this convergence; the first is sociological developments in society which challenge RE, and the other is legal arguments of non-discrimination on religious grounds, based on Human Rights principles especially.

I agree that it is important to be nuanced in considering 'types' of RE, and it is possible to argue in line with the critique of comparative religion (see above) that each single example is a unique type. However, some type of classification is necessary in attempts at comparative analysis, but I think one should be careful about making theory out of comparative studies which is not sensitive enough to contextual difference.

Schreiner (2007) warns that obstacles to comparative studies may include problems of terminology, because our conceptualisation of what RE is will be shaped by the background and history of RE in our different countries (see chapter 3). Schreiner (2007) also warns that there will be problems of language and cultural barriers. In European countries we carry different cultural baggage, and 'linguistic communities correspond to cultural communities shaped by a common history' (Kuyk *et al.* 2007: 15). In an

article Schweitzer (2004) reports from his experience with the comparative work and offers insights into central issues in comparative research in RE in general. While encouraging further comparative work, he also warns that these kinds of studies can be particularly demanding because of language barriers and different use of terminology (Schweitzer 2004: 197).

Variation of meaning of 'confessional' and denominational' is the example Schweitzer (2006) chose to illustrate this problem. In the introduction to this thesis (chapter 1) I too have noted the differences of the meaning of 'confessional' and 'denominational' RE in the case of England and Norway. These two concepts are often used in classifications of RE in Europe (Haakedal 1986, Schreiner 2007, Jackson 2007, Willaime 2007). 'To use the same term in different languages is either to change its meaning or to equivocate (Murphy 2000: 183)'. This point is one which immediately occurs in comparative studies involving different languages, cultures and traditions. It is especially important to pay close attention to the meaning of concepts in different context/ languages in comparative work, or else one might overlook differences as well as similarities, and miss differences and similarities which are not immediately apparent (see Schweitzer 2006).

'To begin with a simple fact: two languages, by their very two-ness, are different languages. To explain in English how something is said in German is to speak German in English. The words, or signifiers, may be identical but they are not spoken in the same language. Here, it is English which speaks

German (Murphy 2000: 183)'. In my work I have come to the conclusion that sometimes it is impossible to translate a Norwegian concept without adding English preconceptions; For example the word 'inspection' is in itself easily translatable, but when it is used in this thesis to refer to school inspection, misunderstandings could easily occur because the kind of inspections that are conducted in English schools are so different from the kind that occur in Norwegian schools that it would be unreasonable to use the same concept for it (see chapter 5). Sometimes when this problem occurs I have chosen to use the Norwegian word in the text instead of an English translation and then explain its meaning in its context. This is to make the significance of the different contexts evident and so that readers would not be confused or misled.

Osmer & Schweitzer (2003) discuss religious education in the context of Protestant churches in Germany and USA, which is quite distant from the kind of multifaith RE in state schools which is my interest. But even though, from a Norwegian point of view, there are good arguments for viewing church/ faith based RE and (multifaith) state school RE as separate fields, internationally the two are intertwined both in school practice in most countries and as a research field (see chapter 3). Our reasons for doing comparative work do, however, overlap since I am also interested in how the same basic international trends (modernization, globalisation and postmodernism) affect English and Norwegian state school RE. We are also both interested in investigating how and why comparative studies are useful in RE today.

Osmer & Schweitzer (2003: 23-28) argue that the comparative perspective is necessary because different countries are affected by the same international trends, and that it is therefore necessary to study more than one country to understand the development in each of the countries separately. Although I had already initiated this comparative study when I encountered this argument, I saw this as an encouragement to pursue a comparative study, and this argument as central for doing comparative work today.

In comparative work the point of reference must go beyond the particular educational practice or theory, and be based on processes which countries share, such as pluralisation. Osmer & Schweitzer's (2003) research question was, for instance, how RE has responded to and dealt with the challenges of modernisation and globalisation in both countries. At the same time there is also the aspect of the national histories to be considered.

In the different contributions to the first publication in the EC REDCo Project (Jackson *et al.* 2007) a variety of supranational challenges to RE are mentioned, for instance globalisation (Jackson 2007: 28) and international policy making (Jackson 2007: 33-43), secularisation and pluralisation (for example Willaime: 100), integration (for example Knauth 2007: 251). The international nature of these challenges makes it appropriate to address them in a comparative project. I see that both Osmer & Schweitzer (2003)

and also the various authors in the REDCo publication (Jackson *et al.* 2007) have this dynamic of the international and national processes, which is implied in the three dimensional model for comparative RE which I suggest below.

Different sources demonstrate how in comparative studies different methodologies are used (for example Schweitzer 2004: 192). Comparative education today is a multidisciplinary field using theories and methods from a range of scholarly disciplines (Adams and Keeves 1994: 949). As Adams and Keeves say, 'There is a need for using a multiplicity of methodological approaches' (Adams and Keeves 1994: 956). Thus the generic consideration of qualitative vs. quantitative methods is of concern for comparativists as it is to other researchers. Both approaches are valid and they may be complementary, as indeed it is in the EC REDCo Project.²⁴ A comparative design may well use a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods, but I have chosen a qualitative approach.²⁵ In addition to comparing elements on the macro/ national level, I also have an empirical element where I have gathered information about the micro/ practice level in six schools, three in England and three in Norway (see chapter 5, 6 and 7).

Schweitzer (2004) warns about one to one empirical comparisons between one school in one country and one school in another, because variations

²⁴ <http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html> (Accessed 24.07.2009).

²⁵ This limitation is mainly due to the need to limit the project to what one person can do in the amount of time available for a PhD, but with regards to chapters 5-7 where I make use of field research, I have considered also some data from both the qualitative and quantitative parts of the REDCo study.

between schools within a country are too large, and that 'it will not stand the test of educational practice' (Schweitzer 2004: 198) and will have limited validity. Schweitzer rather recommends more comprehensive comparisons (Schweitzer 2004: 98-199), which I attempt in chapters 3 and 4. However, Alexander (2000) argues that it is important also to include the level of practice in addition to the systems in comparative education. This does not mean that he does not acknowledge the difficulties of undertaking such a task. Alexander (2000) criticises comparative education research for having focused more on macro levels/ national levels than on the practice of teaching and learning and stresses the exploratory nature of his undertaking (Alexander 2000: 5) when he set out to correct this.

I have no illusions about the intellectual risks of going where relatively few ventured: five countries rather than one or two, the classroom as well as the system, practice as well as policy. To do this kind of work makes heavy demands on an individual's capacity to garner, understand and synthesize material from very different sources, disciplines and of course cultures (Alexander 2000: 3)

This is a strong felt risk of my own undertaking as well, and even though there are other pioneers in the field of comparative research in RE²⁶, there are but a very few models to consider, and the discussions in the field are in their early days. Discussions in related fields must therefore be seen as very relevant. For instance in Ragin's (1987) account of qualitative method in

²⁶ Several of which has been conducted simultaneously to my own work, like Alberts (2007) and the EC REDCo Project.

comparative education he claims that the schools of thought that use quantitative methods are interested in variable oriented causal models of whole populations while the qualitative oriented researchers on the other hand focus the complexity. While quantitative methods starts with simplification, qualitative methods 'starts by assuming maximum causal complexity', and one still makes a choice to 'mount an assault on that complexity' (Ragin 1987: preface). It is fair to say that at the outset of this qualitative comparative analysis, I do assume maximum complexity. I fully acknowledge the difficulty of the task I have taken on, but I still *make* the choice to 'mount an assault on that complexity' (see also Bråten 2009).

National imaginaries and supranational processes

Schiffauer *et al.* (2004)²⁷ is a large published comparative study with an educational perspective, set in a social science framework focusing on integration of immigrants in schools. Even though it is not explicitly about RE, its research interests makes it is very relevant to RE. It is an empirical comparative project involving one school in each of the four countries, so it could be argued then that this study has fallen into the trap that Schweitzer (2004) warns about, in attempting to compare one school from each country. However they attempt to make up for it through being clear that they are aware of this as a limitation of the study, but also through constructing a very sophisticated conceptual and theoretical framework and analytical tool. Their core concepts are: *civil culture*, *national imaginary* and *civil enculturation*

²⁷ The book is entitled *Civil Enculturation: Nation State, School and ethnic difference in the Netherlands, Britain, Germany and France*.

(Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 1-18). I will also be aware of the dangers of generalising from a limited sample in my fieldwork, and thus take Schweitzer's (2004) warnings very seriously, but I also see the terminology in Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) as useful analytic tools (see chapters 5).

The comparative aspect of Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) is based on the question of how two conflicting international trends in European history influence education in these different countries. The first is the development towards Nation States from the 1870s. The idea of the Nation State is seen as dependent on the creation of a *national imaginary* to which citizens tie their identities (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 8) - for instance, a certain view of history, but one that must not be mistaken for what really happened.²⁸ The second is the growing multiculturalism in Europe as a result of immigration starting in the 1950s/ 60.

I see Schiffauer *et al.* (2004)'s concept of *national imaginary* as useful in grasping the historical and sociological depth of national traditions. A central feature of this national imaginary would have to be the relationship between state and religion, which in turn is decisive for what kind of RE has developed in a specific country, (see Willaime 2007). The growing multiculturalism as a supranational trend across European country is the one factor which challenges RE in European countries the most (Haakedal 1986, Schreiner (2007), Jackson *et al.* 2007, Weisse 2007, Willaime 2007), so this

²⁸ Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) refer to Andersons (1991) *Imagined communities*, which is also a main reference for Taylor (2004) *Modern Social Imaginaries*, which he according to the introduction to this book had to stop and write up as a separate book before he could finish his work on *A Secular Age* (Taylor 2007).

makes Schiffauer *et al.*'s (2004) analysis very relevant to comparative studies in RE. Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) show how integration of immigrants in the different countries in their sample, Germany, France, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, take on *different styles* reflecting the national imaginary. I would be interested to ask how national imaginary shapes what kind of RE is possible in the different countries when the challenge to each is the same. But also vice versa: how are these international trends and the whole context of globalisation (see below) challenging the *national imaginaries* and the traditions for RE which reflects those imaginaries? (See chapter 8).

The central aim of Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) is to offer insights into 'the changing dynamics of nation-state civil cultures in multicultural societies' (Back cover). A key research question is 'How do Nation State-schools manage to maintain and update their old links with the national imaginary despite there being so many school pupils who are not nationals or else not ethnically recognizable as such?' (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 10). I think this is very closely related to the central problem of how RE can contribute to social cohesion and citizenship education (for example Jackson (Ed.) 2003, 2007a), or in the case of Norway, to the generic formation ('*byggning*'), (see chapters 3 and 4).

In the EC REDCo Project Weisse points out that in a plural society religion has an ambivalent potential for contributing to dialogue and social cohesion

on the one side and conflict and social tension on the other (Weisse 2007: 9). Despite anticipation that religion would disappear from the public sphere, the opposite has happened, and religion is today an important factor in the public sphere. Since the events in the USA on September 11th 2001 the dangers arising from religious isolation and confrontation have become clear to a wider public (Jackson 2007). Since this is a common European challenge it transcends the national borders and needs to be addressed in a comparative study, they argue. Main aims of the REDCo project are to 'establish and compare the potentials and limitations of religion in the educational fields of selected European countries and regions' (Weisse 2007: 10) and 'to look at the challenges facing religious education in the context of current change in European societies and its importance for dialogue and mutual understanding without disregarding potential problems' (Weisse 2007: 12) and making religion in education a factor promoting dialogue in the context of European development.

Both in design and research interests this project has strong similarities to my own, though the difference in size and ambition is huge. Methods chosen for this project is text analysis with reference to hermeneutic methods combined with some empirical methods,²⁹ which is basically what I have done. The basic questions evolve around historical background in each country, legal institutions and frameworks as well as teachers and pupils perspectives on religion and plurality (Knauth *et al.* 2008, Valk *et al.* 2009,

²⁹ Though they use a wider range of empirical methods, both qualitative and quantitative, including participant observation, semi structured interviews, questionnaires, videotaping, and triangulation.

van der Want *et al.* (2009). These all are elements included in what I have studied and compare in the case of Norway and England. The main methodological stimulus is R. Jackson's interpretive approach (Jackson 1997) to the study of religious diversity (Weisse 2007: 17), and this is an inspiration for me too. This huge comparative project launched four years after I started and financed by EU (Weisse 2007:10) shows the wider relevance of what I was interested to do in my PhD study.

Three dimensions in comparative studies

In a publication about 'Supranational regimes and national educational policy (Kallo & Rinne 2006), Dale (2006: 27ff) discusses 'policy relationships between supranational and national scales', and he points to a 'widespread recognition that the relationships in the area of educational policy between supranational and national organizations have become more and more common, extensive and more complex' as a result of globalisation and the development of a 'knowledge economy' (Dale 2006: 27). This is especially true within the EU. To focus what Dale considers being the fundamental template of education governance he suggests a 4x4 matrix (funding, provision, ownership, and regulation vs. the state, the market, the community and the household Dale 2006: 32-33). However, and this is the central point here, to take account of the globalisation he adds a third 'scale', including supranational, national and subnational factors.

After the analysis of comparative studies in related fields and pioneering work in the field of comparative RE above, it became increasingly clear to me that comparison in RE should include awareness of these three dimensions:

1. Supranational processes
2. National processes
3. Subnational processes

The notion that comparison in religious education is about the study of the impact of supranational processes on national processes is an important background for this conclusion. The central point is that what are basically considered to be the same processes are met differently in different cultural contexts (Karlsen 2006, Haakedal 1986, Schweitzer 2004, 2006, Jackson *et al.* 2007). This is the dynamics of supranational processes meeting national and subnational contexts, and relates to globalisation as a problem area.

According to Leganger-Krogstad (2007: 99) 'global understanding is considered to be a main objective in contextual approaches'. The global is also seen as part of the school context, in addition to factors such as local geo-culture and the national context (see chapter 7). All dimensions would include both historic and current processes.

In the first dimension, *supranational processes*, I want to distinguish between *formal* and *informal* processes.³⁰ By *formal* processes I mean processes of formal international (educational) policymaking which are going on in various international organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the United Nations (UN), the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (Karlsen 2006, Jackson 2007). *Informal* processes include social and/ or political developments which go on both in and through the formal processes but also outside them and, in part independently of them. Included here for instance are the processes of secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation (for example Osmer & Schweitzer 2003, Jackson *et al.* 2007).

Regarding the *formal supranational processes* one should be aware of both *general educational policy* and *specific RE policy*. Dale's model only takes account of general educational policy. The policy specifically regarding RE is, of course, the most relevant for comparative studies in religious education, but there may be elements in general international educational policy which may also be important to consider (Karlsen 2006). Movements in general educational policy internationally may influence the whole curriculum nationally, and thus the curriculum or system of RE in the country. For example changes in curriculum policy in Norway adapting the

³⁰ Habermas' (2006) distinguish between the formal and informal public political sphere and school is seen as part of informal public sphere: making it acceptable to discuss religion(s) here (see chapter 4).

concept of 'basic skills' also affected Norwegian RE (UD 2005), (more on this in chapter 4).

Some inter-governmental organizations, which have developed stances on general educational policy have, for many years avoided the sensitive field of religious education and have left policy issues to particular national educational systems locally. In the case of religion, partly as a reaction to the events of 9/11 and their consequences this is now changing (Jackson 2007), and international politics regarding RE is now emerging for instance in the EU, The Council of Europe (Jackson 2007) and OSCE (2007) with The Toledo Guiding Principles.

The same general distinctions between *formal* and *informal* processes and *general* educational policy and *specific RE policy* could also be made in relation to the second dimension, *national processes*. In the national dimension *formal* and *informal* processes would refer to formal national educational policy on the one hand and informal processes in and about the national education system on the other. Regarding *formal* national educational policy one should also here distinguish between *general* educational policy and *specific RE policy* within the national educational system. Both are relevant even though the specific issues of RE policy are most relevant.

The third dimension which refers to subnational processes would be relevant to in a comparison between national regions (Dale 2006: 33). One could argue that the dimension of the subnational processes would perhaps be especially important for decentralised education systems, like the German system or the one in the USA, but it will also be important to catch subnational variations in strongly centralized educational systems, like the Norwegian or French system. Also this third dimension would be particularly relevant where empirical studies are included in comparative work, because this would inevitably bring subnational factors like local variation into the analysis (see chapter 5-7).

Supranational processes influence national processes, and this is a central argument for the relevance of comparative studies: to study how supranational processes affects national systems. I would however also suggest that the *national processes influence supranational processes*: since processes in national policy are likely to be the origin of ideas exported to an international arena. For example the concept of 'basic skills' was introduced in the new National Curriculum in England in connection to the 1988 Education Act, and may have been exported from this national context to the international arena (see chapter 4). There is also the possibility of one particular country having a specific influence on another of course. This process is sometimes referred to as 'policy borrowing' (See Spreen 2001, Phillips 2005, Phillips and Ochs 2004, Steiner-Khamsi 2004), for example in connection to the 1988 Education Reform in England and Wales, policies

were borrowed from other countries, for instance the concept of 'basic skills' had been borrowed from educational politics of the USA in the 1980s.

There is a certain dynamics in the relationship between the dimensions. For instance Karlsen (2006) shows that recent developments in Norway are influenced by supranational processes. At the same time these influences are also shaped nationally with reference to Norwegian history and school traditions. Both Karlsen (2006) and Dale (2006) discuss how when national educational politics are influenced by supranational regimes, this might sometimes be seen as impositions and raise resistance nationally. This resistance towards international influences may have many reasons; however one possibility is that they originated in a nation or in nations with quite different histories and school traditions, with different *national imaginaries*.

This underlines the importance of having a cultural contextual perspective in comparative RE (Schweitzer 2006). However this must not lead to deterministic attitudes that change is not possible or desirable. Alberts are clearly looking for arguments for changing the general approach to RE in public schools in Germany. Indeed changes are frequent, and they are often linked to international developments, though international impositions are also resisted at a national level (Karlsen 2006). An important spur to do more comparative studies is that policy borrowing could be carried out on based on a better awareness of the significance of contextual factors.

The supranational dimension

The national dimensions are going to be the main focus in my work, but here I will take the opportunity to expand a little on the supranational dimension as outlined above. In relation to *informal* supranational processes I mentioned especially secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation. These are processes that go on through but are also in part independent of *formal* political processes. Globalisation is especially in a limbo between informal and formal processes.

Informal: Habermas (2005, 2006) talks about religion in the public sphere, with reference to Berger (1999) (Habermas 2005: 1, 2006: 1) where Berger radically shifts from his earlier widely acknowledged theories of secularisation and now talks about a desecularisation (resacralisation) of the world. In other words, the world is not seen as secularised in the sense that religion is a declining phenomena in it. Rather the process of secularisation is seen as referring to changes in the role of religion in society.

The word 'secularization' was first used to describe the transfer of property from churches to secular authorities (Wilson 1987: 159). In the twentieth century: 'Sociologists have used this word to indicate a variety of processes in which control of social space, time, facilities, resources, and personnel was lost by religious authorities' (Wilson 1987: 159). Wilson refers to secularisation as an international phenomenon, a historical process which

was considered a global phenomenon. However lately it has been argued, for example by Berger (1999) that secularisation in this sense has in fact been a marginal historical phenomena limited to aspects of 'the western world' (Habermas 2005: 4).

I do not see secularisation as a single global process, but in western modernity as the process of the changing role of religion in society. In view of Taylor's (2007) point that in today's world many modernities coexist (see chapter 7), this would mean for example that some could be seen as living in a secular modern world, while others could be seen as living in a not-secularised modernity. It is possible to be religious and modern at the same time. Habermas' (2006) concern is the degree to which there can be communication between the secular and the religious, and the reason for this concern is that he sees religion as very much present in today's societies, something that the events on September 11th 2001 made overtly apparent. Habermas suggests for example that this is possible in school, as he sees school as an informal public sphere, (see chapter 4).

A point here is that I do see the process of secularisation – understood as the process of the changing role of religion in (modern western) societies - as intertwined with developments towards individual right to religious freedom. Though this is different even between England and Norway with regards to the exact development in right to religious freedom (see chapter 3), this right has materialised itself on the level of supranational processes:

most importantly in the international declaration of Human Rights, and thus this is now a 'globalised' right.

Individual right to religious freedom made the radical religious pluralisation that took place in western European countries from the 1950 - 60s on possible. Before this there has been a plurality of Christian belief in the western world (often leading to conflicts), after the 1950s there has been a radical increase of numbers of non-Christian religions. Contrary to the traditional (pre Berger 1999) view that secularisation was a process that was threatening to religion, it may actually now be argued that secularisation leading to pluralisation is a process that has strengthened rather than weakened the role of religion in society. This presupposes that religion' includes also individual spirituality of the kind often found in new age/ alternative spirituality networks, and the more traditional religions that are not new as such, but have a new presence in the western world as a result of globalisation (including migration).

In her account of recent developments in sociology of religion Davis (2007) distinguishes between European secularisation theories which have seen secularisation as a threat to traditional religion, and therefore as a 'loss' and American rational choice theory which inspired by economic thinking sees the plurality that is a consequence of secularisation as strengthening religion because of the competitive situation in the plural context (Davie 2007: 67 ff).

In the modern western modernity a radical individualisation of personal spirituality is seen as characteristic of the way people relate to religion. An early description of this kind of spirituality is offered, by Bellah (1985) who studied hippies in California: 'Sheilism' is described as Sheila's personal pick and choose spirituality/ religiosity (see also chapter 7). Lately however it has been argued, for instance by Heelas & Woodhead (2005), that a modern western process of sacralisation, as opposed to the idea that the modern western world is desacralised, is a process which is characterised by this kind of individual spirituality. This view suggests that this individualistic spiritual approach is increasingly characteristic of the way modern western people relate to religion.

I think it is interesting to see this in relation to Taylor's (2007) point that many modernities coexists, in today's world, and in chapter 7 this view becomes important in my analysis of the way individual children describe themselves as religious or not; that they exist in different modernities.

I see secularisation processes and pluralisation processes as intertwined and, together with the globalisation process, decisive for the place of religion in society today.

Skeie (1995) distinguishes between *traditional* plurality and *modern* plurality. *Traditional plurality* refers to new groups in the social fabric that have come with recent immigration from non-western countries and cultures. Skeie

argues that the coexistence of distinct cultural groups in a society is not confined to our time and our society: 'If we want to grasp the specific modern and western situation, this concept of plurality is not enough' (Skeie 1995: 86). The *modern plurality* refers to an individual level; the way that each of us relates to the plurality of ideas that is available in the post modern/ late modern globalised world (see also Heelas & Woodhead 2005). Modern plurality has to do with individualisation, privatisation of religion and debates about modernity and late (post) modernity (Jackson 2004a: 9). Focusing on individual differences also brings forward the inner diversity and contestability of religions/ religious traditions, which is central in the research undertaken at the University of Warwick and their development of pedagogy of religion (Jackson 1997, 2004a).

Globalisation is in a kind of limbo between *informal* and *formal* supranational processes. As informal it is a description of a central characteristic of late modernity with its increased travelling activities, free trade and exchange of capital, developments of global mass media and communicative computer technology leading to increased contacts and cooperation globally (Karlsen 2006: 47). These processes are subject to attempts to govern them by various international organisations, for example the EU or OECD. The increasing influence of supranational organisations on national policy is one effect of globalisation (Dale 2006: 27).

It is generally acknowledged that at the heart of globalisation is the liberal global market economy (Karlsen 2006: 47). The logic of the global capitalism challenges the independent government of nation states, for better or for worse. Habermas (2000) for instance claims that politics of today is drained of visions because politics are reduced to adjusting to the international global economy.

Globalisation is conceptualised in different ways. The word globalisation is commonly used about a variety of cultural and economic processes. One definition may be that 'Globalisation is the process through which local happenings are influenced by distant events which, in turn, are shaped by local events' (Jackson 2004a: 10). While some see that globalisation is an inevitable process and focus the possibilities of development and international problem solving (for example Giddens 1990, 1999), others are concerned that the spreading of western culture that is happening through the globalisation process is a kind of cultural imperialism. In reference to the global economy; all have to play by the rules of the western style ideals for a global economy, or else suffer poverty, in reference to education meaning the increasingly standardised western education system is spread, including certain ideas of what count as valid knowledge (Karlsen 2006, Alexander 2000: 564).

Delors (1996: 41) points out that the economic globalisation also leads to a globalisation of human activities. If economic logic is used on the field of

education: education becomes important because it may give advantages in the global economic competition. In fact there is a knowledge economy developing and for instance one may claim that a European educational sector is developed and runs in parallel with national educational sectors (Dale 2006: 46, Karlsen 2006).

Hakovirta (2006) makes the distinction between globalisation and problem based globalism. He loosely defines *governance* as something between the management of international problems and a vision of global government. He sees the UN as the seed of such a world government (Hakovirta 2006: 368). Global problems are problems which are dominated by global aspects; that is spread from one country or is a common internationally shared problem; that causes world scale threats and which needs a worldwide sense of responsibility to solve. Examples would be global climate change or global poverty (Hakovirta 2006: 362 – 363). These problems seem to cluster with each other and almost always have a social character. He raises the question of what kind of educational politics best contributes to solving global problems (Hakovirta 2006, 354). A central global problem in relation to RE is exactly that which Weisse (2007: 9) describes as religions ambivalent potential for both dialogue and social cohesion and social conflict.

The world is in a process of globalisation, which manifests itself in many ways, including ways having to do with religion and education. Religion's

potential for conflict is hardly news, but it has become obvious to a wider public after the events of September 11th 2001 in the USA, by some has been described as globalisation fighting back. This has raised the interest for RE on the agenda for educational politics both locally and internationally.

In European countries the systems for RE are diverse and reflecting each nation state's history, religious traditions and culture. Contextual factors are historic tradition: history of Church/ State relations, the nature and degree of 'multiculturalism' in society, geographical position (south, east, west), socio-political/ economic systems, international/ global influences, general educational values and aims (Jackson 2009). More often than not it is a kind of confessional RE in (state) schools in Europe still today (Willaime 2007). It is basically countries in Scandinavia and England and Wales which has a non – confessional multifaith type of RE.

The motivation for having a form of multifaith RE has to do with wishing to promote tolerance and respect, knowledge, social cohesion and dialogue in a plural society. These ideas are spreading both in non – confessional and confessional systems for RE across Europe. The motivation for having this kind of RE are overlapping with motivations for promoting Intercultural Education, Citizenship education, Peace Education and education in Human Rights. This is currently triggering political processes on a European as well as on a wider international level. At the same time local traditions are strong, and religious bodies' motivation for preserving and strengthening traditional

religious nurture is triggered by that same pluralistic challenge (see chapter 3).

Formal: In relation to formal political processes internationally, I will mention three examples of this development: 1. recent developments within *the Council of Europe*, 2. the development of *the Toledo Guiding Principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools* by the OSCE (2007) and 3. funding of an EU research project on religious education in Europe: *Religion in Education: A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries* (REDCo).

1. The Council of Europe has a project in *Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights (EDC/HRE)*³¹. It has led to citizenship educations in various forms being established all over Europe (Jackson 2003, Jackson 2007: 30). It includes elements of human rights education, civic education, peace education, global education and intercultural education and issues of religious diversity and discrimination. *The New Challenge of Intercultural Education: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe* is another project aiming more precisely at raising awareness about the implications of the religious dimension of intercultural education among decision makers, educators and teachers. Intercultural and interfaith dialogue is now to be made one of the major axes of the Council of Europe development.

³¹ http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/default_EN.asp? (08.08.07)

A key condition for having a public policy about religious education is that in this context religion is seen as a cultural fact. This was the lowest common denominator with which all states in the Council of Europe could work in an educational context (Jackson 2007: 27). There are widely different views about the place of religion in education in the member countries, but all could agree that religion is 'a cultural fact' and that 'knowledge and understanding of religion at this level is highly relevant to good community and personal relations and is therefore a legitimate concern for public policy' (Jackson 2007: 37). This is not an epistemological stance nor a secular assumption, but a strategy for dealing with religion and religious education publicly at a political level in Europe (Jackson 2007: 44).

These reasons given by the Council of Europe for having RE in state schools are in many ways a contrast to traditional reasons for RE which has been a wish to nurture children into a particular faith. 'Changing Aims in Religious Education' was the title of a book published in Great Britain in 1966 (Cox 1966). It was about how RE should be adjusted to meet the reality of a secular society, and this is also a theme in Haakedal (1983), see above. Today aims of RE are changing mainly for reasons having to do with societies change towards religious and cultural plurality (Willaime 2007). This calls for including teaching about faiths other than Christianity and for methods encouraging tolerance and respect in order to lower the level of religious conflict in plural societies. It also reflects a shift in focus from the need of religions to teach and preach, to the needs of children to learn. Now the focus is more on what children need to learn than what the religions like

to teach them. At the same time the need for religious groups to nurture children into their own particular faith is strengthened rather than weakened by that same plurality, so what kind of RE is best suited for the situation is disputed in most countries today. The need for cultural cohesion has been a part of the motivation for having RE traditionally, and is also today part of the argument for having RE. However; since society is now plural, RE also needs to be plural in its approach (for example Skeie 1998, Jackson 2004: 161ff).

2. the Toledo Guiding Principles on teaching about religions and beliefs in public schools by the OSCE (2007) are meant to be a tool for the 56 OSCE participant states in implementing existing principles and commitments ‘on freedom of religion or belief, tolerance and education’ (...) and ‘to ensure that teaching about religion is carried out in a fair and balanced manner’ (OSCE 2007: 10). The guidelines are restricted to teaching *about* religion as the lowest common denominator for RE in the public sphere in this international European context. At the same time it gives Human Rights arguments for the availability of religious nurture as well (OSCE 2007: 12). The basic human right of respecting the freedom of religion or belief is central to the document (OSCE 2007: 13, 16). The production of this document by a panel of experts on Freedom of Religion and Belief together with scholars and experts in other relevant fields is seen in connection to the OSCE’s conflict preventing role in response to the growing presence of religion in the public sphere (OSCE 2007: 11). It is a basic assumption that ‘it is important for young people growing up today to acquire a better

understanding of the role that religion play in today's pluralistic world' (OSCE 2007: 9). Sixteen key guiding principles are formulated, and number one and two include respect for human rights and commitment to religious freedom.

Arriving at international standards such as these would have to identify expectations towards RE which would be acceptable across borders, and this requires a comparative perspective. This is for example reflected in emphasis on 'religious facts' that this was something that all could support despite the different traditions for RE in different countries.

3. Religion in Education. A contribution to Dialogue or a factor of Conflict in transforming societies of European Countries: 'The EC REDCo Project' is described above. In this context I only want to enhance the point that while it has previously proven difficult to get funding for research on religious education from the EU (Jackson 2004b: 26), the funding given by the EU to this historically large project on comparative RE (or RE in general), is also a token of the new focus on policy regarding religious education.

A template for comparative studies in RE

This close study of two countries' RE in state schools aims to illuminate and exemplify the significance of contextual perspectives in comparative studies, so in that way the national dimension (see above) is emphasized.

Comparison needs to move underneath superficial common features and

look at local cultural and historical factors. It is an important point not to underestimate the significance of national and subnational contexts. At the same time the supranational dimension remains an important factor in the analysis. When two countries are being compared with regard to RE, a supranational dimension is implied and has to be considered.

In the field of curriculum theory I find a tool for capturing national processes, including the reality of what goes on in schools (practice). Widely differing phenomena are viewed as a curriculum, and it is therefore necessary to have different definitions (see also chapter 4).³² In a Norwegian context the most immediate association is the National Curriculum, but this will not be the case in countries which do not have school systems as centralised as this, like for instance Germany or the USA or England prior to the reforms of 1988. In England RE remained in a special decentralised arrangement outside the National Curriculum but is still a part of the basic curriculum (Education Act 1988, section 2.1). If we take a broader view and include other countries we will find varying history and practices, and different ideas of what the term curriculum implies, even if there will of course be varying ideas of curricula nationally as well. 'The curriculum is in the eye of the beholder. And so there are many curricula perceived simultaneously (...)' (Goodlad 1979: 30).

³²Goodlad & Su (1992) suggests these definitions: 1. A design or plan of institutionalized education, 2. The actual learning opportunities provided at a given time or place, 3. An instrument for bringing about behaviour changes in learners as a result of their activities in an educational institution, 4. All the educational experiences that learners have under the guidance of the school.

In Goodland's writings (for example *et al.* 1966, 1979, 1986) and in the literature different versions of levels of curriculum can be found,³³ but the guiding idea seems to be to classify curriculum according to its remoteness to the learner. I have chosen to use Goodlad & Su (1992) as I see this as an especially useful and meaningful version of his theories in relation to the comparative work of this thesis, because both English and Norwegian ideas of curricula for RE fit into it. Although Goodlad's work is specifically about the curriculum, I extend his notion of 'levels' to include different historical experiences, specifically the different histories of Church and state in Norway and England, which make an impact on current education in general in both countries, and on RE in particular. These levels are as follows:

A. The *societal level* is the level most remote from the receivers. This includes the socio-political processes involved in determining what subjects and topics should be studied in schools, and what materials should be used. Actors on this level are politicians, special interest groups, different kinds of administrators and professional specialists and the general public. The *societal level* would in both England and Norway be the political, public as well as professional debates about the curricula/ syllabuses for RE in schools. One could see this as the process prior to a new curricula or

³³In Germeten (1999), a report which is a part of the evaluation of the Norwegian reform in 1997, she builds her theory on Goodlad (1986). Goodlad (1986) is an English article by Goodlad in Gundem, B. (Ed.) *Om læreplanpraksis og læreplanteori*. Germeten talks of Goodlad dividing the field of curriculum theory into three areas: 1. The substantial area: the content, 2. The social – political area: the battle of what the curriculum should contain of, and 3. The technical – professional area: how the curriculum is put into practice by professionals on different levels. These three areas, she says, Goodlad links to six different levels of curriculum: 1. The curriculum of ideas, 2. the formal curriculum (*vedtatte*), 3. the curriculum as perceived on authoritative levels, 4. the curriculum as perceived on a technical – professional level, 5. The operationalised (*iverksatte*) curriculum: by teachers and professionals and 6. The experienced curriculum (students' perception, their developed skills and knowledge. For further discussions of Goodlad, see Afdal (2006: 50 – 85)

syllabus being given a written form. One could however just as well see it as an ongoing process, in England in relation to Local Agreed Syllabuses which are being renewed every fifth year, and in Norway in relation to the frequent revisions of the National Curriculum for RE. The theme *academic debates* (chapter 3) relates to this level.

B. The *institutional level* is the curriculum derived from the societal level but specified by the state or province and modified by the school board. Central questions on this level are how much of it should be commonly required for all and to what degree students' interests should be considered, whether subjects be taught as separate disciplines and other questions of relevance for curriculum organization. The *institutional level* would in England be the law, the Model Syllabuses (SCAA 1994) and the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE (QCA 2004) which replaced the Model syllabuses, the Local Agreed Syllabuses and the GCSE syllabuses. In Norway this would first and foremost be the law and the National Curriculum, but local work in schools to adjust the National Curriculum to local circumstances could also be seen as an aspect of the institutional level. In England the local production of schemes of work could also be seen as related to the institutional level, as an element in between the institutional and the instructional level. In Norway the parallel to this would have to be the textbooks (see chapter 6). The theme *curriculum policy* (chapter 4) is related to this level.

C. The *instructional level* is how teachers plan and deliver the curriculum to pupils, and this is in one way the same in England and Norway, but in another sense different because it relies heavily on regulations and expectations which come from the more remote levels. It is still on this level that the final decision is made for what is delivered in the classroom and circumstances such as available resources and teaching skills would be decisive factors along with the teacher's education and what priority RE has in the general school agenda. The theme *curriculum practice: Teacher's perspective* (chapter 6) is related to this level.

D. The *experiential level* is the curriculum that is internalized and made personal, its effects on the individual learner. This is according to Goodlad the most important of all curricula, and 'the final test of all curriculum organization' (Goodlad & Su 1992: 239). The *experiential level* is in both England and Norway the effects of RE teaching on the individual learner. How are aims from the institutional level reflected in pupils' account of what they have learned or what the purpose of multifaith RE is? How are they affected by debates on the societal level, or the views of their teachers? The theme *experienced practice: Pupil's perspective* (chapter 7) is related to this level.

Conclusion

In what I have explored of relevant literature I have found some basic principles for comparative work in RE and I have tried to put the essence of

these in this suggested template for comparative studies in RE. The main point would be ensuring a synthesis of the idea of the three dimensions (supranational, national and subnational processes) and a version of Goodlad's ideas of levels of curriculum. This combination provides a framework for capturing different levels in each national situation within the wider international context.

My taxonomy for selecting themes is based on a combination of Goodlad & Su's (1992) different 'levels' of curriculum and the view that supranational factors have an impact on national developments (Haakedal 1983, Osmer & Schweitzer 2003, Dale 2006, Karlsen 2006). I adapt both sets of insights to my own purposes. The thesis is structured through a set of selected themes, which are covered in the thesis chapters. These are: *academic debate (chapter 3)*, *legal and policy developments (chapter 4)*, and *curriculum practice: teacher's perspective (chapter 6) and pupil's perspective (chapter 7)*. I will apply this methodology through textual and empirical examples. The societal and institutional levels (chapter 3 and 4) are explored through theory and documentary studies; while empirical studies are part of the material for the chapters where the instructional and experiential levels are discussed (chapter 5, 6, 7). The themes move from the general to the particular and from historical and theoretical issues to political and practical issues in religious education.

Instead of trying to compare whole systems, I select specific themes for comparison. Generic issues emerging from these different 'levels' of comparison provide some key points of similarity and difference which is seen in an international context (see chapter 8). The fact that this is an explicit comparison involving two countries inevitably makes it supranational, and necessitates supranational perspectives in explanations especially for similarities but also for differences though differences are often linked to the national dimension. I hope that this approach will assist others who wish to work in the field of comparative religious education.

In conclusion, I must add that there is of course much literature that opened up on various relevant topics that I have not had the opportunity to pursue fully. There is no doubt that further valuable insights for comparative work in RE could be found in exploring comparative studies in related fields more, and maybe especially in exploring literature on policy borrowing and the effect of supranational regimes on national educational policy in general. However, the above matrix remains consistent with literature I have read from comparative education, religious education, comparative religion and other sources.

In the next chapter I will begin to explore the levels of curriculum, starting with the societal level. In chapter 3 I will do a comparative analysis of some themes within academic debates in England and Norway.

Chapter 3

Societal level: Themes within academic debates about Religious Education in England and Norway

Introduction

This chapter explores the theme *academic debates* in religious education in England and Norway in order to investigate the societal level of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992). The main focus will be on the national dimension but the supranational dimension will also be considered. The subnational dimension is here only represented where research which explores local contexts are referenced. National characteristics forming part of a *national style* (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004, see chapter 2) are seen as factors explaining differences, while supranational processes are seen as a main source of explaining parallels and convergences (see chapter 2).

Research and academic debates regarding RE has had school practice³⁴ in RE as a main concern, but academic debates have also dealt with matters which primarily relate to the societal level of curriculum. Since the beginning of school legislation, in England 1870 and Norway 1739, Christian Instruction has been reduced from being the most central aim of schooling to now being one of several equally important subjects taught (Copley 1997, Haraldsø 1989). This has not happened without a great deal of controversy

³⁴ In the structure of this thesis practice is represented by the instructional (chapter 6) and experiential levels (chapter 7) of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992, see chapter 2).

and debate, and today the change towards cultural and religious plurality in society is a main issue in the societal debates about religion and school. Using the concepts developed in this thesis, these debates are seen as informal international processes (see chapter 2) that are connected to the question of how and why religion should be taught in school. This is of concern for educators and scholars in the field of RE, but also for other actors.

On the societal level of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992) stakeholders include pupils, parents and parents' representatives, school leaders, teachers and teacher organisations, politicians and political parties, and not the least representatives of different religious and non religious interest groups. The interrelations between these are complex and difficult to overview, not to mention compare between countries, and in this chapter I will restrict the comparative perspective on the societal level of curriculum to aspects of the academic debate.

My key research questions are:

What are main similarities and differences in the academic debates regarding RE in England and Norway, and how do we account for these?

In order to address this question I have chosen to focus on two specific topics for comparison:

- 1) The role of academic disciplines in the development of multifaith approaches to religious education in England and Norway;

2) Analysis of two 'power texts' that are characteristic examples of academic debate in England and Norway.

Towards the end of this chapter I will also discuss shortly the supranational dimension in academic debates on RE in England and Norway today, by addressing some issues related to internationalisation of research.

The contribution of 'secular' religious studies to the development of multifaith approaches to RE in England and Norway

In order to address the role of academic disciplines in England and Norway I will look at how the traditions for RE research have developed. It is already clear that that in England the development of a multifaith world religions approach was initiated by RE professionals in the 1960s (Jackson & O'Grady 2007: 193; Copley 1997; Hayward 2009), while in Norway a similar multifaith approach was initiated politically in 1997 and then it was followed by research (Skeie 2004: 319). This section will address some reasons for this difference and particularly explore one specific factor; namely the different roles of 'secular'³⁵ religious studies vis a vis theology as academic disciplines in the two countries against a backdrop of other differences; in the national dimension, in school ideologies/ politics as well as differences in the research traditions.

³⁵ The use of the term 'secular' raises some critical questions. One may remark that the term 'secular' is connected to specific historical conditions emerging from a development in some Christian cultures and that 'secular' religious studies grew out of a certain kind of liberal theology. However, in this chapter the term 'secular' religious studies are used with reference to the academic study of religion as opposed to religious thinking about religion (Jensen & Rothstein 2000: 8, Smart 1968).

As a response to secularisation, the teaching of religion in state schools – in effect Christianity – was in the process of change both in England and in Norway towards a less confessional/ denominational approach (England: less confessional, Norway: less denominational)³⁶ before the plurality resulting from immigration since the 1950s and 1960s presented its challenge to RE. The development towards a more child focused, pedagogically based, *Christian RE*, where Loukes (1961)³⁷ and Winsnes (1988)³⁸ respectively were key figures, is an important background for the debate about RE in the context of plurality. Children's educational needs were increasingly interpreted as learning about *religions* and *life views* in the plural, and learning how to deal with the presence of this plurality in their lives. Even if this general trend could be traced in both countries, it did not have the same consequences at the academic level.

In **England** Ninian Smart established The Department of Religious Studies at the Lancaster University³⁹ in 1965. Smart initiated a major research and

³⁶ In England it was non-denominational since 1870 but in law it had a confessional element until 1988, while in Norway it was denominational to the church of Norway until 1997, but was in principle non-confessional since 1969, see chapter 1 for how these concepts are understood differently.

³⁷ Loukes pioneered empirical research in the field of RE, and following him and others a research tradition emerged (Francis 2004: 279). Loukes research uncovered that Religious Instruction in schools was unpopular among teenagers as well as ineffective. Loukes (1961) suggested a more pedagogical founded teaching of religion, i.e. Christianity in schools in England. Two Swedish researchers who follow in his tradition is Erikson 1999 and Hartman 1986 who both explore children's life views and ways of thinking regarding religious question or other questions regarding life views (Jackson 2004b: 23).

³⁸ In Norway Winsnes (1988) pioneered empirical research in Norwegian RE based on the ambition to make RE more relevant to children and young people in Norway. He was partly inspired by research in Sweden (Hartmann) which in turn had been inspired from Loukes, Goldman and others in England. In order to get away from the limitations of a confessional and theologically dominated RE, Winsnes suggested a more pedagogical based religious education, i.e. teaching of Christianity where a pedagogical aim was to aid pupils reflections on life questions (Skeie 2007: 235). Winsnes argued that Religious Education in schools should be based more on pedagogy than on theology (Winsnes 1984: 7, Haakedal 1995: 10-11). One reason for this also had to do with his basic children-orientated perspective.

³⁹ <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/fass/religstudies/> (Accessed 11.08.2009). Eric Sharpe was also member of staff at this department for religious studies at Lancaster University.

curriculum development project that promoted a phenomenological, undogmatic approach to RE in schools (Smart 1968). Especially influential was The School Council Working Paper 36 (Schools Council 1971, see also O'Grady 2005: 228). 'Smart's project was to create a multidisciplinary, open setting for the study of religion conceived as a global human phenomenon' (Jackson & O'Grady 2007: 193). Further, the Shap Working Party on World Religions in Education was set up in 1969 as an organisation committed to 'promoting excellence in the study of religion at all levels and in all types of education'.⁴⁰ At the same time in some schools in the cities the situation was that religious plurality was increasingly overt, and this was reported for example by teacher trainers (Cole 1972). These initiatives were important for the development of the first Locally Agreed Syllabuses that reflected Britain as a religiously plural society (Birmingham 1975; Hampshire 1978). This development was recognized nationally in the 1988 Education Act. In other words the change towards a multifaith approach to RE in England had a 'bottom-up' character and scholars from 'secular' religious studies were involved from early on.

In **Norway**, scholars from the discipline of history of religions/ science of religion had prior to 1997 showed little interest in school RE (Østberg 1998b:

⁴⁰ Shap was set up by professors in comparative religious studies Smart, Hilliard and Parrinder in 1969 after a conference at the Shap Wells Hotel about 'Comparative Religion in Education'. It was set up as a working party, implying their aim was to do something, and besides the above mentioned professors it included from the beginning also seven lecturers in education and nine teachers. This collaboration between people from different levels of education is a hallmark of Shap (Hayward 2009). Shap aims both at religious studies in universities and colleges and religious education schools. See <http://www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/mission.html> (Accessed 01.05.2008). Shap does also have a European 'stickling'- the European Association for World Religions in Education was created in the 1980s: <http://www.eawre.org/>

239),⁴¹ compared to the situation in England. Even if several scholars from 'secular' religious studies in universities in Norway contributed very usefully by books expanding the availability of knowledge about the different religions since then,⁴² the difference compared to England is particularly clear when looking at the role of Shap. By the autumn of 1970 Shap had produced over twenty books about 'world religions' as aids for teachers (Hayward 2009: 4). A similar, if not equal, interest from 'secular religious studies' in educational issues hardly came before 2000 in Norway. Still, there are some nuances in this picture that should be considered. Since the English history of RE research is more described than the Norwegian (Copley 1989, Grimmitt 2000, Jackson 1990, 2004a, 2004b, Alberts 2007, Hayward 2009), I will go in more detail in the Norwegian case.

In the early 1980s, the University of Trondheim decided that the teaching of academic subjects that correlated with school subjects should include educational perspectives. The explanation of this pedagogical interest in this

⁴¹ Some researchers did produce some material for upper secondary schools as these schools have had more of a religious studies approach than the 'grunnskolen' (primary and lower secondary school, for example Groth *et al.* (1985).

⁴² Rian (1999) from the University of Trondheim addresses the world religions in education from a religious studies point of view and refers (again) to Smarts dimensions in religion as a pedagogical tool. Rian both gives an historic overview of the place of the world religions in Norwegian curricula since 1960s, discusses principles for teaching world religions in relation to aims for RE in the Norwegian state school, including some principles for how to compare religions (p. 40), and basic knowledge about religions. The main bulk of the book (pp 71-184) is on classic topics in religious studies and is basically of a phenomenological nature. Rasmussen & Thomassen (1999) was a collection of sources and background materials which was needed in relation to the new KRL subject. This publication was initiated by professionals from religious studies in Bergen and the theology at the University of Oslo. They offered a high quality presentation of source material from Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and Buddhism: and Humanism. Several texts were translated for the first time into Norwegian language, from Arabic, Latin, Sanskrit, and Hebrew. Jacobsen (ed. 2001) addressed the multireligious Norway: Experts contributed to knowledge about Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Christianity in a Norwegian context. These are as far as I know the main contributions from university based religious studies in the time following the introduction of the KRL includes.

university lies in its history of partly emerging from the former 'Norges Lærerhøgskole' (The Norwegian Higher Teacher Training College)⁴³ which was established in 1922 as the country's main teacher education institution.⁴⁴ In the 1980s, courses focusing on religion and pedagogical issues were offered to teachers, and a tradition for a more school oriented university study of Christianity developed there as something slightly different from the theological studies of Christianity. Materials from these courses were published in a range of books, for example Rian & Kværne (1983) *History of religions and teaching religion*.⁴⁵ In this publication, Rian quotes Smart's ideas of religious dimensions, which later were widely used in various RE publications in Norway.⁴⁶

Trondheim was also the place where Ole Gunnar Winsnes delivered his doctoral thesis (1988) and later became professor II in RE. Winsnes was influenced, for example, by the American sociologist T. Luckmann. His research was marked by having a strong religion-society focus, and this can be said to be the core of the Winsnes tradition.⁴⁷ This tradition may, in other

⁴³ My suggestion for English translation of the name of the institution.

⁴⁴ With its present organisation and name, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NTNU (Norges Teknisk Vitenskapelige Universitet) dates back to a reform in 1996, but it was first established as Norway's third university in 1968 after a merger of 'Norges Lærerhøgskole', and 'Norges Tekniske Høgskole (NTH) and a museum and a library connected to 'Det kongelige Videnskabers Selskap' (The Royal Science Association). http://www.ntnu.no/omntnu/NTNUs_historie, (Accessed 12.08.2009), NOU 1995: 28, see <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/dok/nouer/1995/nou-1995-28/5/1/3.html?id=338358> (Accessed 12.08.2009), or for further details see Kirkhusmo (1983).

⁴⁵ Original title: Religionshistorie og religionsundervisning: Noen fagdidaktiske synspunkter.

⁴⁶ These courses were often aiming at upper secondary school teachers, as in upper secondary there was more of an religious studies approach prior to the 1997 reform, which concerned primary and lower secondary: for details regarding differences in the organisation of age groups in English and Norwegian schools, see chapter 5.

⁴⁷ Winsnes became the director of research at the Oslo based 'Stiftelsen Kirkeforskning' (Church Research Foundation), a church related sociology of religion institute. See <http://www.kifo.no/> (Accessed 16.08.2009).

words, just as well be described as a social science perspective than as a pedagogical perspective; there is also a hermeneutical dimension in it which was influential in part of theology at the time. In other words, the Winsnes tradition also built on theological traditions, even if it also suggested a new direction. Geir Skeie, who was supervised by Winsnes, and did his doctoral studies at the University of Trondheim (1998), could be said to continue the Winsnes tradition, focusing on pedagogical issues and making use of theories and methods from the social sciences.⁴⁸ Researchers who have since been doing empirical work in RE in Norway have often used methodology from social sciences (see Skeie 2004, 2007).⁴⁹

Also, the first Norwegian research network focusing on culture, religion and identity in a multicultural context (NEKRIF)⁵⁰ had its first meetings in Trondheim. It was initiated in 1993, and here, a new generation of RE-scholars started to emerge, exemplified by the founders of the network – Sissel Østberg, coming from ‘secular’ religious studies’ and Geir Skeie with a theology background (and at the time a PhD student at the University of

⁴⁸ Skeie claimed RE in state schools needs to be justified within the cultural context of plural society. Skeie (1998) argues that RE should be sensitive to cultural factors, and discusses especially plurality as an important factor.

⁴⁹ Later empirical work are often interested in investigating how KRL works in practice, for example Lied (2004), Afdal (2006) see chapter 6, Haakedal (2004) see chapter 6, Skoglund (2008), Dybdahl (see for example 2008) research regards how the rule of partial right to withdraw is practised. In addition to my own thesis there is also work in progress by von der Lippe who as part of a larger EU – project (REDCo) regarding religion in education examines 14-16 year olds relationship to religion and religious education in a multicultural society; Anker (a research student in RE at the Norwegian school of theology who has a background in religious studies), who explores pupils construction of respect and disrespect in a multicultural school context; Eriksen who in his Warwick based PhD is looking at how teachers and curricula represent national identity, especially ‘Norwegianness’ in religious education; Nicolaisen who is looking at Hindu children in Norwegian schools, and Stabel Jørgensen who in her PhD study is investigating one of the basic skills: writing, in relation to the RLE subject. She will analyse secondary school pupil’s texts with regard to subject knowledge, writing skills and identity.

⁵⁰ ‘Nettverk for forskning på kultur, religion og identitet I en flerkulturell kontekst’ – my translasjon to English.

Trondheim). The background for NEKRIF was a felt need for research in relation to 'focus on religion in relation to the multicultural challenges educational institutions are now facing' in Norway (Skeie 1993). This is very similar to reasons given by several of the English researchers who initiated/participated in RE research projects from the mid 1980s (Grimmitt 2000), and reaching back many years before that especially through the activities of Shap.

NEKRIF was an initiative aiming to assemble educational researchers working with questions related to pedagogy of religion or migration (Skeie 1993), and this seemed at the time to be a marginal issue in academic circles.⁵¹ From an extensive national list of institutions, the Norwegian organisers thought might include scholars interested in these topics, only ten persons responded (Skeie 1993). Internationally the group was well orientated, and in 1993 Monica Taylor⁵² from the National Foundation of Educational Research⁵³ and Robert Jackson from the University of Warwick in England participated in the first NEKRIF seminar in Trondheim. At this point in time Jackson was participating in the *first RE research project* to have received a research council grant⁵⁴ in England. This was the Ethnography and Religious Education Project, which included a curriculum

⁵¹ This was prior to the Norwegian Research Councils initiative to fund research into migration (the IMER, see below).

⁵² According to Gatherer (2005: 125) she is regarded as one of the most distinguished leaders in moral educational research.

⁵³ The National Foundation for Educational Research was founded in 1946 and have since then among other things founded research that 'underpin the drive towards excellence in education', see <http://www.nfer.ac.uk/about-nfer/> (Accessed 24.08.09). It is registered as a charity (no. 313392).

⁵⁴ The grant was from the Economic and Social Research Council, see <http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/ESRCInfoCentre/about/> (Accessed 24.08.09).

project, the Warwick RE project, as one of its components.⁵⁵ The English participants expressed at the time that participation in NEKRIF answered a need on their part to expand their networks (Skeie 1993).

The next NEKRIF seminar, entitled *Religious Education in Pluralistic Societies*, was held at the University of Warwick in February 1994. One day of the seminar was used for academic exchange and two were used for visits to various local religious groups in the Birmingham/ Coventry area (Skeie 1994).⁵⁶ This was the first of many such visits to England by Norwegians interested in RE.⁵⁷ Up until today these visits have typically contained a mixture of academic discussion and visits to faith communities, and this 'genre' can be understood in light of one of Shap's activities from the mid 1970s through to the mid 1980s, namely providing in-service courses 'which provided teachers with the opportunity to follow interests in the field of religion at their own level, as well as considering the implications for their study for the classroom' (Hayward 2009: 6).⁵⁸

The NEKRIF network was especially invited to a larger seminar in Kristiansand in November 1994, resulting in a publication: 'religious and pedagogical ideals' (Leganger-Krogstad & Haakedal 1995)⁵⁹ and NEKRIF

⁵⁵ See <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wie/research/wreru/research/completed/> (Accessed 24.08.09).

⁵⁶ Sissel Østberg became a part time PhD student at Warwick, replicating in Oslo the type of ethnographic research carried out by Jackson and Nesbitt in Warwick (Jackson & Nesbitt 1993, Østberg 1998, Østberg 2003).

⁵⁷ A recent example is Bredlied and Nicolaisen course 22. – 25th April 2008: to Redbridge in northeast London. Bredlied and Nicolaisen participated in this first trip to Warwick in 1993. See www.krlnett.no, (Accessed 16.06.08.)

⁵⁸ This included also perspectives on Christianity in World Perspective.

⁵⁹ Norwegian: religiøse og pedagogiske idealer.

initiated one more seminar in Stavanger in March 1996.⁶⁰ However, after 1997 (when the KRL was introduced), there were no further activities in NEKRIF. Instead a KRL network emerged and continued some of the same debates. But this was not a research network as such, so for many years there has not been a research network for RE in Norway. Ten years later, in 2008 Skeie together with Lied initiated a new national research network in Norway, named NoReFo.⁶¹ In this network *pedagogy of religion* is defined broadly including both Church and School perspectives and suggestions are that members should at least have PhDs in the field. At this time the academic scene in Norwegian RE was quite different from the time of NEKRIF.

When the multifaith KRL-subject was established in 1997 as a political initiative, it was unrelated to the emerging (but still in a Norwegian context, marginal) research into the plural challenge for RE. None of the NEKRIF researchers played any role in the process, and they were even critical towards the curriculum of 1997 for being too Christianity-based and for having no general right of exemption.⁶² Because of the strong tradition of the centrality of Christianity in the subject, when the KRL was introduced,

⁶⁰ 'Religiosity and dissemination of tradition as a field of research: theoretical and methodological challenges': Norwegian: *Religiøsitet og tradisjonsformidling som forskningsfelt; teoretiske og metodiske utfordringer*. Again Robert Jackson participated.

⁶¹ Norsk religionspedagogisk forskningsforum: Norwegian forum for research on pedagogy of religion. The initial meeting was held on but 04.12. 2007. Participants in the first meeting were Elisabeth Haakedal, Erling Birkedal, Geir Afdal, Geir Skeie, Heid Leganger-Krogstad, Jon Magne Vestøl, Njål Skrunes, Peder Gravem, Sverre Mogstad, Sidsel Lied and Berndt Krupka. They discussed the idea of such a forum and who it should be for. The next meeting was held in Oslo 10.10.2008, where a board is elected: Skeie, Lied, Afdal, Leganger-Krogstad. Following this there has to date been two more meetings, in Hamar 24.04.2009 and in Oslo 08-09.12.2009.

⁶² This is personal information according both to Geir Skeie and a member of the political 'Pettersen committee' that suggested the KRL, Ola Moe (see NOU 1995:9). According to Moe they were not aware of this existing research interest in this topic.

politically, in 1997, there was little foundation in the schools and the education system to receive and apply the new multifaith approach (Skeie 2004, 2007). Few teachers were qualified to teach such a subject. There was an obvious lack of knowledge especially about the non-Christian religions, and also a lack of comprehension of the idea of this attempted inclusive multifaith RE subject.⁶³ In Norway all this resulted in measures from the state education authorities after the new subject was established, in order to meet the challenges. This is in contrast to the English context where the lack of appropriate resources and lack of teachers who had an understanding of religions was a central motive for the initiation of Shap in 1969 (Hayward 2009: 2). Shap's production of resources and their other activities, for example the conferences for teachers put on in the north and south of England, had been ongoing for a period of 20 years when the shift towards multifaith approaches was sanctioned nationally in 1988.

In contrast to the 'bottom up' character of the development in England, in Norway the shift to a multifaith approach to school RE had a 'top down' character, even if the increasing religious plurality in some cities and some schools also here an important motivation for the change. The explanation for this is found in the difference that in England there is a decentralised system for producing the RE syllabuses locally (Jackson & O'Grady 2007: 184)⁶⁴, while in Norway there is a long tradition for having a National

⁶³ See Gravem 2004 which will be discussed below.

⁶⁴ Prior to 1988 England had a decentralised educational system, and after 1988, when England got its first National Curriculum, RE remained in a special position as statutory but outside the Curriculum.

Curriculum in all subjects, but also in RE (see for example Haraldsø 1989).⁶⁵ Further, when it comes to the very different roles of ‘secular’ religious studies, the quite theological (though increasingly pedagogical) tradition of the Christian Knowledge school subject and the school law preamble which made Christian nurture the central object of schooling (see chapter 4 for more on this), may have kept scholars from ‘secular’ religious studies off engaging in RE in schools.⁶⁶ It was perhaps convenient to leave ‘grunnskole’ (primary and lower secondary school) RE to the theologians/ scholars of pedagogy of teaching Christianity, while the ‘secular’ religious studies had more of a responsibility for ‘gymnasts’ RE (upper secondary school).⁶⁷ Only when multifaith RE was established politically and centrally were scholars from religious studies in the universities called upon to contribute with knowledge of the *other* than Christian religions. Compared to the English scene, however, there has been less distinct influence from ‘secular’ religious studies to the development of *pedagogy* for RE.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Norway centralisation is a strong feature of the unitary school tradition (see below). From 1939 there was a national curriculum for all (Haraldsø 1989: 100), but in practical terms the content of school curricula have basically been the same everywhere ever since Pontoppidan’s catechism (1737) (Haraldsø 1989: 28). This claim can be justified by the widespread use of certain textbooks (for example ‘Jensens lesebok’ see Haraldsø 1989: 55).

⁶⁶ This preamble was changed in 2008, see details in chapter 4. .

⁶⁷ See chapter 5 for details on the differences in organising of schools in England and Norway.

⁶⁸ In Norway ‘Pedagogy’ is a large independent field of research and practice which deals in theories of teaching and learning (Haakedal 1995). In English this field, to the extent that they are parallels, is called *Education* or *Educational Science* (or *teaching and learning*). The term ‘didactics’ (Nor: ‘didaktikk’) which is used in connection Pedagogy/ Educational Science has different meanings in the two contexts. While in England ‘didactic’ is somehow negatively loaded, referring to archaic methods of teaching, for example as used by Cooling to describe uninspiring RE, in Grimmitt (2000:154). In Norwegian language it is a fairly neutral concept referring to theories of how to teach a specific subject, for instance didactics of RE. The meaning of ‘didactics of RE’ would be overlapping with the term pedagogy of religion. Sometimes ‘didactics’ also refers to ‘methods of teaching’ (general didactics): which is something different from theories of teaching and learning/ pedagogy. This is seemingly more similar to how these concepts are used in the German language, according to Alberts (2007: 63-74). In both England and Norway however there is a dispute over the meaning of concepts (see for example Haakedal 1986, 1995, Jackson 2004b).

Moving from the research field towards the institutional basis for research, there is also a difference between England and Norway. While in England RE research is mainly done in university departments of education, in Norway it was until 1997 mainly an interest in some theological institutions, in particular the most church oriented ones. This in many ways resembles the German situation more than the English (see for example Knauth 2007, Alberts 2007).⁶⁹ Especially since 1997, RE research in Norway has also increasingly been done in other institutions.⁷⁰ This includes some departments of education in universities and most prominently the teacher training colleges. Historically it has been in the teacher training institutions that the interest for doing RE-related research has been strongest, but since

⁶⁹ In Norway there are two theological faculties in Norway, The Faculty of Theology within the University of Oslo <http://www.tf.uio.no/english/> (Accessed 19.03.09) and the Norwegian School of Theology ('Det teologiske menighetsfakultet') <http://www.mf.no/index.cfm?id=179065> (Accessed 19.03.09) which is also situated in Oslo.

⁷⁰ In Norway there has been a change in policy towards rights as well as obligation for people working in the University Colleges to do research. In England not all units which offer teacher training do research, as they depend on getting external funding for it. The systems or funding is also different. In England funds mainly come from sources outside the universities such as charities and funds. For example Shap was initially supported by The Spalding Trust: which since the early twentieth century has given out grants 'for the study of the great religions', see <http://www.spaldingtrust.org.uk/> (Accessed 29.08.09). The Ethnographic study of Hindu children at the University of Warwick was supported by the The Leverhulme Trust which from 1925 has given out 'scholarships for the purpose of research and education'. Funds for research are also found in one of several research councils (Jackson 2004b), see for example <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/default.htm> (Accessed 19.08.2009) In Norway funding still often comes from the institutions or from The Norwegian Research Council. A main source of funds for research in Norway is The Research Council of Norway, but it is a late development that they fund educational research in a substantial way. It is both a funding agency and an advisory body on Norwegian Research policy. For instance it encourages international research cooperation. Most of its funds come from the Ministry of Education and Research, i.e. the state. <http://www.forskningsradet.no/en/Home+page/1177315753906> (Accessed 19.03.09.) At any time the Research Council of Norway has got a number of research programs under which it gives out its funds, and one relevant example here is the International Migration and Ethnical Relations program IMER. It has encouraged and funded research into the life worlds of religious minorities in Norway since 1993, with a pause from 2002 – 2005, and revived for the period of 2005 – 2010. According to its websites it has funded projects in this area also when the program has not officially been up. Even if Norwegian institutions also now increasingly encourage its staff to find research funds from other sources, for example the EU, there are few non-governmental sources of funds in Norway.

doctoral programs are still rare in these institutions, the main research projects have often been PhDs linked to the theological faculties, to other Norwegian university faculties, or universities abroad (see Lied 2006). Since 1997 twelve have delivered PhDs which can be said to be within the field of pedagogy of RE as defined by NoReFo (see Lied 2006).⁷¹ Though most of them are relevant for multifaith RE, only Østberg (1998a) and Andreassen (2008a) had a religious studies background. Of persons who are currently undertaking PhDs studies, several have religious studies backgrounds.⁷² The Norwegian School of Theology⁷³ has been particularly active in establishing itself as a strong actor in the RE scene. To a certain degree its traditionally strong position as a main research institution has been challenged since 1997, but it has maintained central and is, for example, still the only institution offering a separate PhD programme in pedagogy of religion (RE).

An interesting question in light of the differences between England and Norway discussed above (disciplinary basis of research, relationship between research and curriculum changes, and institutional structure) is how this may have influenced the focus of debates in the two countries. One of these debates is related to the concept of religion. Michael Stausberg from The Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion

⁷¹ Skeie (1998), Østberg (1998a), Birkedal (2001), Mogstad (2001), Sagberg (2001), Haakedal (2003), Lied (2004), Afdal (2004), Bø (2006), Flornes (2007), Andreassen (2008a), Skoglund (2008).

⁷² This is for example Bråten, van der Lippe, Anker and Stabel Jørgensen.

⁷³ The Norwegian school of Theology is a private theological faculty. Even if private higher education institutions are quite rare in Norway, this is less so in the field of theology. It was established in 1908 as a conservative alternative to what by some was perceived as to liberal attitudes in the Faculty of Theology at the University of Oslo. Traditionally there has been some tension between these institutions even if they are less pronounced in later years.

at the University of Bergen⁷⁴ has recently criticised the most recent National Curriculum in for RE in Norway (UD 2008)⁷⁵ for being based on an outdated understanding of 'religion', giving an essentialist understanding of each 'world religion' remote from children's own experience (Gripsrud 2008). Stausberg pointed out that this was still a problem, even if it has been discussed for example by Østberg (1998b)⁷⁶ and Skeie (2006a).⁷⁷ This has similarities with English debate about RE, but it had a different starting point.

The world religions approach that Smart and others promoted from the late 1960s was based on the phenomenology of religion. The phenomenological approach in English RE was later criticised for being remote from the experience of children and that it did not provide pupils with the opportunity of toiling with issues of competing truth claims (Jackson 1997: 10). In *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach* Jackson (1997: 7-29) discussed the phenomenological approach both generally and as applied in English RE. He argued that Waardenburg's 'new style phenomenology' in part answers the critics of the phenomenology of religion, and that it 'begins to resemble hermeneutical approaches such as that exemplified in interpretive anthropology' (Jackson 1997: 27).

⁷⁴ He expressed this criticism in the University's web news page (Gripsrud 2008), but he or others has not often raised this issue in Norway.

⁷⁵ <http://www.udir.no/grep/Lareplan/?laereplanid=707207> (Accessed 29.08.09).

⁷⁶ Just after the introduction of multifaith RE in Norway in 1997, Østberg (1998b) discussed some points of critique of phenomenological approach from the English tradition (with reference to Jackson (1997) as relevant for Norwegian RE. At the same time she argues for enhancing the religious studies profile in Norwegian RE.

⁷⁷ Skeie has a wider international outlook drawing on his increasing international experience in pedagogy of RE.

With respect to phenomenological approaches in school RE Jackson (1997) argued that some criticisms of it '(...) are misplaced, being applicable only to poorly designed materials which misapply principles from phenomenology' (Jackson 1997: 27). Jackson (1997, 2004a, 2008b) offers what might count as an updated discussion on the concept of 'religion', as well as 'culture' and 'ethnicity', where inner contestability and plurality in traditions are recognised (See also Alberts 2007: 161), and this becomes the basis for his suggestions of pedagogy for multifaith RE in a plural context. Because of the closeness to the religious studies tradition, developments in RE in England reflected trends in the study of religions – for example in its focus on diversity within traditions (Hayward 2009: 6). This has only recently come into the Norwegian debate, focused in Andreessen (2008a, 2008b), for example.

Can we talk about 'traditions' for pedagogy of RE?

The field of RE has been conceptualised in different ways and researchers have operated with different preconceptions about the nature and aims of the subject' (Jackson 2004b: 20). This is sometimes related to having different academic traditions as a base for understanding RE. Part of the academic debates within each country is the question of different and sometimes competing ideas about the nature of the RE, and especially about what multifaith RE is. In a comparative perspective the variations are even greater as the two countries' complex histories have to be considered. The section above has exemplified how understanding of what RE is, and

developments in RE research, are related to the two countries' different school and research traditions.

In an attempt to summarise developments in Norwegian RE, Haakedal (1995) suggested that in Norway the pedagogical tradition for RE first was established at the Institute of Christian Upbringing (IKO) from the 1950s, as principally Lutheran thinking in combination with the German tradition for 'bildung' (Haakedal 1995: 9). Asheim, Norway's first professor in pedagogy of religion, had this kind of background, but had his professorship at the Norwegian school of Theology (from 1970). In 1995, however, Haakedal described two directions in the development in Norwegian RE and suggested a principal distinction between the theologically based pedagogy of religion: the Asheim/ Mogstad tradition⁷⁸ (see for example Asheim 1977, Mogstad 1999) and a pedagogically based pedagogy of religion: the Winsnes tradition (Winsnes 1988, Lied 2006, Skeie 2004, 2007). In English RE, theologically based approaches and pedagogically based approaches are not described as two main traditions. In England one may point to a religious studies tradition, and some approaches which reflects a theological tradition more, but perhaps rather to an educational/ pedagogical tradition where it may seem that a range of distinct *pedagogies* 'compete' in one field, that of *pedagogy of religious education* (Grimmitt 2000, Jackson 2004a).

⁷⁸Asheim had done a German PhD in 1961 which was the first PhD in pedagogy of religion in Norway entitled 'Glaube und Erziehung bei Luther: ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Verhältnisse von Theologie und Pädagogik' (Lied 2006: 164). Mogstad (2001) is a PhD in the tradition after I. Asheim, building (on) the theological Asheim tradition for RE. Mogstad (2001) is investigating the relationship between biblical texts and human experience making use of perspectives from German theologians Stock and Baudler. His research is relevant for religious nurture within a church context.

For example, Grimmitt (2000: 24-25) suggests that there were nine different approaches to RE coming from different RE research projects.⁷⁹ Some of those approaches could be said to be mainly theologically based while others more clearly are based in a religious studies approach (see also Alberts 2006). If there are tensions between background disciplines such as theology and religious studies, they are not very clearly communicated while, in the Norwegian case, this immediately became a very explicit question in RE after the political introduction of multifaith RE in 'grunnskole' (primary and lower secondary school). For example Thomassen (1998),⁸⁰ a professor at The Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen, discussed the challenge posed by KRL in terms of needs for cooperation where there traditionally have been tensions between these disciplines. While acknowledging positive aspects of this increased cooperation, he also defends the maintenance of 'unquestionable differences' between theology and religious studies. Like Thomassen, Østberg (1998b) too thought it interesting that the new multifaith RE in schools was now challenging the scholarly disciplines, but adds more of a pedagogical perspective and calls for a new discipline which

⁷⁹ These are: 1. Liberal Christian Theological, Experiential, Implicit Models (for example Loukes (1961), Goldman (1964)), 2. A Phenomenological, Undogmatic, Explicit Model (for example Smart 1968, The School Council Lancaster Secondary RE project 1971, the Chichester project 1982), 3. Integrative Experiential and Phenomenological Models (for example Grimmitt 1973, The School Council Lancaster Primary RE project 1977, Hammond, Hey), 4. Human Development, Instructional, Learning About, Learning From Models (The Westhill Project, Grimmitt 1987, The religion in the service of the Child Primary RE project), 5. An Ethnographic, 'Interpretive', Multifaith Model (The Warwick RE project, for example Everington 1993, Jackson 1997), 6. A revelation – Centred, Concept – Cracking, Trinitarian Christian Realist Model (The Stapleford RE project, for example Cooling 1993), 7. A Literacy – Centred, Critical Realist Model (for example Wright) and 8. Constructivist Models of Learning and teaching in RE (The Children and World views project, for example Erricker & Erricker).

⁸⁰ The title of the article was 'Theology and History of Religions – towards a new cross disciplinary identity'.

focuses on the children and on developing pedagogy for this new subject (Østberg 1998b: 240, 253).

Despite the fact that tensions between academic disciplines are more tuned down in English RE, such tensions can also be found here, for example in the different approaches as they are summed up by either Grimmitt (2000), Jackson (2004a) or Alberts (2007).⁸¹ Also in Norway research in RE could be said to have different disciplinary bases, and types of RE research could have been categorised according to a disciplinary focus as theological or having a study of religions approach and/ or a social science /anthropological approach, for example. They are, however all focused on pedagogical issues reflecting (mainly) an institutional base in departments of Education. As such they can be seen as contributing to the *pedagogy of RE* as a separate and distinct research discipline.

Haakedal suggested (in 1995) that *pedagogy of religion* in Norway should not be theologically based but rather an independent, interdisciplinary pedagogically based academic discipline, and mentioned also religious studies as relevant to that. However, she was rather ahead of her time, because until very recently there has not been a religious studies tradition in Norwegian RE (see for example Lied 2006). However, since 1997, people with a religious studies background increasingly have been hired in teacher

⁸¹ It is possible for example to interpret the recent disputes between Jackson (2008) and Wright (2008) (see also Jackson 2004a) as one where arguments are mainly drawn from different academic traditions.

training institutions⁸², and in 2008 the German scholar Wanda Alberts was hired for a new chair in pedagogy of religion at the University in Bergen. This university now offers a study-of-religion approach course in pedagogy of religion.⁸³ Also in 2008 Andreessen delivered a thesis in pedagogy of RE which can be said to reflect an emerging religious studies tradition within Norwegian RE. He now works at Tromsø University College, Department for Teacher Education.

Coming back to the broader question of whether traditions for pedagogy of RE can be identified, it must be noticed that the varieties within these traditions are great, and also that they are evolving. The comparative perspective brings in the *supranational dimension* which, on the one hand, adds to the complexities of the question of how the field is understood. On the other hand, it is also in the increasing international exchange, collaboration and networking (see below) that certain hallmarks of what might be described as an international tradition for *pedagogy of RE* are found. Included in the International Seminar of Religious Education and Values (ISREV) for example (see below) are all kinds of teaching into, from and about religions (and life views and ethics/ values) in different countries. Seen as an independent research discipline *pedagogy of RE* would be defined by research questions which originate in questions of relevance to educational practice in different contexts.

⁸² Although when I and others with a religious studies background was applying for positions that became available in teacher training institutions after the introduction of KRL in 1997, some of those institutions mentioned only theology or studies in Christianity as relevant background.

⁸³ <http://www.uib.no/ahkr/utdanning/religionsvitenskap/laererutdanning-i-religionsvitenskap> (Accessed 24.08.09)

I think it is also a point that *pedagogy of RE* needs to be connected to a tradition for educational research rather than the traditional university disciplines of theology or religious studies (or other). An argument for why the field of pedagogy of RE as a research field needs to be based in a tradition for educational research is that the school subjects are constructions that do not correlate directly to any of the established university disciplines. For example Skeie (2006a: 94) notes how the 'real world diversity' of the school teaching practical context even presents an implicit critique of the scholarly traditions. Another reason is that there are many common themes, for example about learning or motivation etc. across school subjects that are the concern of pedagogical researchers. Also issues of social concern, such as community cohesion, have an impact on a variety of subjects in schools. I see this as especially important for further development of RLE⁸⁴ into a subject which is perceived as inclusive also by those who are currently critical to it. It may also be seen as important for English RE, but this is perhaps more already the case here.

A basic criterion for an *inclusive* multifaith RE in my view is that it needs to be pedagogically based in educational research. Christian theology and the theologies of the other religions, and 'secular' religious studies (and other disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology etc.) will continue to play a role, which can be seen as constructive to the extent to which they provide relevant information (or theoretical concepts and tools or even debates, such

⁸⁴ The name was changed from KRL to RLE in 2008, see chapter 1 and 4.

as the question of what religion is) for the study of the interface between religion and teaching of religion in various contexts. I think that today there is sufficient research in the area of the teaching about/ from/ into religion (and life views and ethics) in Norway as well as England to say that *pedagogy of RE* can be seen as an established separate field of research.

The reading of two 'power texts' by looking for characteristics of academic debate in England and Norway

Following up a broader analysis of academic and disciplinary features of the English and Norwegian research of RE, this section analyses two rather recent texts, one from each country, in order to dig deeper into the similarities and differences between the RE research traditions in the two countries. The texts have been chosen as being 'power texts' in a 'Foucauldian sense'.⁸⁵ Foucault has a radical critique of modern society as based on power and inequality.⁸⁶ Power is seen as rooted in institutions and manifests itself in texts. Interpreting the religious education research scene from this perspective, Jackson (2004a) and Gravem (2004) are 'power texts'. They can be seen as dominating the discourses in the field, not in the sense that they are not controversial, but rather in the sense that controversies often tend to refer to these texts. Their ambitions are reflected even in the titles, where Jackson say that he wants to *rethink* Religious

⁸⁵ The establishments of 'order of things' are (seemingly) empirical and hesitant, and Foucault looks for explanations for established 'orders' in western culture. Based on such (established) 'orders' which are seen as ontologically true, general theories of 'the order of things' are constructed. Foucault's theories become Meta theory as also the establishment of scientific traditions are seen as dependant on these basic (but empirical and not ontological) 'orders'. (Foucault 1966)

⁸⁶ According to Eliassen (1996) seen in Foucault's authorship from 1971, for instance in *Madness and Civilisation*. (See also Taylor 2007: 600).

Education and Plurality, while Gravem say that he wants to present a *more precise interpretation* of the KRL subject (in the 1997 National Curriculum) than in his opinion exists. Because they are 'power texts' - in the concepts from Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) - they illustrate aspects of *the national styles* (see chapter 2) in the academic debates about RE.

The English publication *Rethinking Religion and Plurality: issues in diversity and pedagogy* (Jackson 2004) and the Norwegian publication *KRL – a subject for all? The KRL subject as answering to challenges in a multicultural school context* (Gravem 2004)⁸⁷ have in common that they both identify what they see as the main positions in the debates about English and Norwegian RE at about the same point in time. However, they do this on a quite different basis. Gravem and Jackson refer to different traditions⁸⁸ when they each are attempting to identify the main positions in the societal debates about RE in their country. In this way the texts are not 'speaking to' each other, and Gravem and Jackson so far have had no contact in academic terms. This also increases the asymmetry between the texts, and this brings out more distinct differences, which is an intended purpose of choosing these two here.

⁸⁷ Thesis from 2002, published as a book in 2004. Original Norwegian title: *KRL- et fag for alle? KRL-faget som svar på utfordringer i en flerkulturell skolekontekst*. This is Gravem's second doctorate (which is slightly different in profiles from PhDs). When he was hired for a professorate in KRL at the Norwegian school of theology, he was also granted professorship in systematic theology.

⁸⁸ This can refer to the different traditions for RE in England and Norway (see above) but also that they refer to different academic disciplines within those national traditions.

The two scholars base their main arguments in different academic traditions and different research experiences. To some degree they can be said to represent opposite (or different) positions in the debates, as the debates about (multifaith) RE in England and Norway are in many cases parallel or even converging. Gravem (2004) evaluates certain positions in the debate against a 'more precise' interpretation of 'the text' referring to the 1997 KRL curriculum (KUF 1996) and its contested meaning. As an experienced interpreter of theological texts, Gravem uses his skills to discuss the degree to which some interpretations are in line with 'the basic text' or not, and whether other interpretations are better. This type of text-interpretation has a certain resonance in the research tradition for RE in Norway as Haraldsø (1989), Skottene (1994), Skrunes (1995) and Bø (2006) all have done historical studies of curricular texts and also of the role of Christianity in the development of the Norwegian unitary school tradition. Jackson's perspectives also draw on the traditions for RE research in England with reference, for example, to Loukes (1961), Smart (1968) and others, but his perspectives also reflect his backgrounds in social sciences and empirical ethnographic research. There is less focus on curriculum analysis in Jackson's text and in one way the curriculum is the background and research in the foreground. However, Gravem analyses the curriculum, but through this he also evaluates and comments on research perspectives.

Both the different national traditions and the different academic traditions can be seen as Foucauldian 'orders' (discourses). If I perceived them as belonging to different orders however, one could claim that there is a lack of

common ground for comparing these two texts. Only if one sees these two as within the same 'order' or field (of *pedagogy of RE*) does it become logical to compare them (see above). However, it could also be expected that that which is based in one tradition (academic/ national) would be challenged by the other as arguments could be seen as based in different discourses. Had I chosen to compare scholars with more similar positions like for example Jackson and Winsnes/ Skeie, or Gravem and Hull or Wright this might have brought out more similarities between the English and Norwegian academic debates about RE. When Jackson (2004a) and Gravem (2004) are chosen for comparative reading this is to bring attention to *differences* that could help me identify what may be seen as specific to these *national styles* of academic debate about RE in England and Norway.

The fact that the institutions that they represent - in Norway a Theological faculty, and in England an Institute of Education at a university - are main institutions for research and pedagogy of RE in their national context, is in itself an indication of differences in *national styles* (see above). Gravem works at the Norwegian School of Theology, which has a long tradition for being interested in the field of pedagogy of religion in Norway.⁸⁹ As shown above, the Norwegian School of Theology has in a most systematic way established formal competence and both organized courses for school RE teachers and facilitated higher studies and degrees in pedagogy of religion (RE). Three of Norway's current four professors in the field (Mogstad,

⁸⁹ Its interest in school issues had links to the establishment of a school focus study in Christianity at the University of Trondheim. This included also a network of Christian teachers with a background from The Norwegian School of Theology.

Gravem and Afdal) have their chairs there.⁹⁰ This is part of the explanation why Gravem's thesis is seen as a major text in the Norwegian context. Jackson on his side established the Warwick Religious Education Research Unit (WRERU) on the formation of the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick in 1994. They were building in part on the existing tradition for ethnographic research (for example on Hindu Children in Britain) in the former Arts Education Department. Since then this research unit has established itself as a main actor in RE research in England⁹¹ with increasingly international engagements as well.⁹² The Institute currently has three professors in religions and education as well (Robert Jackson, Eleanor Nesbitt, Leslie Francis), and they also offer masters and PhD courses in religious education.

Comparing these two texts brings attention to how having a binding National Curriculum (Norway) as opposed to having the system of the Locally Agreed Syllabuses (England) influences the academic debates differently. One of the things Gravem (2004) demonstrates is how central the National Curriculum is to the Norwegian discourse and this emphasis is an important element in the Norwegian tradition, even though research and academic debate about RE in schools in Norway is also much more than that (Skeie 2004, 2007). I think it is justified to claim that much societal and academic

⁹⁰ Sverre Dag Mongstad, Peder Gravem, Geir Afdal. The fourth professor (Skrunes) is seated in a Christian teacher training institution; Norsk Lærerakademi (NLA): 'The Norwegian Teacher Academy' in Bergen. <http://www.nla.no/> (Accessed 25.03.09)

⁹¹ For instance through receiving the first Research council grant for studies in Religious Education in England in 1990 for the Ethnography and Religious Education project, see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wie/research/wreru/research/completed> (Accessed 24.08.09).

⁹² Especially though its engagement in the REDCo project, see chapter 2, see <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wie/research/wreru/> (Accessed 16.08.09).

debate in Norway relates to discussing the content of the National Curriculum and interpreting it in the context of the unitary school ideology (Haraldsø (1989), Skottene (1994), Skrunes (1995) and Bø (2006)).

This does not have an immediate parallel in the English debates. In England there is neither a National Curriculum for RE nor a unitary school ideology. In this respect the contexts of English and Norwegian RE are very different (see chapter 5)⁹³ Nevertheless, discussions of legal issues, for example the change in law in 1988 (which sanctioned multifaith Local agreed RE syllabuses) is also present in English debates. For example Hayward (2009: 8) notes that 'from the time of the consultation on the National Curriculum through to current discussions of the revised secondary curriculum, the non-statutory national framework for RE, QCA schemes of work and the proposed national strategy have similarly been the focus of discussions and response' by members of the Shap Working Party. Another example, which lies further back in history, is Hull's (1989) *The Act unpacked* which is about analysing what the 1988 Education Reform Act meant for RE and collective worship (see chapter 4). However, the strong focus on the National Curriculum in the Norwegian debate brings attention to how the English academic debates relate to the context of the decentralised system for producing RE syllabuses. Despite tendencies in Norway towards

⁹³ There is variety of types of schools even within the state system in England, while this is not the case in Norway. The four main types of state schools are: Community schools, Voluntary Controlled schools, Voluntary Aided Schools and Foundation schools and in addition a number of independent schools, see <http://www.inca.org.uk/england-system-mainstream.html> The support of schools with a religious character within the state system is disputed in England, see Jackson (2004a: 39-57).

decentralisation and in England towards centralisation, they are still far apart on this point (see chapter 4 & 6).⁹⁴

Both Jackson (2004a) and Gravem (2004) include political as well as academic perspectives. Drawing on their own as well as others' research they argue what kind of RE is best suited to meet the religious plurality in the English and Norwegian school systems (school ideologies). Both Jackson (2004a) and Gravem (2004) evaluate what they see as the main positions in the debates about RE with plurality as the sociocultural backdrop. Their views of plurality are, however, different and this becomes especially evident as Jackson (2004a) and Gravem (2004) both relate to Geir Skeie's theories of plurality (Skeie 1995, 1998). But while Gravem raises the question of how useful it is to distinguish between traditional and modern plurality in relation to his project (Gravem 2004: 210)⁹⁵, Jackson integrates these concepts in his discussion of plurality (Jackson 2004a, for example in page 1, 8, 12, 92, 113, 126). Jackson sees a mix of traditional and modern plurality as the context for religious education in the twenty-first century (Jackson 2004a: 20).⁹⁶ This is the basis for discussing the developments in RE in England, from Christian Instruction as a binding force in society through a divorce of

⁹⁴ There are movements back and forth between tendencies to centralise and decentralise in each country, but with the constant that in Norway there has been a central National Curriculum for RE while in England there has been a decentralised system of producing the syllabuses Local (further details in chapter 4). The National Curriculum in Norway have however emphasized local adjustments in the curriculum in varying degree, and in England the introduction of Model Syllabuses and the Non-statutory National framework may be seen to represent centralising tendencies.

⁹⁵ Which is interpreting the text of The National Curriculum for RE in the context of the Norwegian plural society.

⁹⁶ This could also be seen as many types of modernities coexisting (as do Taylor 2004, see chapter 7 and 8).

RE and moral education and citizenship education, to being able in RE to explore this plurality (Jackson 2004a: 20-21).

The main problem being discussed in Jackson (2004a) is different approaches to RE in the light of plurality seen as a mix of modern and traditional plurality. Jackson (2004a) summarises the debate about RE in England and Wales through a discussion of six different approaches to RE in (state) schools in relation to their relevance in a plural context RE. These are:

1. 'Religion as cultural heritage' which denies that society is plural and argues that Christian indoctrination is a valid form of RE in the state school:
2. 'State funding for religious schools' which allows schools with religious profiles to take care of religious nurture in plural societies⁹⁷:
3. 'Postmodernist approaches to religious education' which wants pupils to explore religion through personal narratives:
4. 'Religious Education as religious literacy' which wants to present the different religions as distinct systems and help pupils identify with a particular religion (a position which could be seen as having some similarities to Gravem's view):
5. 'Interpretive approaches to religious education' which try to keep the debate open and involve pupils to participate in interpretation through reflexive studies of source materials:

⁹⁷Similar to the Dutch model of pillarisation, see for example in Avest, Bakker, Bertram-Troost & Miedema 2007

6. 'Dialogical approaches to religious education' which aims to increase pupils understanding of religion through interaction (Jackson 2004a: 2-3).

The main argument is that interpretive, dialogical and religious literacy approaches to RE are better suited for the plural context than the others.

The arguments for this are based on an understanding of the plural nature of society which takes account of a distinction between traditional and modern plurality and sees plurality as purely descriptive as opposed to seeing pluralism as normative (Jackson 2004a: 8, with reference to Skeie 1995).

There is an understanding of modernity and post-modernity/ late modernity and globalisation as the context of RE (Jackson 2004a: 9 -10). There is also a focus on the inner diversity and contestability of cultural and religious traditions, (Jackson 2004a: 2,) reflecting the tradition of the ethnographic research done in WRERU at the University of Warwick, and the Interpretive Approach which was developed there (Jackson 1997).

Important perspectives relevant to an inclusive pedagogy of RE, include: the critique of 'orientalism' (Said 1978) which is about recognising the complexities of the inner diversity in 'traditions' (Jackson 2004a: 81) and the critique of early multiculturalism, which points out that RE sometimes reifies stereotypes through presenting religions as distinct and homogeneous systems, and not acknowledging power relations within different cultural groups (Jackson 2004a: 128). An important point in this *rethinking* of pedagogy of RE is a view of ethnicity, culture and religion not as bounded

entities, but as flexible phenomena 'in a state of flux and rapid change' (Jackson 2004a: 15) and with fuzzy edges and inner contestability. These points reflect ideas from the social sciences, especially social anthropology. (This is closer to the Winsnes/ Skeie tradition in the Norwegian scene.) These perspectives are rooted in the tradition of ethnographic research at the University of Warwick where the identity formation of young people from different backgrounds is seen as an ongoing process influenced by many different kinds of religious and non religious sources.⁹⁸

The idea of religion perceived as part of a cultural heritage is seen as problematic (Jackson 2004a:13, 22-38). Prior to the 1988 reform some argued for a predominantly Christian RE to continue and even for the need to strengthen this in the face of the increased religious plurality in English society. Some argued against sanctioning of a multifaith type of RE as developed for example in the Birmingham (1975) syllabus. In this line of argument a special British brand of Christianity would be closely linked to British cultural heritage (Jackson 2004a: 22). This lobby influenced how the law text was formulated both with regard to RE and in relation to collective worship (see chapter 4). This association of morality with one particular religious tradition ignores the moral concerns of other religions and of humanistic traditions within the British society, Jackson argues. That tensions such as these are strongly felt also on the Norwegian side becomes evident in Gravem (2004), but he takes a different stance towards this issue.

⁹⁸ This makes the Interpretive Approach developed in Warwick child oriented Jackson (2004a: 19 - 20, Jackson & Nesbitt (1993), Østberg (1998), Ipgrave (2002).

Gravem's (2004) *KRL – a subject for all? The KRL subject as the answer to challenges in a multicultural unitary school*⁹⁹ is an attempt to make 'a more precise interpretation' of the subject according to the 1997 National Curriculum, than in his opinion existed at the time of writing, applying a method he calls 'systematic reconstruction' (Gravem 2004: 5). It is also an analysis of the different understanding of the KRL subject as expressed in the discussions following the introduction in 1997, so it can also be seen as an attempt to sum up the debate about KRL so far. He evaluates what he sees as the main positions in this debate against his 'more precise' interpretation of the text (the 1997 National Curriculum for RE). It is the only published book which is about summarising and discussing the societal/academic debate related to RE in Norway.¹⁰⁰ Gravem's agenda is to argue against those who, from various positions, have criticised the KRL-subject and rather to defend the view that more precisely interpreted the subject should be understood as a coherent and justified solution to the challenges a multicultural society raises for Norwegian RE. This debate can be seen as the first reaction in Norwegian society to the idea of multifaith RE, and, as such, it may have more similarities to the reactions in England after the Birmingham (1975) syllabus. This also triggered public and political debate, where, on the one side, Christian organisations argued RE should be about Christian nurture and, on the other, was humanists who wanted to be

⁹⁹ Norwegian: 'KRL – et fag for alle? KRL faget som svar på utfordringer i en flerkulturell enhetsskole'.

¹⁰⁰ But several articles and book chapters attempt the same, for example Haakedal 1995, Skeie 2004, 2006a, 2006b, 2007, Lied 2006).

included on equal terms (Haakedal 1983: 46-47). Hull (1978), who had been one of the main engineers behind the document, defended it.

Under the heading 'The contested subject'¹⁰¹ Gravem claims there have been three main perspectives in the debate about the KRL:

1. KRL has got a too unclear Christian education rooting and profile.
2. KRL has a too distinctive Christian education profile.
3. Because of political compromises, KRL has strong inner tensions and contradictory demands which makes it impossible to put into practice (Gravem 2004: 148).¹⁰²

Those holding the first position as described by Gravem use the preamble of the school law¹⁰³ to argue that KRL still had to be seen as confessional. It was Christian voices mainly coming from NLA university college who argued this position (Gravem 2004: 149) as they wanted to continue to have a denominational/ confessional¹⁰⁴ type of RE in the state school. Those who argue the second position, that the KRL has a too distinctive Christian character, also referred to the school law preamble. They argued that the tradition of the Christianity subject would continue to shape the parts about Christianity in KRL (in the 1997 National Curriculum) in a qualitatively

¹⁰¹ Norwegian: 'Det omstridte faget'.

¹⁰² Christian education pointing to the Norwegian pedagogical school tradition for teaching Christianity, which by some were seen as continuing in the KRL subject, see below.

¹⁰³ Which until 2008 was stating that aiding parents in Christian upbringing of their children is the overall purpose of education, but the addition that this is in cooperation with the children's home is stressed in a verdict in the Norwegian High Court (details in chapter 4).

¹⁰⁴ See chapter 1 for the different meanings of these concepts in the English and Norwegian context.

different way compared to the new parts about 'other' religions, philosophy and life views. There is also quantitatively more material on Christianity and only a limited right to opt out, and these factors together are seen as KRL (in the 1997 National Curriculum) being a form of indoctrination into state religion (Lutheran Christianity). It is especially the Norwegian Humanists Association, together with other minority groups, who have argued this position (Gravem 2004: 171-172).¹⁰⁵ The third position is argued by analytical scholars who have pointed out inner tensions and weaknesses in the 1997 National Curriculum for KRL, and raised the question whether there are too many inconsistencies in it. The main arguments for this position were seen to come from Plesner (1998) and Skeie (1998) (Gravem 2004: 198ff).¹⁰⁶

Gravem (2004: 390ff) concludes that the new RE that Norway adopted in 1997 must be understood as *a new type of subject* and not as denominational (or confessional) Christianity, as both the first two positions claim, nor as a religious studies based subject. He chooses to look for coherences between the different parts which others have seen as inconsistent and argues that KRL can be seen as consistent enough to defend. Through employing Thor Ola Engen's theories of integrative socialisation (Gravem 2004: 249, 393-394) he claims KRL (in the 1997 National Curriculum) can be seen as a solution to how to construct RE as a

¹⁰⁵ After losing in the High court in Norway, their complaint about this subject and the lack of right to be fully exempted was recognised in a verdict in Strasbourg in 2007 (see chapter 4).

¹⁰⁶ Against this, more optimistically Lied (2004) later argues, based on empirical studies that KRL can work in practice, despite perhaps being theoretically impossible, see also Thomassen (2006).

common subject for all (multifaith approach) in the *Norwegian* plural society, but also in the traditional Norwegian unitary school. An important aspect of his analysis is the relationship to the ongoing court cases, and especially the ruling of the Norwegian High court that KRL was not in violation of the Human Rights (more on this in chapter 4). His opinion is that this subject reflects, firstly, that in *the Norwegian* plural context the main part of the population is Christian, and secondly that the curriculum includes other religions and life views in a percentage proportion similar to the size of the minority groups (Gravem 2004: 390). He sees it as fair to emphasize the specific Norwegian Christian tradition more, because of its longstanding historical roots in the country, which is a 'religion as a cultural heritage' argument.¹⁰⁷ However Gravem does emphasise the possibilities of local adjustment as a means to offer minority pupils RE which is better adjusted to their needs.

According to Gravem (2004: 391), central core values of importance for KRL are to respect the different religions truth claims and to accept group pluralism, which he takes to mean treating individuals as well as groups with different cultures, religions and life views equally. Another of these values is

¹⁰⁷ Bø's (2006) thesis is a study in the Norwegian National Curricula as such (not just the RE curriculum) and their attempts to create unity (helhet: unity/ cohesion) in a differentiated society, and the role of religion in this enterprise. Bø discusses 'the longed for cohesion in the Norwegian school' implying the underlying unitary school ideology. Parsons theory of generalised values is central in his analysis (Bø: 116 ff, 176) – which I think resembles Bellah's concept of civil religion (see chapter 4). Bø (2006) does not discuss Gravem (2004) but they are both discussing possibilities to harmonize tensions in the 1997 National Curriculum in the context of the Norwegian unitary school ideology/ plural society. While Gravem goes much further in claiming such harmonisation is possible, Bø concludes that it is not possible to omit tensions in a complex society, and suggests a strategy of accepting that there have to be tensions in such a document (Bø 2006: 179) Gravem has a much more explicit political agenda of defending the KRL. Bø is less political and is also looking at a broader spectre of tensions within the curriculum as a whole.

to support minority cultures as far as they do not violate the coherence of the shared community (Gravem 2004: 391). These values, on which the Norwegian school rests, is in Norwegian culture informed through Christianity and Humanism as traditions, Gravem says that this makes it possible to claim that the Norwegian school rests on a consistent set of values while also being open to alternative values with which it is in a dialogue, because these values exclude forced conformity (Gravem 2004: 392).

Gravem's main perspective with respect to plurality is majority vs. minority, where he does grant the majority certain extra rights, though not the right to discriminate against minorities (see also Skeie 2006b: 24-25). The alternative would be to not grant the majority any privileges or not conceptualising society in terms of minorities and majority at all. Rather, the emphasis could be on how individuals may situate themselves differently towards such ideas of groups. Skeie (1998, 2006b), for example, represents a different position in the Norwegian debate with his different understanding of plurality stemming from the social sciences (in the Winsnes tradition, see above). For example Skeie (2006b: 30) notes that 'As researcher, I suggest that presently our political responsibility should be towards *the individual child* (my italics) and the context the child lives in'.¹⁰⁸ However, Skeie and others with similar positions become controversial in a Norwegian context, not because of the emphasis on the individual child as such, but because

¹⁰⁸ (...) We should work for curricula as well as teaching that gives the individual person access to knowledge that can support both different kinds of believing and not-believing, and give opportunity to exchange thoughts on views and values with others, (...) with the possibility of developing in new directions (Skeie 2006b: 30).

this challenges what may seem like a strong and dominating idea of seeing Christianity - and Humanism as - 'our cultural heritage' (see chapter 6 and 7). For those having a similar view as Skeie however, Gravem's view of preserving values seen as Norwegian and linked to a certain tradition (Christian - and Humanistic - cultural heritage), may be seen as controversial.

The idea of a nation specific heritage and the conscious political construction of this heritage, or national imaginary (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004), are at the core of the Norwegian unitary school tradition (Engen 2005).¹⁰⁹ It is linked to a conscious nation building as a political project in post colonialised Norway after its liberation from Denmark (1814) and finally Sweden (1905) (Engen 2005). Radical ideas of plurality such as Skeie's deconstruct this imaginary. Gravem, on the other hand, may be seen as arguing to preserve a consistent imaginary. This is, he says, for the political purpose of aiding social cohesion, and he sees KRL (in the 1997 National Curriculum) as a constructive compromise in the plural *Norwegian* society. Although Gravem is inclusive, seen from a majority perspective, his view could still be seen as offensive from a minority perspective. This point has indeed often been made in the societal debate in Norway. For example, in a critical book published by the Norwegian Humanist Association just after the KRL was introduced politically, the social anthropologist Thomas Hylland-Eriksen (1996:157) characterised this kind of tolerance as the traditional

¹⁰⁹ Both Schiffauer and Engen refer to Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities (Anderson 1991).

Christian benevolent but patronising way, without allowing others to become equals to the state religion.¹¹⁰

It is important for Gravem that school education as such; including its RE, is not value free, and in the English context this is a point Hull also underlined in his defence of the Birmingham (1975) syllabus (Haakedal 1983: 47). In this Gravem's position also compares to Wright's position in the English debate, (see for example Alberts 2007: 163). It is the Norwegian Humanist Association which has represented the most persistent critique of KRL in Norway (including law suits, see above and chapter 4). I see the role of the critique of early multiculturalism and orientalism in England that Jackson discusses (2004a: 81, 127) as serving some of the same aims of problematising minority perspectives. However, Jackson goes much further than Gravem in incorporating this critique into his suggestions for appropriate RE in the English plural context, thus taking a different approach to the question of how to deal with or even conceptualise minorities as well as the majority.

As noted above, there is a tendency to emphasise Christianity as part of Norwegian cultural heritage in a rather strong strand of historic studies in Norway. Here the argument has often been to preserve Christianity as part of our cultural heritage within the tradition of the unitary school (Skeie 2004: 323, Lied 2006: 170), and I see Gravem's thesis as relating to this strand in

¹¹⁰ Paraphrased from this original Norwegian text: 'For tiden ser det imidlertid ut til at de ikke kristne religiøse minoritetene skal "tolereres" på den tradisjonelle kristne, velvillige nedlatende måten, men ikke at de skal få være likeverdige med statsreligionen.'

the Norwegian tradition. This historical research interest does not have a parallel in England where theoretical contributions in the field of pedagogy of RE have been more interested in methods of teaching RE in schools, in an educational science tradition, more than in a theological/ historical tradition (see above). This does not mean, however, that the relationship between state and Church also in England has formed both the school tradition in general and RE specifically, in a certain way (for example Copley 1997, Jackson 2004a).

From the point of the first educational legislation, in England 1870, in Norway (then a part of Denmark) 1739, the English legislation reflected a 'traditional' (Christian) religious plurality, while the Norwegian legislation reflected a 'traditional' (Christian) religious unity. The English legislation, for example, allowed private schools to teach religion according to their own denominational faith, at the same time ensuring that religious education (Religious Instruction) in state schools was non-denominational (but with a confessional element).¹¹¹ In addition there was also a general right for parents to withdraw their children from 'RI' from 1870 onwards in England (Copley 1997) while in Norway the right to withdraw was first granted in 1889 after longstanding battle over this (Haraldsø 1989).¹¹² In Norway there

¹¹¹ In England religious schools existed before 1870 when Britain got its first Education Act. The point of the legislation was to provide education to all, in other words to places where church schools did not provide schooling. Since then schooling has been a shared project of the state and the Church of England. This is referred to as 'the dual system' (from 1902) (Copley 1997). The purpose of the first school law in Norway in 1739 was to ensure the nurture of children into the state religion (Lutheran Christianity). This remained the main aim of schooling till the mid 1800s, but since then RE in school has been part of an intrinsic education with a broader content (Haraldsø 1989), which is broadly similar to the English situation.

¹¹² The law of dissenters in 1845 allowed other Christian denominations into the kingdom, and from 1851 it became legal for non-Christians to enter.

was no traditional religious plurality; in fact Norway and its school system is traditionally religiously monocultural. It is not unreasonable therefore to describe the development in English RE as negotiated on the basis of *difference* (as essential to the English [British] National Imaginary) while developments in Norwegian RE are negotiated on the basis of ‘*sameness*’ (as an essential idea in the Norwegian National Imaginary (see also Everington (2009) and Lund Johansen (2009), see chapter 6).

This can perhaps also be part of the explanation why the English school system as such is also more plural, allowing for different kinds of (religious) schools both within and without the state system. This is also very much in contrast to the way the Norwegian unitary school – with its traditionally strong connection to the state religion (see chapter 4) and the nation building project (Engen 2005). Today, for example, independent religious schools in England include also Muslim or Hindu schools, and since 1997 policy has changed towards including more faith based schools in the state system as well, and now there are some Muslim and Sikh schools and one Hindu (primary) school (Jackson & O’Grady 2007: 187-188), while in Norway some religious schools also exist outside the state system, but only very few, and these are all Christian schools (Skeie 2004).

In comparing these two ‘power texts’ I have brought out some essential differences between the academic debates in the two countries, and also

suggested some reasons for them.¹¹³ Essential controversies are brought out as they are discussed in these texts, which can be seen as major texts in each context. For example, their different positions on the question of representing religion as cultural heritage highlights differences in what is dominating the discourses. It becomes evident that when Jackson *rethinks* it is a different tradition that he rethinks: one where contemporary society and its growing plurality has been the centre of attention for RE for a long time, with a stronger studies-of-religions/ social science influence. Gravem can be seen as rooted in a theological tradition, or rather pedagogical Christian education tradition¹¹⁴, which, until 1997, was dominant in Norway, and which has often been preoccupied with interpreting curricular texts in a historical context. With the 1997 reform, this tradition was severely challenged by plurality as the sociocultural backdrop, and this is the challenge which Gravem addresses in his book. Although his arguments explicitly concerns one particular text, the 1997 KRL curriculum, the issues he discusses continue to be relevant even after the changes to the National Curriculum that has occurred since then (see chapter 1 and 4). Perhaps it is the case that others have since continued the debate on many of the issues that Gravem raise in this book, and thus contributed to negotiate those issues further.

¹¹³ Although I acknowledge fully that explanation for differences in the two countries academic debates are more complex than I am able to illustrate here. For example The two countries have different, even opposing position with regards to colonial times, where Norway in near past was colonised and therefore had a 'need' for nation building, while in England the past of being a colonial power would give a very different point of departure. Historic research has not been a strong strand in English RE, however the different pasts and differences in *use of* historic research towards nation building as part of the academic debate about multifaith RE may explain why defending the representation of Christianity as part of a national cultural heritage is seen by some as more justifiable in the Norwegian context.

¹¹⁴ Gravem has a background in teacher training in Hamar, where Engen is placed and where there is a certain focus on migration perspectives in pedagogy.

However Gravem and Jackson can both be seen as suggesting or pointing out that a change of paradigm is necessary (or has happened). Gravem concludes the KRL (in the 1997 curriculum) must be understood as a new type of RE in Norway, and thus defends the break from the traditions of the Christian school subject. Jackson, from his point of view, concludes that approaches to RE which take account of plurality (as a fact and not as a normative idea) are the ones which are suited for society in the present and the future. Gravem has a narrower national view compared to Jackson. Even though Jackson also refers to the national context he does, to a significantly greater degree than Gravem, also reports international research, including Norwegian RE research. Gravem, from his point of view, refers back to history and tradition, reflecting the national dimension more in a *Norwegian style*, while Jackson's book, to a greater extent, also reflects a supranational dimension; in this he can be seen to negotiate the *English style* further in a supranational context.

The supranational dimension in academic debates on RE today

So far in this chapter I have emphasised some core differences, and looked for explanations for these, with the intention of illustrating how shared international challenges are shaped by the national traditions. I have also shown that there are many examples of contact between England and Norway, for example through NEKRIF (see above).¹¹⁵ Many impulses have

¹¹⁵ For example Winsnes (1988) had international references (including Smart 1968) and Rian (1983) introduced Smarts ideas the dimensions in religions (see above). Further at the brink of the introduction of the KRL English scholars were invited to share their experiences

come from English RE into Norwegian RE and also vice versa, as for example Jackson (2004a) refers Norwegian research. In this section I will address the supranational dimension directly, drawing attention to how this is shaping developments in each of the countries.

One important example of a supranational process is the *Christianising of* European countries, which, in spite of its common features, has taken different forms in each county. The same is true for the Reformation, the development of European Nation States (see Schiffauer *et al.* 2004), the European Enlightenment, secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation. In each case there is also a question of what the term means, for example secularisation (see chapter 2, see also, for example, Davie 2007, Taylor 2007). In this chapter, and in this thesis, the main focus is on pluralisation: what it means and how it has affected English and Norwegian RE. But all those other processes are also present as its context. Religion, the main subject matter in RE, is in itself international, and in addition there is a general trend in academia that research and academic debates develop more and more as international fields in the face of globalisation.

Religion is a very evident factor in international relations and in processes of globalisation and no country can afford to see its educational provision in isolation (Jackson 2004b: 29).

in Norwegian conferences, for examples Robert Jackson and Judith Everington from the University of Warwick participated in two conferences prior to the introduction of the KRL in 1996, and that John Hull from the University of Birmingham was invited to talk about 'the gift to the child' one of the first national conferences on the KRL in Gran in November 1997.

Both in Norway and in England RE research has been heavily influenced by the supranational processes of pluralisation, as this chapter has shown. This is not special for the field of pedagogy of RE, but is in line with the general developments in academia including educational research, related both to *formal* and *informal international processes* (see chapter 2). RE research in England has made significant advances since the 1950s, especially through the inclusion of empirical methods, and has in later years developed further through increasing collaboration and international contacts (Jackson 2004b). There is a similar trend in Norway. Here early theoretical research, which tended to focus on historic issues of relationship between Christianity, state and school, has become more complemented by empirical work and work focusing on practice and on issues of social context and contextuality (for example Leganger-Krogstad (2007), Haakedal (2004), Afdal (2006), Lied, (2004) Breidlied & Nicolaisen (2004)). Also in Norway the increased international contact has been important for the development of the subject.

The special history of the University in Stavanger is interesting in this context as it used to be a University College which traditionally was a carrier of pedagogical interest in RE outside the theological institutions. It was granted full university status in 2005, and here Geir Skeie has been the key figure in building a research centre for RE based in a secular university in Norway. Especially important for this development has been the involvement in the international and comparative EU funded REDCo research project (see chapter 2). But also, as noted above, the granting of a new position for

RE in the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen, indicates a new development.

Inter-exchange of ideas internationally happens also through (increasingly) international channels of publications – for example the British Journal of Religious Education (BJRE)¹¹⁶ and Waxmann's book series 'Religious Diversity and Education in Europe' (of which Jackson and Skeie are two of the series editors)¹¹⁷ – international networks, seminars and research projects. I think especially the history of the International Seminar on Religious Education and Values (ISREV) deserves mention.¹¹⁸ In the ISREV context religious education (and values) is seen to include both teaching in religious contexts, such as church schools or religious state schools (which are common in many countries) and multifaith RE or 'secular' RE. Both Norway and England have active delegations in this network. In recent years there has been a great deal of focus on issues of religious and cultural plurality. There are also other networks of various kinds¹¹⁹, and the International Association for the History of Religion (IAHR) now also has sessions on religious education (Pye *et al.* 2006).

¹¹⁶ Jackson has been Editor since 1996. This was formerly a national forum for RE called (up to 1978) Learning for Living, and was partly a publication channel for Shap (Hayward 2009), but it has been developed into an international peer reviewed research journal.

¹¹⁷ <http://www.waxmann.com/index-e.html> (Accessed 08.09.09).

¹¹⁸ See <http://www.isrev.bham.ac.uk/> (Accessed 06.09.09)

¹¹⁹ Further international networking has gone on for instance at the Nordic Conference of Religious Education (NCRE), which also vocationally has had guests and participants from outside the Nordic countries, among them from England. There is also a European Network for Religious Education through Contextual Approaches (ENRECA) which was initiated in 1999. It includes researchers from Northern European countries and focuses intercultural issues such as changing patterns of religious and secular plurality in an European context, aiming at policy makers (Jackson 2004b: 26). Another example is the International Network for interreligious and intercultural Education which was initiated in 1994 and involves researchers from some Northern European countries and South Africa (Jackson 2004b: 26).

In an increasingly internationally developing 'educational market' (Karlsen 2006), PhDs in RE have also become internationalised. For example Østberg (1998a) is a Norwegian researcher who did an English PhD in the Warwick tradition of ethnographic research, focusing on questions of identity for young Pakistani Muslims in Oslo. Lars Laird Eriksen, another Norwegian, is about to submit his PhD at Warwick. Kari Flornes from Bergen University College did a PhD at the University of Birmingham (Flornes (2007). These PhDs (as well as my own) could be included both in the English and Norwegian contexts. Further, Alberts (2007) is a German scholar having compared English and Swedish RE in her thesis, who now works in The Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion at the University of Bergen, Norway. Comparative studies (such as mine and Alberts') and international and comparative research projects (such as the EC REDCo Project) are characterised by having an international outlook (see chapter 2). These international PhDs and research projects are, in my view, characteristic of the development in the field towards becoming more international with increased networking and cooperation across nation borders.

Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I have explored the societal level of curriculum comparatively by narrowing this down to a focus on aspects of the academic debate, looking for significant differences and reasons for these differences. I have focused firstly on the role of academic disciplines in the development of multifaith approaches to religious education in England and Norway; where I

had a special focus on the different roles of 'secular' religious studies in developing pedagogy for multifaith RE, and secondly on two books which I see as significant contributions to the academic debates in each national context.

I found that reasons for the different role of academic disciplines should be seen in relation to the different development of the tradition of religious studies, noting that in England religious studies was more closely connected to school RE than in Norway. Also differences in the school systems are seen as an important source of explanation, especially because the less centralised and less unitary English tradition made it possible for initiatives from certain actors in religious studies to initiate important developments. In Norway religious studies has been relatively cut off from contact with school RE for many years, until the effect of the 1997 KRL-subject changed structures and dynamics in academia. The analysis of two 'power texts' showed that Jackson (2004a) and Gravem (2004) both attempt to summarise major debates about multifaith RE in England and Norway respectfully at about the same point in time, but on a different basis. I showed the way in which their contributions reflect differences in the traditions of RE research in the two countries. In the last section I have given example of how the field of academic study of *pedagogy of RE* today is increasingly international.

I can distinguish between two main sources of explanations for differences, both found in the national dimension (see chapter 2, 5, 8). One comes from inside the domain of RE, and this is the differences in how research traditions for RE have developed in the two countries. The other comes from outside the domain of RE as such, from differences in general school developments. One important factor forming this general school development in both cases has been the nation-specific traditional relationship between religion (Christianity), state and school. This can be seen in terms of traditional religious plurality (England) vs. traditional religious unity (Norway), having a national curriculum vs. the decentralised system for making RE syllabuses and in the different role of 'secular' religious studies in the two countries. These are seen as major factors in explaining differences in the way the field of *pedagogy of RE* has been conceptualised and developed.

In the next chapter (4), I will go on to explore the institutional level of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992, see chapter 2, 8), in relation to certain key law texts and curricular documents.

Chapter 4

Institutional level: Recent Legal and Policy Developments in England and Norway

Introduction

This chapter explores the theme *curricular policy*. This relates to the institutional level of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992, see chapter 2), which I have interpreted to mean in England the law, the Model Syllabuses (SCAA 1994) and the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE (QCA 2004) which replaced the Model syllabuses, and the Local Agreed Syllabuses.¹²⁰ In Norway the institutional level would mainly be the law and the national curriculum for RE, but also local work in schools used to adjust the national curriculum. In England the local production of schemes of work could also be seen as part of the institutional level, or as a structural element in between the institutional and the instructional level. In Norway the parallel to this would have to be the textbooks, (see chapter 6).

In this chapter I have chosen to compare firstly laws regarding religion and school, and secondly two representative curricular documents. Of the English documents I have chosen to look at the Non-Statutory National

¹²⁰ The Local Agreed Syllabuses are legally binding; the QCA 2004 is not and was originally directed at Agreed Syllabus conferences. However, it is now being used much more widely as a kind of position statement, see http://www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/9817_re_national_framework_04.pdf (Accessed 09.08.09).

Framework (QCA 2004). In Norway the national curriculum for RE has changed frequently in recent years¹²¹ and for this chapter I have chosen to look at the one from 2005: *The KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity-religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information* (UD 2005).¹²² My research questions will be covered in two main sections – on law and policy – and are as follows: What similarities and differences exist between English and Norwegian laws concerning religion and school? How do we account for these? What are the main similarities and differences in English and Norwegian policy as expressed in QCA 2004 and UD 2005? How do we account for these?

The Legal Framework

In this section I will compare laws regulating RE in state schools. I will examine what the law says about how religion and life views should be presented in state schools and laws regulating the right to opt out. Attention will also be given to laws which regard religion and schools in general, specified as in England laws regarding collective worship and in Norway the school law preamble which until 2008 made Christian nurture the central object of schooling as such in Norway.¹²³

¹²¹ 1997, 2002, 2005 and 2008

¹²² In original Norwegian language: 'KRL-boka 2005. Kristendoms-, religions- og livssynskunnskap, Læreplan for 1. – 10. årstrinn: Læreplanveiledning og informasjon.' In an English version of the Norwegian Education Act it is translated "Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education, but I find that this translation have a different meaning than the much discussed Norwegian name for the subject. Lovdata: <http://www.ub.uio.no/ujur/ulovdata/lov-19980717-061-eng.pdf> Accessed 05.02.09.

¹²³ The Norwegian High Court emphasised that the laws statement that this should be in cooperation with the home, see below.

Law regulating RE in state schools

Laws relevant to RE have been made since the first Education Act of 1870. However, I will concentrate on legislation that relates to the present situation for RE in England, namely the 1988 Education Reform Act. In England it is stated in the Education Reform Act of 1988 that all maintained schools should offer Religious Education. Every Local Educational Authority (LEA)/ Local Authority (LA) since 2007) is obliged to convene an agreed syllabus conference that must produce a Local Agreed Syllabus (LAS) that shall be used in that area.¹²⁴ These syllabuses must be non-denominational and according to the Education Act 1988, section 8.3, 'reflect the fact that the religious traditions in Great Britain are in the main Christian whilst taking account of the teachings and practices of the other principal religions represented in Great Britain'¹²⁵.

It is interesting to note that the Act refers to Christian *traditions* in the plural (see chapter 3). It clearly gives Christianity priority over 'other' religions. Reasons for this have to do with the strong tradition of Christianity historically and still today in British society. There is no mention or reference in the text of the law to non-religious life views or a humanist tradition. Strictly speaking, the law excludes them, since the subject is *religious* education, and by legal precedent, humanism in English law is not regarded

¹²⁴ The tradition of agreed syllabuses goes back much further. See, for example, Copley (1997) and Jackson and O'Grady (2007)

¹²⁵ http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts1988/Ukpga_19880040_2htm Accessed 25.10.2005

as a religion.¹²⁶ However, ‘other’ principal *religions* in Great Britain *should* also be taught – an innovation in the 1988 law.

Guidance on the interpretation of the Education Reform Act of 1988, section 8.3 is found in Department for Education (DEF) Circular 1/94. Here the following is mentioned as aims for RE:

To develop pupils’ knowledge, understanding and awareness of Christianity, as the predominant religion in Great Britain, and the other principal religions represented in the country; to encourage respect for those holding different beliefs; and to help promote pupils’ spiritual, moral and mental development (Copley 1997: 175).

The circular says to encourage *respect* for those holding different beliefs, so this is an interpretation of what the law indicates when it says to ‘take account of the fact’ that there are other religions in Britain. It states that it is up to the agreed syllabus conferences to decide how many religions should be taught in depth at each key stage. When deciding the balance between Christianity and other religions, the conferences should consider both the national and local position of the religions, the age and background of the pupils, the wish of parents and governors, and to make decisions that minimize the number of parents who might withdraw their children. These

¹²⁶ The Birmingham 1975 syllabus, which was the first multifaith RE syllabus in England (see chapter 3) first included humanism on equal terms as religions, but when it was tried legally it was a juridical decision that humanism could only be included to inform knowledge about religion, and that RE meant the subject matter was *religion* (Haakedal 1983: 46).

'other' religions were interpreted in the Model Syllabuses (SCAA¹²⁷ 1994a-d) to be Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism, and these are the religions that tend to be included in most Local Agreed Syllabuses.¹²⁸

The law also requires that any LEA (LA) must have a Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE). The SACRE has the right and duty to advise the LEAs (LAs) regarding RE and to review the syllabuses regularly, at least every five years. Nothing specifically on RE is changed in law since the Education Act of 1988, but renewal is embedded in the system of the regular revision of the Local Agreed Syllabuses. RE continues to have a special status as statutory but outside the national curriculum but it might be said to have taken a step towards the same kinds of standardisation as the other curricular subjects with QCA 2005 (see below).

Norwegian RE is regulated by § 2-4 in the Norwegian Education Act. A law concerning the subject KRL¹²⁹ was first included in connection with the introduction of multifaith RE in the education reform in 1997. This law was changed in 2002 in connection with the KRL curriculum being revised, and in 2005, in connection with answering to critique of KRL given by the UN's Human Rights committee, -and again in 2008 (following a verdict in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg: see below). In the 2002 document, § 2-4 from the 1997 law was unchanged except for the name of

¹²⁷ The School Curriculum and Assessment Authority, later replaced by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA).

¹²⁸ They are also the religions identified by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) for the research study of materials being used in RE being conducted by the University of Warwick <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wie/research/centres/wreru/> .

¹²⁹ Christianity with orientation about Religions and Life views' (KUF 1996), see chapter 1.

the subject (but only in such a way that the abbreviation KRL could be kept), and the exact text of the law is now quoted in the text of the curriculum, see the exact wording of the law text in 1997 and 2002 in appendix 2. In 2005 the words of the law was changed to:

‘Teaching in the subject Knowledge of Christianity, Religions and Life views shall:

- provide a thorough knowledge of the Bible and Christianity as cultural heritage
- provide a thorough knowledge of Evangelical – Lutheran faith and other Christian denominations
- provide knowledge of other world religions and philosophies of life
- provide knowledge of, ethical and philosophical topics
- promote understanding and respect for Christian and humanist values
- promote understanding and respect and the ability to carry out a dialogue between people with different views concerning beliefs and philosophies of life

Knowledge of Christianity, Religions and Life views is an ordinary school subject that shall normally be attended by all pupils. Teaching in the subject should not involve preaching.

Teachers of Knowledge of Christianity, Religions and Life views shall present Christianity, other religions and philosophies of life on the basis of

their distinctive characteristics. Teaching of the different topics shall be founded on the same educational principles.’¹³⁰

The word ‘thorough’ was kept for the first bullet point even after the changes in 2005. This is according to the UD 2005 (p. 26) not to be understood as a qualitative difference, but merely a quantitative difference which is justified by the relatively greater importance of the Christian tradition in Norway. The judgement in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg in 2007 concerned the 1997 law and curriculum. Despite the changes in 2002 and 2005 it was interpreted by the political leadership and central administration that the critique was of such a character that a further adjustment was needed.¹³¹ A central symbolic act was to remove the special mention of Christianity in the name of the subject. After 10 years of KRL¹³², it was now changed to Religion, Life views and Ethics (RLE).¹³³ The emphasis put on Christianity through the use of the words *thorough knowledge* as opposed to just *knowledge* of other religions and life views, was removed.

Already in the 1997 version of the Norwegian law the point that this subject should contribute to knowledge of different religions and life views, respect those holding different views and develop ability to dialogue, was clear. The aims for RE in state schools changed quite dramatically in 1997: from the

¹³⁰ <http://www.lovddata.no/all/tl-19980717-061-002.html#2-4> Accessed 11.12.07.

¹³¹ http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Hoeringsdok/2007/200706054/Hoeringsnotat_om_religion_livssyn_etikk.pdf, accessed 11.12.07, p. 5.

¹³² Although the name was changed in 2002 it was changed in such a way that the abbreviation could be kept, see chapter 1.

¹³³ In 2008 the name change from Knowledge of Christianity, religion and life views (KRL) to Knowledge of Religions, life views and ethics (RLE) was perceived by many teachers and the general opinion as a real shift to a more neutral subject even the content was only modified and not really changed much.

traditional aims of the teaching of Christianity to a multifaith type of RE. The motivation for the change was that school RE should reflect contemporary Norway as a multicultural and multireligious society (see for example NOU 1995: 9, Skeie 1998: 3, 2007: 223, Gravem 2004: 17ff, Lied 2004: 20).

Through the changes since then, the emphasis on the multicultural context has been enhanced. From emphasising Christianity, and especially the Norwegian Lutheran tradition, more in the earlier versions, more equal treatment of different religions and life views is stressed increasingly through these changes in the law. The point that the aim of this subject is to contribute to social cohesion through educating citizens of a plural society about each other's faiths - and even give the ability to have dialogue, has been emphasised and made clearer through the changes.

Laws regulating the right to opt out

In England, according to the Education reform Act 1988 section 9.3, on parents' request a child has the right to be wholly or partly excused from RE. The right to opt out dates back to the first Education Act in Great Britain's history, from 1870 (Copley 1997: 30). Some would argue that it is an anachronism, but no one has yet suggested removing it (Copley 1997: 206-208). It does provide a safeguard against discrimination. This point is also recognised in the *Toledo Guiding Principles* (OSCE 2007: 70, see below).

Further, I find it an important perspective to consider the many types of schools which exist in England. For example, parents could opt for a private

school or a state maintained school with religious character, such as a voluntary aided school.¹³⁴ Changing the right to withdraw would therefore not really be very meaningful within this system. It is a goal that most pupils shall attend RE, and even though there have historically been a few instances of mass withdrawals (Copley 1997: 207), this is not a major problem.

In English community schools, RE is not meant to contribute to any generic formation, not meant to give *all* pupils a common frame of reference in the same manner as in Norway. Even so, it is a goal that as many as possible participate and also that RE should contribute to Citizenship Education (Jackson 2003). The aim of promoting respect and tolerance then refers to those (in practice their parents) who chose to participate. In an English context the point that it should be the same for all is less important than the protecting the individuals rights. This must be considered in the context of the English educational system being evolutionary, where every development builds on a historically evolving system. Prior to 1988 the right to opt out tacitly regarded what was then called Religious Instruction (RI) as having a Protestant emphasis, that was likely to be objected to by Catholics and Jews, for instance. After 1988 community schools (fully state funded schools) got Religious Education (RE) with no nurturing goals, but the same right to withdraw was maintained. Its deep roots in the system seem to have

¹³⁴ The four main types of state schools are: Community schools, Voluntary Controlled schools, Voluntary Aided Schools and Foundation schools and in addition a number of independent schools, see <http://www.inca.org.uk/england-system-mainstream.html> The support of schools with a religious character within the state system is disputed in England, see for example Jackson (2004: 39-57).

given the opt out right a 'taken-for-granted-ness': which is interesting in this comparative context, since the opposite seems to be the case in Norway:

In Norway it is not possible to be excused (exempted) from the content of the teaching, i.e. from learning any of the content. The main argument is that school RE since 1997 formally is an ordinary school subject where the content of the teaching is knowledge about religion. One can however still be partly excused from the subject, from *activities* that a pupil or her parents, on the basis of their own religion or philosophy of life, perceive as being practice of another religion, or adherence to another philosophy of life. This may apply to activities either inside or outside the classroom (see for example Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet (KUF) 1998).

The State of Norway was sued by a group of parents with the demand to be granted full right to be exempted from KRL. The State of Norway was found not guilty in all levels of the Norwegian legal system, including a judgement in the Norwegian High Court (Norges Høyesterett 2001)¹³⁵. The parent group went on to appeal to the UN Human Rights Committee and the Human Rights Court in Strasbourg. On the 3rd November 2004 the UN Human Rights Committee gave a judgement that KRL was in violation the UN convention on Civil and Political Rights, Article 18.¹³⁶ This concerns parents'

¹³⁵ Norges Høyesterett 2001: Dom 22. august 2001 I sak nr. 2000/1533, sivil sak, anke, Humanetisk Forbund m.fl. mot Staten v/ Kirke-, utdannings og forskningsdepartementet. (Norwegian High Court 2001: Sentence 22nd August 2001 in case nr. 2000/1533, civil case, appeal, the Humanist Organisation and others versus the State by the Department for Church, education and research.

¹³⁶ <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-II/ufd/233191/251920/Human-Rights-Committee-Communication-No-11552003.html?id=422478> (Accessed 27.01.09).

rights to provide for their children's religious and moral upbringing. This committee then goes on to say that it would not be in violation with this convention had the teaching been done in a neutral and objective way, as intended in the law (Høstmælingen 2005).

However the committee claims that even in theory the right of exemption from certain parts of the subject lays an unreasonable burden on parents in terms of knowing what part of the teaching to ask their children to be exempted from. They also said they found the reference to the school law preamble 'formålsparagrafen', Section 1-2, which makes Christian nurture the central object of schooling, as problematic (see appendix 2). In practice the committee found the subject's educational and proselytizing parts were so intertwined that the arrangements for exemption were unpractical (Høstmælingen 2005). Interestingly it is not the curriculum itself which is explicitly criticized, but the practice of the subject, its association with the Christian object clause and the limited right to opt out. Still, the most immediate means to correct the situation was to launch a new curriculum for the subject.

Following this judgement, for a few months in spring/ summer in 2005 there was a general right to opt out, but when the UD 2005 was launched ahead of its schedule as a response to the judgement by the UN Human Rights Committee, the general right to opt out was withdrawn and a limited right to withdrawal reinserted (UD 2005: 52). In UD 2005 it is underlined even more

strongly that it is just another school subject, that no preaching is allowed, that it should be learning *about* religion, that schools should seek to avoid methods and activities in teaching that could be perceived by some as practising religion and that all teaching should be conducted in close cooperation with families. A reference to the preamble in the subject syllabus for KRL was removed, but it still applied to KRL in the same manner as it did to all subjects.

The section concerning the right to limited exemption was made into a separate section of the law, Section 2-3a. The right to be excused from activities that may be perceived as religious now formally concerns schools activities in general, and not activities in RE per se.

Religion in laws regarding schooling in general

In England, in the Education Reform Act 1988, under the heading 'Religious education', there are two elements: the first is Collective Worship, section 6.1 ff., and the second is Religious Education, according to Local Agreed Syllabuses (see above). Again this follows historical precedent. In the 1944 Education Act RE consisted of Religious Instruction (RI) and collective worship. The term RE became used from the late 60s to refer to the subject only, and came to mean teaching about, and perhaps also learning from, religions, but this was not a legal usage. 1988 was the first time RE had been used in law more or less as it had been used in the profession.

Collective Worship was now seen as a separate thing, but it was not removed despite a strong debate (Hull 1989: 15ff).

The part about Collective Worship states that any school is obliged to hold a daily act of worship, described as *collective* worship, that according to section 7.1 'shall be wholly or mainly of a broadly Christian character'. In section 7.2 it is explained that this is of 'a broadly Christian character (...) if it reflects the broad traditions of Christian belief without being distinctive of any particular Christian denomination'. Hull (1989) has demonstrated how problematic it would be to know how to do this with enough sensibility of pupils' different backgrounds in a multifaith school and society. It is in a sense an attempt to maintain a generalised non denominational Christianity which can only be found in school, a school religion which has the characteristics of civil religion (Bellah 1970, Bellah & Hammond 1980, Davie 1994, 2007, see below). The right to opt out relates to both worship and education, meaning you can opt out of one, but go to the other.

In Norway section 1-2 of the Norwegian Education Act, is the school law preamble, called 'formålsparagrafen': ('Christian object/purpose clause'). Until 2008 it stated the following about the object/ purpose of school education (as such):

The object of primary and lower secondary education shall be, in agreement and cooperation with the home, to help to give pupils a

Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society.

(See appendix 2 for the full text.)

This concerns education in Norway in general, and not RE particularly. Prior to the changes made in 2005 there was a specific reference to this section both in § 2-4 concerning KRL and in the KRL curriculum. This reference was taken out in order to answer to the statement from the UN's Human Rights Committee. I cannot see that this is a very significant change since it still does concern KRL (see also Høstmælingen 2005: 245). It is especially the formulation 'to help give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing' which is controversial in relation to a school which is now multicultural, and in relation the question whether KRL can be called an inclusive school subject. The explanation given in the UD 2005, (p. 26) is that this must be seen in relation to the first part of the sentence: 'in agreement and cooperation with the home'. If the home does not give the school the mandate, the school shall not give the pupil a Christian upbringing. This interpretation was emphasised in the sentence in Norwegian High Court which ruled that the KRL was not in violation with the Human Rights (Gravem 2004: 220, Norges Høyesterett (Norwegian High Court) 2001: 22-24).

This school law preamble was considered by many an anachronism, out of touch with the general development in Norwegian education and the new KRL subject especially. The conservative Bondevik government (2002-2006)

was unwilling to touch it, but the labour/ socialist Stoltenberg government (2006 – 2009) initiated a change. The 'Bolstadutvalget' (Bolstad committee) reviewed the preamble of the school law and suggests it should be changed. Their suggestion was printed in NOU 2007: 6 Formål for framtida: Formål for barnehagen og opplæringen: Purpose/ object for the future: purpose/ object of kindergarten and education (see the full text of their suggestion in appendix 2). In passing the parliament the wording was changed in the direction of emphasising the cultural heritage more and keeping the traditional emphasis on the rights of parents. The emphasis in the suggestion from the Bolstad working party on the new plurality of society might be seen as somewhat weakened in the version that was finally passed in parliament. Still, it was a significant change from the former preamble (See the text as it was passed in the parliament in appendix 2).

Up until 2008, however, formally the overall purpose of education in Norway was to assist parents in giving their children a Christian and moral upbringing given the restriction of the emphasis on the rights of parents to decide otherwise. Due to this school law preamble, the connection between state religion and state school has been quite explicit in Norway. The ordinary school subject KRL was bound by this in the same manner as other subjects, but it is difficult to imagine that this should not affect this particular subject more than for instance mathematics or Norwegian language. Also the quantitative difference that 55% of the time is to be linked to Christianity, according to UD 2005, underlined the link between school and the traditional (civil) religion of the country.

Comparative discussion on legal issues

In both countries the right to receive religious education is determined by law. The basic principles for religious education in state schools are enshrined in the law and the law decides that religious education should reflect both Christianity and other religions. The Norwegian law is more detailed than the English regarding the content of the teaching. The English law gives LEAs/LAs the obligation to produce Locally Agreed Syllabuses, while the Norwegian law refers to a central National Curriculum. The Norwegian law stresses the importance of the European humanist tradition, while there is no reference to this in the English law.

The way RE is treated in the laws reflects the history of Church and state in both countries, as well as traditional cultural differences between Norway and England, differences in the makeup of the civil religion, in the legal systems and in the school systems. In England the law on this topic has remained relatively stable. Even if there has been a huge amount of educational legislation since 1988, from both conservative and labour governments, (see for example Jackson 2004a: 39 ff., Copley 1997: 153ff) the English law *specifically on RE* has not changed since 1988¹³⁷. However the system is flexible and systematic reviewing of curricula is a part of the system and regulated in the law, Section 14.3a. The details of the content of

¹³⁷Except what specifically regards on voluntary aided schools, where the 1996 Act made it possible to have a wider range of such schools see Jackson 2004a: 39ff

the teaching are to a great extent decided locally with the locally agreed syllabuses.

In contrast, in Norway, the law has been changed frequently, and the content of RE syllabuses has to a great extent been decided nationally, even if the UD 2005 represents a shift towards emphasising local adjustment of the National Curricula. The Norwegian law was changed in 1997, 2002, 2005 and 2008. The basic principles are however the same as in 1997, although the law has been adjusted to make sure it is not in violation of Human Rights conventions. This has moved the aims of RE in Norwegian legislation in the direction of emphasising its contribution to intercultural education more. Traditional aims of education into the Christian religion were removed from the law in 1969 and in 1997 teaching about other religions in addition to Christianity were dramatically strengthened. Nevertheless, developments since 1997 reflect a recurring need for strengthening the point that RE in state schools is not about proselytising. It could appear that this has still not been removed from the way RE is perceived, or perhaps practised (see chapters 3, 6 and 7). In England developments in the subject cannot be traced in changes in the law in a similar way. Changes like the ones traceable in the Norwegian law must be sought in non-statutory advice, such as that contained in the Model Syllabuses (SCAA 1994) and the Non-Statutory National Framework (QCA 2004), and in developments in interpretations of the law in Local Agreed Syllabuses (which are statutory documents).

While, on the Norwegian scene, the changes reflect a conflict that has been ongoing both in the Norwegian jurisdiction and in international juridical institutions, there is less juridical conflict on the English side.¹³⁸ In a comparative perspective this might at first glance seem odd since the English law introducing a more religiously pluralistic form of RE dates back to 1988 (although Christianity is the only religion to be mentioned by name). This can be explained historically and in relation to the English educational systems evolution, and the 1988 Act builds very clearly on the 1944 Act (Jackson 2004a: 39ff). Until 1988 no specific religion was mentioned in law, it largely being understood that Christianity was the one, but in 1988 it had become necessary to specify in some more detail which religions RE was regarding. Religions other than Christianity were first actually named in the non-statutory model syllabuses of 1994. However, in comparing actual documents it can be noted that the wording of the current English law is more similar to the 1997 Norwegian § 2-4 rather than later Norwegian legislation. In both cases Christianity is mentioned specially and the other religions remain unspecified as 'others'.

As a reason for the difference in conflict level I see, firstly, the difference in the right to withdraw. In England such a right exists and has existed since the first education act in 1870 (Jackson 2004a: 39), while in Norway up till 1889 and again since 1997 there has been no such right (see for example Haraldsø 1989, Østberg 1998a: 26, Sandvik 1996: 39). The right partly to be exempted from certain activities, not the content of learning, now concerns

¹³⁸ There was a legal case in connection to the Birmingham 1975 syllabus, but it never went to any international legal instances.

schools activities in general, and not just RE. This point was made clear already in a circular in 1998 (KUF) 1998), and clearer when the rules of exemption was made into a separate paragraph¹³⁹ and was no longer a part of the law regulating RE. One might say therefore that, in Norway, receiving RE is both a right and an obligation, while in England it is more just a right. In England there has been less government attention to this problem, despite the fact that there were organised withdrawals of Muslim children in some Northern towns, for example in Kirklees in the area of Yorkshire in Northern England and in Birmingham (see Hull 1998), while in the Norwegian context there has been and still is a lot of 'noise' and strong uneasiness from some parties regarding the lack of the right to withdraw. Still here too there are actually only a small number of complaints.

In the Toledo Guiding Principles (OSCE 2007: 68-75) there are references to the case of *Folgerø vs. Norway* in the European court of Human Rights and a similar case concerning Turkish RE, *Zenging vs. Turkey*. In the Toledo Guiding Principles it is underlined that the right to withdraw must be realizable in practise. They also stress the importance of the teaching being done in a neutral and objective way not to violate Human Rights, but remark that, in a strict sense, no teaching in any subject can be absolutely neutral. Even if it could be argued that the opt out right ideally should be abandoned, in practice it is important to keep it as a safety valve against violations of Human Rights.

¹³⁹Lov om grunnskolen og den videregående opplæringa § 2-3a *Fritak frå aktivitetar i opplæringa*. http://www.lovdata.no/cgi-wift/wiftldles?doc=/usr/www/lovdata/all/tl-19980717-061-002.html&emne=lov*%20om*%20grunnskol*&& (Accessed 12.02.09).

Historical religious conflicts have forced England to have liberal legislation on this point. The Church of England is the *established* church, but other Christian traditions, such as Catholicism and the non-conformist churches, especially Methodism, have strong traditions in the country. England has in a sense traditionally been religiously plural, and religious education in schools has reflected this. Even when it was Christian Instruction it was non-denominational, at least in theory, although it was perhaps a 'protestant' non-denominational RE reflecting an English type of civil religion (Bellah 1970, 1980, Davie 1994, 2007).¹⁴⁰

In Norway there is a closer link between state and church. The Church of Norway is still a state church. This tradition has been very dominant since the Reformation. Only from 1845 did the law allow other *Christian* faiths in the kingdom, and eventually religious freedom developed (Haraldsø 1989, Sandvik 1996). However it is still the case that no other religions or denominations have a *strong* tradition in the country. In Norway religious freedom has in part come about through a fight by some to be non-religious, hence the emphasis on the humanist tradition (Østberg 1998a: 26). Davie (1994, 2007: 197) characterises civil religion in Britain as believing without

¹⁴⁰The concept *civil religion* originates with Rousseau, but is developed by the American sociologist R. Bellah (for example 1970, 1980) to help understand the role of religion in American public life. Bellah is also influenced by Durkheim and Parsons and his concern is describing the non-institutional dimensions of religiosity (Davie 2007: 42, Davie 1994: 74). The concept 'civil religion' refer to features that binds for example Americans together, while at the same time hold back from giving explicit privileges to a single church denomination, which would be against the American constitution. Davie (1994) distinguishes between features of civil religion originating explicitly from religion, and other features, such as the role of the Monarchy in Britain. Predominant among these features are however allusions to a shared Judeo-Christian heritage, emphasising commonalities rather than difference (Davie 2007: 154).

belonging while religion in the Nordic countries as belonging without believing (Davie 2007: 141). In other words, historic contextual circumstances relating to the national dimension on Dale's (2006) scale makes for different characteristics of civil religion (see chapter 2).

Secondly, as a reason for more juridical conflict in Norway compared to England, I think the Norwegian history of there being two subjects is important. This relates to the above mentioned nationally specific historic circumstances of Norway, and lacks a parallel on the English side. Prior to 1997, as an alternative to Christian Knowledge, one could opt for 'Knowledge of worldviews' (Østberg 1998a: 26). This alternative subject was initiated and developed by the Norwegian Humanist Association (HEF) and resulted from a long battle for freedom of (or from) religion in Norway (see for example Sandvik 1996). I think the sense of losing this subject might be a factor which helps to explain this conflict. Although it might seem fair to say that both the Christians and the secular Humanists lost their subject in favour of a common subject in 1997 (see chapter 3), the Norwegian Humanist Association has persistently claimed that the KRL subject is discriminatory (see for example Hylland Eriksen 1996). After losing legal cases at all levels of the Norwegian system, two international legal institutions supported their claims. Despite the intention that KRL is meant to be an inclusive subject for different religious and non-religious people, the dominant role of Christianity is perceived as problematic.¹⁴¹

¹⁴¹ KRL/ RLE is still not perceived, by the humanists, for example, as being sufficiently neutral for all to accept despite changes in the law and in the curriculum intended to achieve this.

Thirdly, as a reason for less legal conflict in England compared to Norway, I see the presence of schools with a religious character within the state system in England (for example voluntary aided schools)¹⁴² and in the independent sector. In my view, this makes the non confessional RE in English state schools easier to accept. One could always opt for a state or private school according to one's own religious preferences. This works in the case of Catholic education, but there is often much competition for places at Church of England schools, which operate usually as 'neighbourhood schools' and, of course, many parents cannot afford independent education. On the Norwegian side no state schools have a religious character, private schools are mainly established based on religious grounds, but are so rare (only about 2% of school children Skeie 2007: 224). Because of this RE in the state schools in Norway could be seen really to mean to include *all*. Not granting a general opt out right, the Norwegian system therefore lacks the safety valve that the Toledo Guiding Principles recommend (OSCE 2007: 70) while in England retaining the opt out right does act as a safety valve.

The English tradition of collective worship and the Norwegian school law preamble 'Christian object/ purpose clause' are both elements that establish a link between the state school and the traditional religion of the country, or the nation specific civil religion, which in both cases are dominated by a

¹⁴² Still however religious schools within the state system are a hot topic in England. There is now a pressure group 'Accord' against state funded religious schools, which includes a lot of religious people and humanists: the driving force is the education officer of the British Humanist Association (<http://www.humanism.org.uk/news/view/120>)

nation-specific brand of Christianity, expressed partly through the relationships between state and church. Both are generally seen as distinct from RE, but in both cases it could be argued that there is a connection. In the English case the connection can be traced through the various Education Acts, and in Norway it was in KRL that the topic Christianity is taught explicitly. In addition to Christianity being the main object of teaching in the RE classes both in England and Norway, these parts of the law raise the question as to whether English and Norwegian state schools can be seen as belonging to either religious or secular spheres.

Habermas (2006) challenged the simple distinction between secular and religious spheres: As opposed to the formal public/ political sphere, the informal public/ political sphere is seen as an appropriate setting for communication between religious and non-religious people. The public school is considered such an informal public/ political sphere, and this makes school a category transcending the clear distinction between secular and religious, and consequently it can be seen as place for dialogue between religious and non-religious people (see also Jackson 2008a).

Both in English RE and Norwegian RE there are some tensions between – on the one hand - traditional religion or religion as cultural heritage (Jackson 2004a), or traditional religion as part of the *national imaginary* (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004), or civil religion (Bellah 1970, 1980, Davie 1994, 2007) or generalised values (Bø 2006: 116)¹⁴³ and - on the other hand - the plurality

¹⁴³ Refers to Parsons (see chapter 4).

of society that the multifaith RE subject also is meant to reflect (Skeie 1998, Jackson 2004a, Skeie 2006b). In both English and Norwegian RE there is a clear difference between Christian traditions and the sometimes unspecified 'other' religions and life views. We have seen this both in the academic discourse (see chapter 3) and in some policy documents. There is a danger that those who belong to 'other' religions or have no religious beliefs are somehow 'others' which is not helpful for integration. The issue of what shared values should be based on is not straightforward in a multicultural society. The development in both countries shows how the *national imaginaries* are negotiated to become more pluralistic: reflecting the actual development. But perhaps these are negotiated on the basis of 'sameness' in light of Norwegian history and the unitary school ideology, while it is negotiated on the basis of 'difference' in light of English history and absence of unitary school ideology (see chapter 3, 6).

Introducing QCA 2004 and UD 2005

In addition to comparing legal issues (above) I have in this chapter, covering the institutional level of curriculum, chosen to do an explicit comparison of two documents: In England, in 2004, The Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education was published (QCA 2004), and in Norway, in 2005, *The KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity- religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information* (UD 2005). In this section I will compare these two distinctive and influential documents that appeared respectively in England and in Norway. Both

relate to specific issues, but also can be seen as indicators of more general issues in the debates about RE in the two countries.

In England, in 2004, the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE was published (QCA 2004). This follows in the tradition of the 1994 Model Syllabuses in that it offers advice to Agreed Syllabus Conferences on how they might construct their syllabuses. However, its function is more than this. For some time there has been a debate over whether religious education should be a national curriculum subject in parallel with other school subjects. The 'national framework' has been used by the lobby supporting the idea of a national syllabus, and indeed has been used by teacher trainers and publishers as an indicator of current trends in the subject. It is thus a 'landmark' document to consider. The English law did not change in connection to the non-statutory national framework (see above).

In the Fall of 2004 and at the same time as the new non-statutory national framework for Religious Education was launched in England, a new revision of the Norwegian RE curriculum was being written. Normally all subjects' curricula are renewed simultaneously in connection with a reform. Since 1997 there have been three exemptions to this in relation to RE. Firstly KRL was renewed after evaluation research following the implementation of KRL, and *KRL-boka*¹⁴⁴ Læringscenteret (LS) 2002 reflecting this evaluation

¹⁴⁴ Knowledge of Christianity-, religions- and philosophy of Life: Curriculum for the 10 year long 'grunnskole' (elementary and lower secondary school, see chapter 5): Curriculum guidance, Circulars, Information to parents: Norwegian: Norwegian: KRL- boka: Kristendoms-, religions-, og livssynskunnskap: Læreplanveiledning: Rundskriv: Informasjon til foreldre.)

replaced the KRL curriculum from 1997. Since it came as a separate subject revision, it was published as a separate document. Secondly in 2005, *The KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity- religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information* (UD 2005) was published and implemented as part of the national curriculum: replacing the previous curriculum for KRL from 2002 (LS 2002). This was also published as a separate document.¹⁴⁵

In 2005 the Ministry of Knowledge¹⁴⁶ was preparing a total revision of the entire National Curriculum, meaning new curricula for all school subjects with a new structure compared to earlier National Curricula.¹⁴⁷ The plan was to implement this reform in 2006. When in the Autumn of 2004 a statement was made by the UN's Human Rights Committee that KRL was in violation of article 18, nr. 4 of the convention for civil and political rights (see above)¹⁴⁸, the work towards a new curriculum for KRL reflecting a response to this critique was speeded up. In the spring of 2005 UD 2005 was launched a year ahead of the rest of the reformed curriculum, and hastily implemented already from the autumn of 2005. Having already this new

¹⁴⁵ The third exemption was the revision in 2008, following the verdict in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, when the name was changed to RLE: (see above, see also chapter 1). In this chapter I have chosen to do the comparison based on the UD 2005.

¹⁴⁶ Norwegian: 'Kunnskapsdepartementet': Now named 'Utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet': Ministry of Education and Research (2009).

¹⁴⁷ For the first time in Norway a curriculum document included *5 basic skills* ('grunnleggende ferdigheter') which should be obtained across the curriculum. Central to this reform was a change in Norwegian Educational policy from content based curricula to aims formulated as *competence targets* ('kompetansemål'). The reform, named 'Knowledge Promotion' (Kunnskapsløftet) was meant to meet international challenges to the educational sector. Karlsen (2006: 27) characterises it as being part of a chain of reforms through which the Norwegian Educational system was adjusted to international trends and standards.)

¹⁴⁸ <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-//ufd/233191/251920/Human-Rights-Committee-Communication-No-11552003.html?id=422478> (Accessed 27.01.09).

structure that was to come with the 2006 reform 'Knowledge Promotion', KRL was for one year in the special position of being formally part of the 'old' national curriculum, but having the same structure as the new national curriculum, and could therefore also be seen as part of this. As a part of the Norwegian National Curriculum it was a legally binding document which textbook publishers, educators and teachers refer to regarding what RE in school should be like.

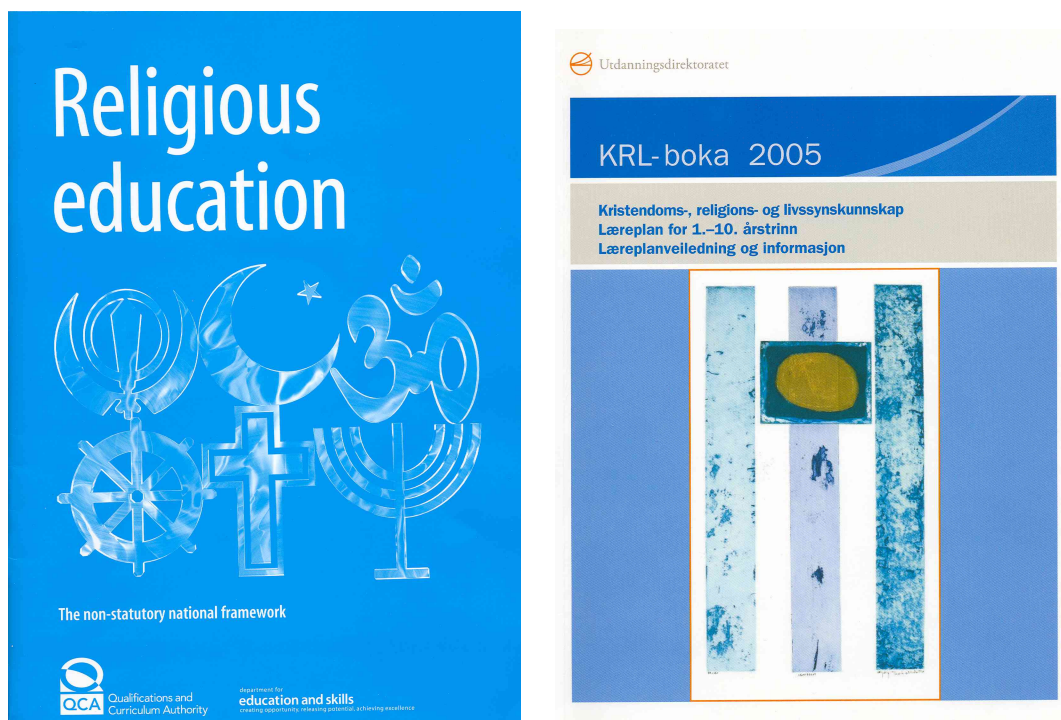


Illustration 1: Front page of The Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education (QCA 2004), and front page of The KRL book 2005: *Knowledge of Christianity- religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information* (UD 2005)

QCA 2004

The official title of the English document is 'Religious Education: The Non-Statutory National Framework.' The name of the Government department responsible was the 'Department for Education and Skills'.¹⁴⁹ The slogan of the department is printed on the cover: 'creating opportunity, releasing potential, achieving excellence'. The religions Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism are represented on the cover by their symbols. These are traditionally the religions which are included in the English context.¹⁵⁰ The publication has 50 pages, and the layout is in sky-blue (azure) and white.

Pages 6-7 are illustrative pages held in an opposite layout with white print on blue pages. They illustrate in an ideal way the intentions of RE according to this document. On top of page 6 there is a picture of pupils spelling the word 'peace' with their bodies. On page 7 there are two pictures, one of a group of ethnically diverse looking pupils and the other of a jigsaw of seven pieces, one for each of the six religions with each their symbols on, and a centrepiece with the text 'harmony linking all separate religions'. On these

¹⁴⁹ This has now been changed to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

¹⁵⁰ The same religions were mentioned in the 1994 Model Syllabuses and arguably correspond to the main religions represented in Britain (although Zoroastrians/Parsis and Bahais might disagree). W. Owen Cole wrote an influential RE text called *Six Religions in the Twentieth Century* (Cole 1985) which referred to the same six religions (Christianity plus – in alphabetical order – Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Sikhism). This text may well have influenced the general perception as to which 'world religions' were the 'other principal religions represented in Britain' in addition to Christianity referred to, but not named, in the 1988 Education Reform Act.

pages are also seven quotes from students showing in an exemplary way how RE ideally should work. For example Frances, aged 15, says:

In my RE lessons I have learned to become more broad minded, to accept other people's beliefs and faiths and to not let race or religion come in the way of what you see in an individual. What I like about my RE lessons is that my opinion is heard and I can find out what my fellow students' opinions are.

On the top of page 7 is a small text under the heading: 'The importance of religious education'. The main points here are that RE should provoke challenging questions about the ultimate meaning and purpose of life, issues of right and wrong, develop knowledge and understanding of Christianity and other religious traditions, challenges pupils to learn from the religions, and explore their own beliefs and questions of meaning, to develop their sense of identity and belonging, and develop respect for others and enable pupils to combat prejudice.

A relatively extensive section is called 'About Religious Education in the curriculum', (p. 8-18). This includes a number of structural elements which in effect also gives some information about the content of the subject. The main headings are:

- The contribution of religious education' (p. 8): to support the values of the curriculum; truth, justice, respect for all and care for the

environment, to support the aims of the curriculum like for instance to contribute to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

- ‘The structure of the national framework for religious education’ (p. 10): That it has the same structure as the standards for subjects in the National Curriculum, but has a different juridical status.
- ‘Attitudes in religious education’ (p. 13): for instance aims to encourage students to develop positive attitudes towards learning, and towards other people’s beliefs and values.
- ‘Learning across the curriculum: the contribution of religious education’ (p. 14): addresses how RE should contribute to a number of general goals that exist in the National Curriculum, for instance to contribute to the development of certain ‘key skills’.
- ‘Religious education and general teaching requirements’ (p. 17): a set of general teaching requirements are specified with respect to RE.

‘The non-statutory national framework for religious education’ (pp. 19 – 32) is the main part of the document. The structure as described in the previous part is here filled with content, but it is not very detailed. The content is described in terms of learning targets for each key stage 1-3, and also for the foundation stage (which is the stage of preschool) and ages 14 – 19 (the 16-19 part of which follows compulsory schooling). A separate section on ‘Attainment targets for religious education’ (p. 33-37) specifies what these should be for religious education. The last part is the ‘Appendix: General teaching requirements’ (pp. 38-50) which is attached to all national curricular

subjects. It is specified in the main part of this document how these are adapted in RE.

UD 2005

The title of the Norwegian document is 'The KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity- religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information.'¹⁵¹ The name of the department responsible is the Ministry of Education and Research¹⁵². The cover is illustrated by a lithograph by the artist Bjørg Torhallsdottir called 'the golden egg'. It is an abstract picture so one cannot immediately see what it represents. The publication has 96 pages and the layout is in grey-blue and white.

There is a 'Foreword' explaining the relationship to 'The Knowledge Promotion 2006' and why the RE curriculum is published a year ahead (p. 5 - 6). 'The Curriculum for Knowledge of Christianity-, Religions- and Philosophies of life for 1st – 10th grade' (p. 9 – 19) is the main part. It has the new structure for curricula that was to be implemented through 'The Knowledge Promotion 2006' where content of teaching is described in terms of competence targets (kompetansemål) (these have some similarities with attainment targets in the QCA National Framework, but are not identical)

¹⁵¹ In original Norwegian language: 'KRL-boka 2005. Kristendoms-, religions- og livssynskunnskap, Læreplan for 1. – 10. årstrinn: Læreplanveiledning og informasjon.' In an English version of the Norwegian Education Act it is translated "Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education, but I find that this translation have a different meaning than the much discussed Norwegian name for the subject.

¹⁵² This was changed to the Ministry of knowledge (Kunnskapsdepartementet) in 2006.

and basic skills (comparable but not identical to key skills in the QCA National Framework). The content is described in terms of competence targets after 3rd grade, 7th grade and 10th grade, which compares to the notion of 'key stages' in QCA 2004. UD 2006 is less detailed about content than previous Norwegian national curricula, and this also goes for the RE curriculum.

The main headings are:

- 'The purpose of the subject' (p. 9): to contribute to generic formation, to the reproduction of common frames of references in the Norwegian society.¹⁵³ It is stressed that the KRL is an ordinary school subject where dialogue and respect for others is central, and that no preaching of religion is allowed.
- 'Main areas of study' (p. 10) and 'Timeframe for the subject' (p. 11) reveals the following main areas and division in terms of percentage: Christianity (55%), other religions and life views (25%) and philosophy and ethics (20%).
- 'Basic skills in the subject' (p. 11) are stated to be: oral expression, to read, to write, to count (numeracy) and to use digital tools (ICT).

¹⁵³Generic formation (my translation/ interpretation) refers to the word 'allmenndanning', which is a central educational topic in Norway. The first part 'allmenn' refers to the general public, 'commoners' maybe, meaning 'for all'. The second part 'danning', may be known to some Englishmen as the German 'bildung': translated here to 'formation' meaning 'cultured' or maybe civilized, or simply 'educated'. Alberts (2007: 56-57) suggests that 'Bildung' includes the acquisition of cultural knowledge as a basis of a further development of ones own personality' and that the German concepts of bildung and Erziehung 'are meaningfully integrated in the English concepts "Education"'. Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) use the concept civil enculturation which also seem overlapping in meaning to 'bildung' or generic formation: see chapter 2. There is presently an extensive debate about 'danning' in Norway, and a study group on the issue has been formed at the Faculty of Education in the University of Oslo.

These are the same for all subjects and it is specified what it means to train these skills through KRL.

- 'Competence targets' (p. 13) are formulated aims for each stage that decides the content of the subject within the defined main areas of study.
- 'Assessment' (p. 19) refers to the final mark students will get at the end of year 10 and that they may in addition get an oral exam.¹⁵⁴

A quite extensive part called 'Curricula guidance' (p. 21-42) is *about* the subject curricula, about problems and dilemmas for teacher education and development of competence. It contains elements like recommendations for methodology and progression. Much of what is found here I recognize as elements that were a part of the curriculum itself in earlier versions (KUF 1996, LS 2002). Local development of syllabuses based on the National Curriculum is emphasized more than before. This is said to be one of the major changes with this reform. The guidance to the curriculum is however quite detailed, and gives the impression of being a sort of textbook on the curriculum. The main headlines are 'Introduction' (p. 23), 'About the Competence Reform' (p. 24), 'The Education Act' (p. 26), 'About the curriculum for KRL' (p. 28), 'The curriculum at work' (p. 32).

A separate section on 'KRL's history and current documents' (p.45 – 54) contains two circulars (F-02-05 and F-08-05) concerning the statement in

¹⁵⁴ This follows the general system for assessment/ qualification in Norway. This is one area in which there is a major difference in the general schools systems in England and Norway (see chapter 5).

the UN Human Rights Committee about KRL.¹⁵⁵ There is no additional subject history apart from what appears from these documents. The last part is 'Information about KRL to guardians (parents etc.) in 20 languages' (p. 55-96). This section is meant to be of help for schools in their role of informing parents and others that KRL is not religious instruction but education about religion, considered to be an ordinary school subject.

Comparative remarks regarding layout and structure¹⁵⁶

One immediate difference is that there appears to be six world religions in England and five in Norway, where Sikhism is not included, being much more of a minority religion in Norway. However, the Norwegian curriculum includes Humanism on the same terms as the religions. The simple explanations are that there are more Sikhs in England and a stronger secular humanist organisation, with a different and special history in Norway, combined with the fact that humanism, by legal precedent, is not regarded as a religion in English law.¹⁵⁷ The two documents are printed in different shades of blue. Both documents were published as separate documents, the Norwegian because it was published a year early in relation the total reform of which it is a part, and the English since RE is a 'compulsory' subject, but is not part of the national curriculum – hence the perceived need for a non-statutory framework.

¹⁵⁵ <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-//ufd/233191/251920/Human-Rights-Committee-Communication-No-11552003.html?id=422478> (Accessed 27.01.09).

¹⁵⁶ I do not know if the once responsible for the layouts have had any contact with those responsible for the content of the documents, but I am here comparing the finished documents.

¹⁵⁷ QCA 2004 represents a shift to being more inclusive of non-religious beliefs in English RE.

The English document has a very clear easily recognisable symbolism on its cover while the Norwegian authorities have chosen an artistic expression where symbolism is more esoteric. The English document includes pictures and quotes from pupils in its introductory paragraphs, which have no parallels in the Norwegian document. The QCA 2004 includes *attainment targets* for RE, in line with curriculum documents in other subjects in England since 1988, and the UD 2005 includes *competence targets*, a new policy in Norway introduced with the 2006 reform. In QCA 2004 certain *key skills* which are meant to be acquired through all school subject are exemplified with regard to RE. In UD 2005 certain *basic skills* which are meant to be obtained through all subjects are exemplified with regard to RE. The nuances in meanings between *attainment targets* and *key skills* (England) and *competence targets* and *basic skills* (Norway) may well be a language question, and in a translation one might have chosen the existing English terms. However, as this is comparative work, I consider it important to maintain the precise differences in terminology used in the two countries.

Both documents include comments on recommended methods of teaching in additions to the actual curricula documents. They have the same length, ca. 50 pages, since pp 55-96 of the Norwegian document consists of translations of information about KRL in 20 languages.

The place in the school curricula

In comparative work one of the fundamental problems relates to translating terms and concepts (see chapter 2). It might be appropriate here to comment on the relationship between the concepts syllabus, curriculum and framework. I have Goodlad's theory¹⁵⁸ of curriculum as the basis of my understanding of 'curriculum', but these concepts have a pattern of practical use in the languages which might cause misunderstandings. In England the concepts curriculum, syllabus and framework are used with sometimes overlapping meanings. The *curriculum* may mean the general activity of the school, a particular course of study or all courses of study. The concept *syllabus* means a concise description of a course of study. A framework is a suggested structure to support a subject, used especially in relation to RE because of the diverging status in relation to the National Curriculum. In Norwegian the concept *nasjonal læreplan* refers to centrally decided programmes of study for all subjects, correlating to the English *national curriculum*. The subject syllabuses are for instance called the '*læreplan for KRL*', which here will be translated as *the RE curriculum*.

RE in England has a special status as statutory but outside the National Curriculum. RE is a part of the Basic Curriculum. The Basic Curriculum refers to all school subjects. The basic curriculum consists of the National Curriculum and RE. This means that pupils who attend state schools (maintained) have an entitlement to RE. Reasons given for this right are their need to understand religion in order to understand the contemporary

¹⁵⁸ Or a version of it: as his theories develops it would perhaps be better described as theories (Goodlad *et al.* 1979).

society, and also that it should contribute to their personal development (QCA 2005: 5). When it comes to RE the syllabuses these are designed by a local committee. Schools design the specific curriculum on the basis of the agreed syllabus. This structural placement does give the signal that RE is different from other subjects; it is a subject with a special status in the formal structure (and perhaps also in people's minds).

This Non-Statutory National Framework for RE (QCA 2004) reflects a wished for national standard for RE that QCA recommends local authorities to follow. The document seems (to many) to be pushing opinion towards having a national syllabus. At the same time it is still underlined that the local curricula should reflect the needs of local communities (QCA 2004: 3). QCA 2004 is in other words one of several central advices and obligations that the LEAs have to relate to in order to produce locally agreed syllabuses. The most important obligations are found in the law.

Norwegian RE is a central, integrated and integrative part of the Norwegian National Curriculum. The 2006 National Curriculum (UD 2006) is the first in Norwegian history where the RE curriculum does not appear as the first subject in the document. It is underlined in the Norwegian law and in several places in UD 2005 that KRL is an *ordinary* school subject where no form of preaching is to take place. It is a subject where pupils should learn *about* religions and life views. The aim of it is to learn *about* religions, and through dialogue and other means, to learn to respect different religions and values

and Human Rights values. The three main reasons given for having RE are (UD 2005: 5):

- the importance of Christianity in Norwegian and European tradition (Christianity as part of our cultural heritage)
- the humanist tradition's importance in Norwegian and European tradition and
- the importance of the plurality of religions and life views that characterises today's Norwegian society

Further it is a stated aim for the subject that it should contribute to generic formation ('bildung')¹⁵⁹ and to pupils' personal development, and also give some common points of reference in a culture characterised by respect and insight into each other's particularities regarding religion and life views.

Comparative points

In both countries state schools are obliged to offer RE which includes Christianity and other religions. In the case of Norway, secular life views also have to be covered. This is not a legal requirement in England, but happens increasingly, especially in secondary schools. In England RE has a special status as statutory (as part of the 'Basic Curriculum') but outside the National Curriculum, while in Norway it is integrated in the National Curriculum, and it is emphasised that it is just another school subject. The

¹⁵⁹ Generic formation (my translation/ interpretation) refers to the word 'allmenndanning', see above.

need for this to be underlined may however indicate that it is not quite just another subject. The special status of RE in the English school system also makes it something other than just another subject.

The special histories of relations between school and religion, the fact that laws about general schooling make reference to traditional religion (Christianity), the special structural arrangements in England for producing RE syllabuses locally, the sometimes heated public debates about religion and schools, and the degree to which questions regarding RE in school are politicized can all be taken to indicate that RE in both countries are not quite ordinary subjects. In Norwegian RE there is a closer relationship between the political level and the institutional curriculum than in other subjects (Skeie 2004: 323). In these respects there are similarity between religious education in England and Norway. An important difference between UD 2005 and QCA 2004 is that the QCA 2004 is just a standard which authorities *recommend*. It is not meant to be a common frame of reference for all pupils, like the Norwegian UD 2005. However, the law and non-statutory advice in England, taken together, make it clear that it is among the aims for RE that it should contribute to general educational aims and support the schools values.

Both QCA 2004 and KD 2005 reflect central guidance and obligations on the one hand and emphasises on local curricular work on the other. Since QCA 2004 represents centralising tendencies in RE in England and UD 2005

represents decentralising tendencies in Norway, RE in England and Norway actually moved towards each other in this respect with these two documents. Nevertheless, local activity in England is much more extensive than in Norway since it includes producing the syllabuses locally and also because the practice of making the Local Agreed Syllabuses is long established (see chapter 6).

Structure and content of RE in England and Norway exemplified through QCA 2004 and UD 2005

In England for key stages 1, 2 and 3 (ages 5–14) the national framework (QCA 2004) has the same structure as subjects in the national curriculum. All subjects have different attainment targets in relation to what 'knowledge skills and understanding' pupils should aim at (QCA 2004: 26). In RE there are two attainment targets, relating to learning about religion and learning from religion. These terms originate in Michael Grimmitt's work (1987, 2000),¹⁶⁰ although the idea that RE should be both about knowledge and personal development has a longer history. However, 'learning about' and 'learning from religion(s)' has come to mean something different from the meaning intended by Grimmitt (Grimmitt 2000).

According to QCA 2004 (p. 11), in the section on RE in the curriculum:

¹⁶⁰ According to Grimmitt (2000: 15) the original concept of learning also from religion involved a pedagogical strategy in which pupils should evaluate their understanding of religion in personal terms and evaluate the understanding of self in religious terms. This is not unlike Jackson's (1997: 6, 47, 130 - 134) concept of edification

Learning *about* religion includes enquiry into, and investigation of, the nature of religion, its beliefs, teachings and ways of life, sources, practices and forms of expression. It includes the skills of interpretation, analysis and explanation. Pupils learn to communicate their knowledge and understanding using specialist vocabulary. It also includes identifying and developing an understanding of ultimate questions and ethical issues. In the national framework, learning about religion covers pupils' knowledge and understanding of individual religions and how they relate to each other as well as the study of the nature and characteristics of religion.¹⁶¹

Learning *from* religion is concerned with developing pupils' reflection on and response to their own and others' experiences in the light of their learning about religion. It develops pupils' skills of application, interpretation and evaluation of what they learn about religion. Pupils learn to communicate and develop their own ideas, particularly in relation to questions of identity and belonging, meaning, purpose and truth, and values and commitments.¹⁶²

The choice of the term *religion* (singular) over *religions* (plural) was a conscious one: one reason for this choice was

¹⁶¹ According to QCA (2004: 34) in the part where the attainment targets are described in more detail and in relation to assessment, 'Learning *about* religion includes inquiry into, and investigation of, the nature of religion. It focuses on beliefs, teachings and sources and ways of life and form of expression. It includes skills of interpretation, analysis and explanation. Pupils learn to communicate their knowledge and understanding using specialist vocabulary. It includes identifying and developing an understanding of ultimate questions and ethical issues.'

¹⁶² According to QCA (2004: 34), in the part where the attainment targets are described in more detail and in relation to assessment, 'Learning *from* religion is concerned with developing pupils' reflection on, and response to, their own experiences and learning about religion. It develops pupils' skills of application, interpretation and evaluation of what they learn about religion, particularly questions of identity and belonging, meaning and purpose, truth values and commitments, and communicating their responses.'

...the concern that RE had been the study of separate religions where pupils did not get the opportunity to look across them for similarities and differences, connections and insights and so forth, implying that the study of religions had become too compartmentalised. A second reason was a concern to promote interfaith dialogue, and the wording 'learning about religion' as opposed to 'learning about religions' were seen as more appropriate for that. A third reason was that some felt that the thematic study of religion needed a way back into the syllabus making.¹⁶³

In addition to the part about what '*knowledge, skills and understanding*' students are to get through RE, there are also three elements concerning the '*breadth of study*': '*religions and beliefs*', '*themes*' and '*experiences and opportunity*'. Concerning '*religions and beliefs*' ('religions' here in plural) the main points are that Christianity should be taught at every key stage; the other religions should all have been studied by the end of key stage 3. It is also recommended that other religions than the traditional six and secular philosophies such as humanism are taught 'where appropriate', but this issue is still controversial in England.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ This according to an email from John Keast, who was involved in drafting the QCA 2005, dated October 4th 2008, forwarded to me with permission by Professor R. Jackson.

¹⁶⁴ The inclusion of secular humanism is a new phenomenon in the English context, see above. It had previously had a presence in some Locally Agreed Syllabuses, but their inclusion was controversial (Copley1997). QCA 2004 represents a shift to being more inclusive of non-religious beliefs in English RE. At the moment, strictly speaking, the law excludes them, since the subject is *religious* education, and by legal precedent, humanism in English law is not a religion. Thus, QCA 2004 is pushing the debate in a particular direction. In 2008 an exam board wanted to include humanism as an option for GCSE exams, which is very important for what is actually studied in year 10 (see chapter 5 & 6). Since this would have meant that a pupil could have focused only on humanism, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority turned the request down. The British Humanist Association reacted by taking legal action against the government's examinations agency, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's regulator Ofqual, arguing that this was against the principle of giving non-religious beliefs equal status. (See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/sep/13/gcses.religion> , Accessed 18.02.09)

Further, still under '*religions and beliefs*', it is stated that how religions relate to each other should be studied, including interfaith dialogue which is also a new element. Attention should be paid to similarities and differences both between the religions and within them. RE should also contribute to community cohesion and the combat of prejudice and discrimination. Explicit reference to this is also new. '*Themes*' relates to the obligation of Local Agreed Syllabus conferences to come up with themes for the subject and '*experiences and opportunity*' (see chapter 6) refers to students having an opportunity to have experiences to help their learning, like visits to holy places etc.

Regarding the structure for RE as expressed in QCA 2004, there are also a range of aims relating to learning across the curriculum (QCA 2004: 14 ff):

These are:

1. 'Promoting spiritual, moral, and cultural development'¹⁶⁵
2. 'Promoting citizenship'
3. 'Promoting personal, social and health education' (PSHE)¹⁶⁶
4. 'Key skills'¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ This is related to the overall aims of the curriculum according to The Education Act, section 1.2 (a): 'promote(s) the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils (...)'.
¹⁶⁶ Citizenship and PSHE are subjects which have their own curricula, but are mainly realized through the other subjects and general school activities.
¹⁶⁷ These are generic skills to be obtained through the taught subjects.

In addition to this there is a list of seven other aspects of the curriculum that in a similar way are to be realized through all subjects, including RE. Among them are thinking skills, financial capacity and education for racial equality and community cohesion. The document is in other words very ambitious regarding what should ideally be accomplished through RE.

The English *key skills* are: communication, application of number, information technology, working with others, improving own learning and performance and problem solving (QCA 2004: 15-16). It is specified in the subject syllabus how one can work on these skills in RE. For example the key skills of information technology can be obtained in RE:

(...) through using CD-ROMs and the internet selectively, researching information about religions and beliefs, teaching and practices, using email to analyse information with people of different beliefs and cultures, using spreadsheets and databases to handle the present data relevant to the study of religious education (QCA 2004:16).

In Norway *basic skills* (key skills) as introduced in the reform of 2006 (UD 2006: 39) are oral expression, to read, to write, to count, to use digital tools (ICT). These key skills are to be obtained through the individual subjects. For example to use digital tools is defined for KRL (UD 2005:12):

To be able to use digital tools in KRL is a means to research religions and philosophies of life, to find different presentations and perspectives. An important skill is to use material that is available through digital tools, like pictures, texts, music and film in a way that unites creativity with critical evaluation of sources. Digital media gives new possibilities for communication and dialogue about religion and life views. These media also gives opportunities for broad access to material concerning current ethical questions (UD 2005: 12).

The content of the subject is in UD 2005 described in terms of 'competence targets' (attainment targets) per stage. The stages are 1-4th grade, 5-7th grade, and 8-10th grade.¹⁶⁸ The competence targets are structured according to the three main areas of the subject; which are '*Christianity*', '*Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and life views*'¹⁶⁹ and '*philosophy and ethics*' (UD 2005: 10). The competence targets for *Christianity*, the *other religions*¹⁷⁰ and *life views* and *philosophy and ethics*' follow a pattern. For instance, the aims (targets) in relation to Judaism for 4th graders are formulated in three bullet points, the first referring to storytelling, the second to having conversations about certain topics such as prayer, and the third regarding Jewish art and aesthetics. The same kinds of aims, relating to storytelling, conversations about certain topics like prayer, art and aesthetics are specified in a similar way for the other religions as well. The pattern is the same regarding

¹⁶⁸ This is new for the UD 2005 and follows the structure of the rest of the 2006 national curriculum.

¹⁶⁹ This part used to in previous curricula (1997, 2002) go under the headline '*other religions*' but is here specified like this. In the targets for year 10, parallel to English key stage 3, 'additional religious plurality' ('annet religiøst mangfold') is added to the headline for these targets (UD 2005: 10.)

¹⁷⁰ My generalisation.

Christianity but here there are 7 bullet points and more details. For the topic 'life views' the same pattern is applied, with stories from, conversation on certain topics and art and aesthetics from the humanistic tradition.¹⁷¹ The topic philosophy and ethics has 7 bullet points and diverges to a degree from the main pattern.

While the number of bullet points representing competence targets after the 4th grade is 3 for some topics (other religions and life views) and 7 for others (Christianity and Philosophy and Ethics), the numbers are increased to 5 bullet points for the other religions and life views, and 10 for Christianity and 9 for philosophy and ethics after 7th grade. The pattern is that they concern conversations about certain topics, the ability to describe, present and explain certain issues (UD 2005: 14-16). After the 10th grade the bullet points are again more extensive both in number and content. Each bullet point is often quite open and can be concretised in a number of ways. For instance, under Buddhism in the 10th grade, one of the bullet points is 'discussing some chosen texts from the Buddhist written tradition'. This allows endless opportunities for choice of text and how to proceed with discussion. Thus, according to this national curriculum, very important decisions are formally left to the sub-national level, to local schools or school districts who can adjust the curriculum. It is a new feature in the Norwegian context that so much responsibility is given to local curricular work.

¹⁷¹ It should be noted how unfair it is to the concept of life views that this is reduced in the curriculum to one life view, namely that of (secular) humanism. In the aims after year 4 it is that exclusively, while in the aims after years 7 and 10 the concept is supposed to be discussed more widely, but still with a clear emphasis on (secular) humanism.

The content of English RE, according to QCA 2004, is described with reference to the structures mentioned above. I will here refer to key stage 2 for more detailed examples of how the content of RE is described in this document. Under one of the main headings, '*Knowledge, skills and understanding*' (QCA 2004: 26), points a-h specify what pupils should learn *about* religion and further points a-e specify what pupils should learn *from* religion at this stage. Examples of what pupils should learn *about* religion are 'b. describe the variety of practices and way of life in religions and understand how these stem from, and are closely connected with beliefs and teachings', 'g. use specialist vocabulary in communicating their knowledge and understanding', 'h. use and interpret information about religions from a range of sources'. Examples of what pupils should learn *from* religion at this stage are: 'a. reflect on what it means to belong to a faith community communicating their own and others responses', 'c. discuss their own and others views of religious truth and belief, express their own ideas', and 'e. reflect on sources of inspiration in their own and others' lives'.

Under the other main heading '*Breadth of study*' (QCA 2004: 27) it is stated that pupils should be taught knowledge, skills and understanding through the three main areas of study which are 'religions and beliefs', 'themes' and 'experiences and opportunities'. 'Religions and beliefs' is specified like this: 'a. Christianity', 'b. at least two other principal religions', 'c. a religious community with a significant local presence, where appropriate', and 'd. a secular worldview, where appropriate'. This is identical for all stages 1-3.

Examples from points e – m listed under ‘themes’ are: ‘h. the journey of life and death: why some occasions are sacred to believers, and what people think about life after death’, ‘j. inspirational people: figures from whom believers find inspiration’, ‘m. belief in action in the world: how religions and beliefs responds to global issues of human rights, fairness, social justice and the importance of the environment’. Examples from points n – s listed under the heading ‘Experiences and opportunities’ are: ‘n. encountering religion through visitors and visits to places of worship, and focusing on the impact and reality of religion on the local and global community’, ‘r. reflecting on their own and others’ insights into life and its origin, purpose and meaning’, ‘r. express and communicate their own and others’ insights through art and design, music, dance drama and ICT’.

The content of Norwegian RE is in UD 2005 described according to the structures mentioned above. I will here refer to more detailed examples of the content according to this document from the competence aims for the 7th grade, which would be parallel in age to key stage 2 in the English structure. Examples of targets for ‘Christianity’ after year 7 (UD 2005: 14) are that pupils should be able to ‘explain the Christian calendar (the Christian Era) and the rhythm of the Church Year, describe Christian festivals and central rituals’, ‘describe the church building and other Christian places of worship and reflect on their significance (meaning) and use, and use digital tools to seek information and make presentations’.

Examples of what competence aims pupils are to reach in the main area 'other religions and life views' after year 7 (equivalent to key stage 2) are, for example, in relation to Islam, to be able to 'explain the origin of the Islamic calendar (the Islamic Era), and describe Islamic festivals and central rituals', to 'describe the Mosque and reflect on its significance (meaning) and use, use digital tools to seek information and make presentations' (UD 2005: 15).

Examples of what competence aims pupils are to reach in the main area 'philosophy and ethics' after year 7 (equivalent to key stage 2) are to be able to: 'have conversation about current philosophical and ethical questions and discuss challenges related to the issues poor and rich, war and peace, nature and environment, ICT and society', and to 'participate in talks about ethnic minorities in Norway and reflect on attitudes towards the multicultural society' (UD 2005: 16).

Comparative discussion regarding structure and content

Some structural similarities and parallels in QCA 2004 and UD 2005 are striking, especially since these similarities have come about *with* these two documents. In both cases the content is described in terms of targets to be reached, attainment targets/ competence targets, and in both cases these targets are related to key stages.¹⁷² In both cases there are certain key and basic skills that are to be obtained through RE and other subjects. In both cases there are also a number of additional aims that are to be realised through the subjects. In England these are, for instance, economical skills

¹⁷² Although the term key stage is not used in the Norwegian document.

and citizenship education, while in Norway they include the learning poster (UD 2005: 25, UD 2006: 31) and aims stated in the general part of the curriculum including generic formation ('bildung') (see a above).

The general part of the curriculum is a 'survival' from the 1997 reform (KUF 1996: 15 – 50). The learning poster is a new feature with the 2006 reform in Norway. The learning poster is a one page list of 11 points of ideals to be realized across the curriculum and includes, for instance, 'giving all pupils equal opportunities to develop their abilities and talents individually and in cooperation with others' (the poster's first point) and to 'stimulate pupils in their personal development and *identity* (my italics), in their development of ethical, social and cultural competence and ability to understand and participate in democracy'. The latter has, in my view, clear connotations to the idea of citizenship education as understood in England.

In the case of England these cross curricular themes are identical to those found in the structure of the National Curriculum as developed in relation to the reform in 1988. These have however been developing and, for instance, citizenship education was introduced as a distinct subject area in 2002, (see Jackson 2003: 149). In Norway the elements of the learning posters are new with the 'competence reform 2006', but the idea that some aims are general and cross curricular are of earlier origin, reflected for instance in the changing school law preamble (Haraldsø 1989).

In the Norwegian context this change to the content being described in terms of targets to be reached – (attainment targets) competence targets per key stage – must be understood in relation to our adjustment to European processes of standardisation of education (Karlsen 2006). In asking my fellow English PhD students if this was also the case regarding the English curriculum, one answer was ‘I’d be surprised if it was European – this was the height of Thatcherism’¹⁷³. It was a working party that created this framework prior to the national curriculum coming into effect in 1988¹⁷⁴. A motivation for the reform was to strengthen the quality of education which partly had an economic motivation. This type of reorganisation of the public sector, known as New Public Management, has spread internationally (Johnstad, Klausen og Mønnesland 2003, Karlsen 2006). According to a source in the Norwegian committee that produced the 2005 curriculum¹⁷⁵ they did not base the new syllabus on QCA 2004, although they knew about it and looked at it for inspiration. The mandate they were given to include these structures was not linked to the English curriculum explicitly.¹⁷⁶

In both QCA 2004 and UD 2005 religious education includes both the Christian tradition and other religions and philosophies of life/ secular world views, even if the latter has a much stronger representation in the Norwegian document and is a new and disputed feature of English RE.

¹⁷³ Email from Nigel Fancourt, 07.10.05.

¹⁷⁴ Email from Bill Gent, 05.10.05.

¹⁷⁵ Email from Heid Leganger Krogstad 03.03.05.

¹⁷⁶ It is possible that the basic ideas for this kind of curriculum were developed under the influence of the Thatcher government’s educational policies in England, and that these structures, through Britain’s central membership in the EU and other international institutions, have influenced the way educational policies in general have developed in Europe, including in Norway. This issue is discussed at a general level by Karlsen (2006).

Dialogue, personal development/ identity development and working on respecting others are central perspectives in both. The multicultural society is in both cases the perspective of the subject, and aims include that the subject should contribute to integration/ citizenship education.

At the same time there is both in QCA 2004 and UD 2005 a tension between traditional culture and religion, religion as cultural heritage and the 'new' idea of society as multicultural. In the terminology of Schiffauer *et al.* (2004)¹⁷⁷ the question would be what the relationship is between a traditional *national imaginary* where values from the Christian religion are generalised (Bø 2006), and forming a central part of the civil religion (Bellah 1970, 1980, Davie 1994, 2007), and a *new national imaginary* where the plural society is reflected. How is the new sense of plurality challenging the idea of 'the English' or 'the Norwegian', so that civil religion in its traditional form is challenged, and so that it challenges the way the community is imagined?

Concluding discussion

Despite important differences, aims as formulated in the laws of the two countries reveal a basically similar approach to RE. New aims which address religious plurality are a shared feature. In both countries, aims for RE are to learn about (and from) Christianity and other religions in a way that is meant to promote tolerance and respect for others holding different beliefs or belonging to another religion (see for example NOU 1995:9, Hull

¹⁷⁷ A concept related to Anderson's (1991) concept of 'Imagined communities' and Taylor's (2004) 'Modern social imaginaries', see chapters 2 and 5.

1988). These aims reflect a plurality in society and a wish to educate to combat tension and promote social cohesion among citizens of a culturally and religiously plural society. These kinds of aims are strengthened in Norway through the changes in the law and the national curriculum since 1997 and in England, for instance, through the non-statutory guidelines (QCA 2005).

The similarities in structure which appear in QCA 2004 and UD 2005, especially with the introduction of attainment targets and skills in the Norwegian curriculum are related to *formal supranational processes*. Without pinpointing what actually led to this similarity, I believe it is likely that this comes from general educational policy developed in international organisations in which both England and Norway participate.

It is an interesting perspective, I think, to see the long established English right to opt out in relation to the traditional (mainly Christian and Jewish in 1944) religious plurality in Great Britain. However, the Norwegian fight for the right to opt out should be seen in relation to the strong and dominating role of the Norwegian State Church in Norwegian history –and the traditional fight for religious freedom (see for example Sandvik 1996). English school history as such is more plural, and less concerned with constructing a national imaginary, while in the young nation of Norway (from 1814) there has been a consciously political construction of fellowship through common school education for all, in which the State Church and the teaching of

Christianity in School has played a central part (Haraldsø 1989, Engen 2003, 2005, Engen *et al.* 2006, Bø 2006, see chapter 3). Now one strives for the common, Norwegian-ness, the Norwegian national imaginary, to be defined as more plural, while 'England' or the national imaginary of England (especially when it is seen as a part of the Great Britain) is initially more plural. However, both are challenged by the new sense of plurality which has come about due to immigration since the 1950s/ 60s, and perhaps also by a growing sense of globalisation (see chapter 2 and 8).

QCA 2004 and UD 2005 have very different status in legal terms. UD 2005 is a compulsory curriculum for *all* children growing up in Norway, with a limited right to opt out. This reflects the unitary school tradition in Norway. QCA 2004 is a non-statutory framework, although it undoubtedly has been influential, aimed primarily at Agreed Syllabus conferences, and encouraging a standard for most state schools, without being prescriptive for RE for all types of schools. The four main types of state schools since the 1998 School Standards and Framework Act are Community schools, Voluntary Controlled schools, Voluntary Aided Schools and Foundation schools (see for example Jackson 2004a: 42). In all these types of school they follow the National Curriculum (since 1988) and work in partnership with Local Authorities (LAs). However with regards to RE *community schools* have to follow the Local Agreed Syllabus for RE while the others may have a 'religious character' (although normally voluntary controlled schools follow the local agreed syllabus) (Jackson 2004a: 42). As Jackson points out, 'All schools with a religious character can have collective worship

that is distinctive of the religious body concerned, but only voluntary aided schools can have ‘denominational’ religious education’ (Jackson 2004a: 42). In addition 7% of school children attend independent schools, which themselves are of different types, including some that are religious foundations.¹⁷⁸ This whole system is very different from the Norwegian unitary school tradition, and in addition in the English system there is also the additional safeguard for individuals rights which the right to ‘withdraw’ or opt out of religious education provides.

The main differences between English and Norwegian RE have to do with the different contexts including different legal traditions, different school traditions and systems, differences in civil religion etc. elements which must all be seen as part of the national dimension.

Of differences there is, for instance, the fact that in England Sikhism is included in non-statutory guidance and in many agreed syllabuses, as one of the ‘other’ religions, and in Norway the inclusion of secular world views/ philosophies of life is much stronger. This especially applies to the humanist tradition which, in the Norwegian case, clearly is made part of the national imaginary.¹⁷⁹ In England secular world views have only been included in some Local Agreed Syllabuses. In QCA (2004) it is included with the reservation ‘where appropriate’ – even though the law includes only ‘religions’ (see above). It might seem strange therefore that the British

¹⁷⁸ <http://www.inca.org.uk/england-system-mainstream.html> Accessed 18.02.09.

¹⁷⁹ Included for instance in the new school law preamble from 2008, see appendix 2.

Humanist Association actively participates in religious education processes (often having a representative on agreed syllabus conferences, for example), while the Norwegian Humanist Association has expressed strong unhappiness to be included, arguing for instance that they do not wish to be perceived as a religion. It was parents with a secular humanist world view who took legal action against the state for discrimination for example (see above), while in England there is now a case of the British Humanist Association taking legal action for not being included in an RE examination syllabus (see above).¹⁸⁰ The different contexts conceptualised here as *the national dimension* (see chapter 2), explain the different approaches to RE by the British and Norwegian Humanist Associations.

With regard to the English concepts of learning *about* and *from* religion, I take the view that these are parallel to the Norwegian aims of giving pupils both knowledge and personal experiences in their meeting with religions and worldviews. This is for instance as formulated in the 2002 version of the national curriculum for RE (LS 2002: 14: this will be discussed further in chapter 6) and as implied in the central background document NOU 1995: 09: *Identity and Dialogue*. By way of contrast to both England and Norway, in France, the personal/learning from side is entirely absent in their approaches to the study of religion in state schools (Willaime 2007). In UD 2005 the 'learning from' or 'experiential' elements have been toned down as a reaction to the critique that the subject has not been sufficiently objective. The *learning about* aspect is now more prominent, so it can be argued that

¹⁸⁰ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2008/sep/13/gcses.religion> , Accessed 18.02.09

Norway, to some degree, is moving towards a French kind of approach, on the institutional level of curriculum.

However, the idea that RE teaching should stimulate pupils' development is still a part of the equation in Norway. In the part of this text (UD 2005) called 'The curriculum at work', it is stated that 'The adaptation of knowledge, attitudes and values which are acquired through the subject as such, shall support the pupils in their work to form their own opinions and find their own position' (UD 2005: 32).¹⁸¹ Aiding identity development is also one of the eleven points in the learning poster ('læringsplakaten') (see above). Any explicit reference to the concepts of 'identity' and identity formation, which were so prominent for example in NOU 1995:9, have been removed from the RE curriculum text. Despite this, the 'learning' from aspect is, in my view, still present. It is present, for instance, through the reference to the school's role in *generic formation*:

'Through dealing with questions of ethics, values and central cultural knowledge and through the emphasis on dialogue and multicultural understanding KRL stands out as one of the most important subjects to contribute to the generic formation' (UD 2005: 32).¹⁸²

I see the similarities in content and ideology in relation to a number of supranational processes (the first dimension, see chapter 2). For example,

¹⁸¹ My translation

¹⁸² My translation

the informal supranational process is reflected in the fact that immigration of people from various parts of the world has led to more multicultural societies. Immigrants have brought with them cultural and religious specifics that have not traditionally been a part of English or Norwegian culture; this is a similar and relatively recent feature in both countries. However both countries must also be seen in a wider international context. Thus, England's role in the Commonwealth as well as its EU membership is important differences since Norway is not a part of those international unions. In both countries there has been a shift in official policies from the idea that 'other' cultures and religions are imagined as exotic and distant (for example Said 1978) to being perceived in a more socially integrated way, where imagined limits between 'us' and these 'others' are being negotiated in school RE, among other (public) places¹⁸³.

Pluralisation is another of these *informal supranational processes*, and here I refer both to the result of this immigration as discussed above and the alleged development from modernity to post modernity, with perhaps the coexistence of traditional and modern plurality (Skeie 1995). It could be argued that in many ways our English or Norwegian cultures have always been plural (Skeie 1995), and that the real qualitative change is not the increase in number of ethnic or religious groups, but the challenge that plurality is to every one of us individually, with all the options of individual choice that are opened up. At the same time we are still influenced by our

¹⁸³ In the time of writing this, February 2009, there are for instance heavy public debates in Norway regarding whether Muslim police women should be allowed to wear hijab, which includes reference to England where this has been allowed.

sense of belonging to social and/ or religious groups, as for instance Jackson's (1997: 136) ideas of membership groups illustrates. Perhaps this forms people's view on reality in so many different ways that it is appropriate to claim that many different kinds of modernities coexist. In the words of Charles Taylor (2004: 1-2), 'Western modernity on this view is inseparable from certain kinds of social imaginary, and the differences between today's multiple modernities need to be understood in terms of divergent social imaginaries involved.'¹⁸⁴

Globalisation, (see chapter 2), is the development of the world 'as one place' having to do for instance with modes of communication and the development of global ethics through human rights thinking. The development of international law is, in the case of RE in Norway, one point where *formal process* in the supranational dimension affects national policy making processes explicitly, through the legal cases described above. There are differences in the way each country reacts to and relates to those same processes, reflecting their specific history and tradition. A puzzling question is, however, if QCA 2004 and UD 2005 are more similar in ideology and content than religious education in other countries, why is this so when England and Norway are, in so many respects different?

In my view there are strong similarities in content in relation to *informal supranational processes* (see chapter 2). Some informal sociological trends that affect all European countries (and beyond), like secularisation,

¹⁸⁴ See also chapter 7.

pluralisation and globalisation, are addressed in similar ways in RE curricula in Norway and England. But I believe that the main reasons in each case for why they react to this challenge in the way that they do, is to be found in the *formal and informal national processes*. In Norway I would suggest the unitary school tradition (Østberg 1998b) is a major explanatory factor why KRL was introduced in 1997. In England I would suggest the traditional plurality, the traditions of the evolving school system and the locally agreed syllabuses in RE are main factors for explaining why a multifaith type of RE emerged (see for example Jackson & McGrady 2007). Following this line of argument it would seem the specific similarities between English and Norwegian RE are incidental.

Norwegian RE must be understood in light of the Norwegian school system and its history and English RE must be seen in relation to the English school system and its history. Major differences relate to the different school systems and their different histories and ideologies. This becomes especially clear in relation to ideas of 'the Norwegian' and 'the English' in relation to their *national imaginaries*. It is of course a question to consider to what extent these are seen as respective cultures with internally consistent ethics and cultural features and how much each is regarded as a plural society. The opposing rules for withdrawal for example, I see as an indication that plurality is a more integrated feature of the English national imaginary than the Norwegian.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter has been to do a comparative analysis of RE policy in England and Norway through comparing legal issues and then focusing on two central curricular documents QCA 2005 and UD 2004. I have looked at the place of RE in the curricula and the status and position of these two examples. I covered legal issues first, which I consider to be a part of the institutional level of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992), and which are important also for interpreting QCA 2004 and UD 2005 as expressions of RE policy. Last, but not least, I have looked at structure and content of English and Norwegian RE on the institutional level of curriculum as it is expressed in QCA 2005 and UD 2004. In the final comparative discussion of these points I have looked also at how elements from the supranational and national dimension affect each other.

From my discussion a number of questions emerge, for instance of the relationship between *supranational and national processes* of both a *formal and informal* character, and also what are the implications of those in English and Norwegian RE. The comparative perspective is helping to illuminate what developments in Norway are particularly 'Norwegian' in the sense that they are linked to Norwegian history and tradition, or the idea of it, the Norwegian *national imaginary* (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004). Likewise I have considered what is particularly 'English' and what has to do with supranational informal and formal processes. It is an important finding that things that are easily taken for granted from an insider point of view are put into perspective through comparison or viewing the issues in an international

context. Another is that the traditional relationship between state and school is decisive for how multifaith RE in each case has been formed. It becomes clear how KRL can be understood differently when Norwegian history and traditions are the focus compared with the different focus of Norwegian participation in European and international society.

In a 'close-up' one on one comparison with the English situation, it becomes clearer how the development is a balance of the national 'style', the national dimension and participation in international processes (the supranational dimension). Both documents (QCA 2004 and UD 2005) can be considered to represent the institutional level of the curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992) and as such they do reflect the main ideas of what religious education in state school in present day English/ Norwegian society is, or should be according to some professionals and policy makers at the societal level of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992). Influences on these both stem from the national and supranational dimensions.

In the chapters 6 and 7 I will explore how ideas discussed at the societal level and ideals formulated at the institutional level of curriculum are interpreted and executed through teachers' interpretations in their teaching (instructional level, chapter 6) and perceived in practice by pupils (experiential level, chapter 7). Firstly, however, I will set the scene (Chapter 5) by describing and contextualising the empirical data collected in England and Norway to facilitate these discussions.

Chapter 5

Religious Education in Practice:

Introduction to Case Studies from England and Norway

Introduction

This chapter introduces the empirical part of the thesis where I explore the theme *curriculum practice* and provides contextual material which helps to explain the differences experienced within the two systems (Goodlad & Su 1992, see chapter 2). The fieldwork was a study of six related cases in state school RE, year 10 (14-15year olds). Three of these cases were situated within the English system of education and three in the Norwegian. The fieldwork was conducted in England between October and December 2004, and in Norway between January and April 2005. The fieldwork was limited to day visits to each school with a systematic observation of one RE lesson, an interview with the class teacher and a group interview with four pupils from that class. Geographically the fieldwork was restricted to an area in central England and one in central Norway. Both regions include rural areas where ethnic minorities are scarce, and more central areas of varying degrees of ethnic plurality. The schools chosen in my study represent a variation from heavily multicultural to almost monocultural in terms of pupil population.

This thesis is structured by the methodology as outlined in chapter 2. In chapter 3 I explored the societal level of curriculum, and in chapter 4 I

explored the institutional level. More empirical studies are needed to better inform the theoretical and pedagogical discourses, and the politics on the institutional level could also be improved with better knowledge of practice. Contributing to knowledge of practice is one reason to include an empirical element, but it needs to be understood that the main reason for its inclusion here is as a means to explore my suggested methodology for comparative study.

In order to explore the two remaining levels: the instructional level and experiential level (Goodlad & Su 1992), it is necessary to use empirical data. I could have used existing studies, but decided to take the opportunity to make use of the material from my own fieldwork from 2004/ 2005, as the questions asked in the interviews evolved around aims and descriptions of content of RE at the institutional level, which reflects the societal level. This will be the main source of information regarding the levels of practice, but I also refer to other data as required. This chapter (5) was tailored to fit the aim of linking the field data to the other levels of curricula as defined here, and hence also to the other chapters. For this chapter the research question is 'How does the empirical research fit into the overall methodology as outlined in chapter 2?'

Representation and national imaginaries

It is essential to acknowledge that there will be much variation within each education system. My case study material does not attempt to answer

questions regarding variations between schools or regions. It does exemplify variation within the systems, but only to a very limited degree. It only includes three examples from each system and only demonstrates certain variations within the local areas where the research was done. The question of how representative these six cases are cannot be answered based on this qualitative study alone. Some indications can however be found when one looks at it in relation to other empirical research, for example the qualitative and quantitative research conducted by the EC REDCo Project (for example Dietz *et al.* 2009). However the analytical tools presented in Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) will be used to illuminate connections between a non representative sample and the societal and institutional levels of curriculum within the national dimension.

The concepts used by Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) are employed to connect non-representative sample material and characteristics of each country's educational system. They argue that any one school within a nation state would be a representative example of the nation's specific *civil enculturation*.

Civil enculturation is 'the process by which an individual acquires the mental representations (...) and patterns of behaviour required to function as a member of (civil) culture, (...) taking place as a part of the process of education' (Schiffauer *et al.* (2004: 2).

Civil enculturation involves pupils' socialisation as members of the *civil culture*, which includes *civil society*, *civic culture* and norms of civility¹⁸⁵ and a *social imaginary*. The *social imaginary* is 'the dominant national self representation of a nation state', also called '*national imaginary*'. It refers to a symbolic imagery to which citizens of a nation state tie their identities, which I have mentioned also in previous chapters (for example chapter 2). This may, for instance, be a certain view of history, but one that must not be mistaken for what really happened. Norms of *civility* will be historically particular and it includes the knowledge of how to treat others depending on the situation. *Civility* describes the preferred method of interaction in the public sphere (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 4 - 8).

Others with interesting similar concepts are Jeffery Alexander (2006) who writes about *The civil sphere* and Charles Taylor (2004) who writes about *Modern Social Imaginaries*.¹⁸⁶ Both Taylor (2004) and Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) refer to anthropologist Benedict Anderson's [1983] (1991) concept of *imagined communities*. Also Engen (2005) which is the main reference on the relationship between a conscious (post colonial) construct of 'Norwegianness' and the unitary school ideology, refers to Anderson's idea of *imagined communities* (see chapter 3).

¹⁸⁵ *Civil society* is a public space filled with networks and organisations such as churches, sport clubs, trade unions etc. Understanding how *civil society* works is one crucial ingredient in understanding any nation state's *civil culture*. *Civic culture* refer to conventions regarding expected behaviour vis a vis powers in the public sphere, including state bureaucracies (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 4 - 8).

¹⁸⁶ 'Western modernity (...) is inseparable from certain kinds of social imaginary, and the difference between today's multiple modernities need to be understood in terms of divergent social imaginaries involved.' (Taylor 2004: 1-2)

When I reviewed Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) (Bråten 2006) a question I had was why the relevant limits/ distinctions were seen to be the *national* limits. Might not imaginaries sometimes also be constructed as supranational? The answer in my view clearly has to be yes, with all the international formal and informal processes that take place. One very potent example would be international terrorism, which could be understood as *an international imaginary*. Also we see even in Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) that the students form patterns across national lines, for example in terms of being part of an international youth culture as much as they were part of the *national imaginaries*. In my methodology I consider both national and *international imaginaries* to be relevant for the interpretation of examples of practices.

The comparative perspective does reveal differences in styles in the English and Norwegian samples which can be said to reflect different *styles of civility*, or different *national imaginaries*. For example one of the most immediate differences which can be observed is the school uniform worn by English pupils. Uniforms used to have a very negative press in England and disappeared from many schools in the 70s and 80s only to be brought back again, often due to pressure from parents, in the late 90s. So in many schools they are a fairly new thing, they are seen as a way of encouraging a sense of belonging and positive school ethos.

When I told the group of pupils in English School 1 (ES1-P) there were no school uniforms in Norwegian schools, their response seemed to be one of

envy. Opposition to wearing of school uniforms could be observed in this school by the dynamics of pupils deliberately not tucking their shirts in and teachers constantly nagging them about it. Deviating from my interview schedule I asked:

O: So, when you're the grown ups, are you going to change this?

Boy 1: Yes.

O: Or are you going to follow the tradition?

Girl 1: Giggles. Oh, well. I mean um there's one school over at ...

Girl 2: the Trinity School...

Girl 1: yeah,

Girl 2: no, no they have to wear school uniforms now ...

Girl 1: Oh. Well, they used to not have uniforms at all. And we played them in [...] and sorts of thing and stuff, and they didn't look like a team! And, just looked like seven people who stood around going to watch it rather than play it.

Girl 2: They were wearing trousers, skirts and shorts and... we all were wearing a nice t-shirt and a black skirt and looked so much more organized.

Boy 1: Well, I'd have to agree with you.

Group giggles.

Despite the youthful opposition they display here, they are well on the way to being socialized into favouring the idea of the uniform, and this could clearly

be seen as an example of the *social enculturation* reflecting an English imaginary going on in this school.

Applying these concepts of *social enculturation*, *civil culture*, *civil society*, *civic culture norms of civility*, and especially perhaps *national imaginary*, the comparative perspective does exemplify differences in styles in teaching RE in the English and Norwegian schools. It also informs a discussion of the two educational systems and findings in English and Norwegian educational research (see also chapters 6 & 7). These concepts are important tools for discussing all my material (see chapter 2) but have a special function in the empirical part with respect to interpreting non-representative field data in the light of their representing a certain *national imaginary*.

Different styles of civility in the school systems

The comparative perspective reveals different styles of civility in the two educational systems as such. I stated in chapter 2 that both general educational policy and specific RE policy are seen as relevant to the national dimension even if specific issues in RE are seen as most relevant. I see two of the main sources for explanations of difference between English and Norwegian RE as:

1. within the domain of RE, for example in the different scholarly traditions for RE research, and
2. outside the domain of RE, especially in the different school systems (see also chapter 3).

The different school systems reflect a national history of education including the traditional relationships between church, state and school. This is why the school systems as such are relevant here: they are main sources of explanation of difference between English and Norwegian RE, reflecting different *national styles* of civility. I have not, however, described the systems in full detail, nor have I covered every possible school type.¹⁸⁷ Here I have focused on some factors that I see as particularly potent in bringing out the different styles of civility in the two systems.

The basic structures of the educational systems in England and Norway are similar in some aspects; for instance, the length of compulsory education in both cases is 10 years. The coverage of the curriculum, in terms of traditional school subjects, is also rather similar, and since 1988 both systems have had National Curricula. We have also seen in chapter 4 that the way curricula are organised is converging as a result of international educational policy.¹⁸⁸ We have also seen that in RE aims are converging in most European countries, responding to challenges which are international¹⁸⁹ (see chapter 2).¹⁹⁰ However, it is the case that the differences between the educational systems and the ways which RE fits into them seem more obvious than the similarities in many important areas, reflecting those national traditions, in other words the different styles of civility.

¹⁸⁷ How religious education fits into the two systems is written about by Jackson and O'Grady, in the case of England (Jackson & O'Grady 2007), and by Skeie in the case of Norway (Skeie 2007).

¹⁸⁸ For example with regard to including key or basic skills.

¹⁸⁹ secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation

¹⁹⁰ for instance with reference to Willaime 2007.

The English and Norwegian educational systems are different in many ways, but the one element which most clearly brings out differences of civil cultures is the question of inspection. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Service and Skills (Ofsted)¹⁹¹ is an important and integrated part of the English school system. School inspections are required by law and the purpose is to provide impartial information to parents and others so that schools can be compared. The function of Ofsted inspections is also to ensure good standards across the manifold English school system through regular inspections. Currently, schools in the state system are inspected every sixth year, and a full report is published openly on the internet. In the reports it is laid out what the school does well and where there is room for improvement.¹⁹² Inspected units receive grades ranking from Outstanding, Good, Satisfactory and Inadequate. All inspected units which receive the grade 'outstanding' appear on a list published on the Ofsted homepage.¹⁹³

The 'outstanding' providers are listed by regions, and one example from West Midlands is Bartley Green School, a Specialist Technology and Sports College.¹⁹⁴ The report includes a letter to pupils explaining the findings, and for instance it says that 'you are confident, well-adjusted, reflective and caring' but also states the two concrete areas which the inspection reveals needs further improvements, which are 'raise standards and accelerate progress in science, (...) and increase the numbers gaining the higher A-C

¹⁹¹ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/> (Accessed 20.04.09)

¹⁹² Ofsted also inspect Local Authority Children Services, Teacher Training institutions and independent schools.

¹⁹³ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/> (Accessed 20.04.09)

¹⁹⁴ [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_providers/full/\(urn\)/103491](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_providers/full/(urn)/103491) (Accessed 20.04.09).

grades in the subject.¹⁹⁵ This is not one of the schools in my sample as they will remain anonymous, but two of these schools are given the overall grade 3: Satisfactory: the second lowest grade, while the third, the inner city school (see below) is given the grade 2: Good. The identification of explicit areas for improvement and for external observers to describe the school and its pupils in such a fashion would be inconsistent with the Norwegian style of civility.

It is difficult in a Norwegian context to explain (understand) what inspection means in the English sense, and providing explanations for its non existence for an English audience is equally difficult since this is taken for granted in the Norwegian context.¹⁹⁶ As defined by Schiffauer *et al.* (2004: 4-8) *civic culture* refer to conventions regarding expected behaviour vis a vis powers in the public sphere, including state bureaucracies. Ofsted¹⁹⁷ could be regarded as a state bureaucracy. In my interpretation, the state bureaucracy in Norway, which covers some of the same functions with regards to the purpose of helping schools to develop,¹⁹⁸ is the Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (Utdanningsdirektoratet: UD)¹⁹⁹, especially via its site the School Portal (skoleporten).²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ [http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/display/\(id\)/94066](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/oxedu_reports/display/(id)/94066) (Accessed 20.04.09)

¹⁹⁶ In an Norwegian – English dictionary of education on the Norwegian Directorate of Education of Education and Training, http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/ordbok_no_eng.pdf accessed 24.04.09) there is no entry on the Norwegian word 'inspeksjon' (inspection). In searching the English word 'inspection' it was found in an explanation of a concept 'insynsrett' (right to inspect). This is nothing similar to an Ofsted inspection.

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/> (Accessed 20.04.09)

¹⁹⁸ In England Ofsted aims at helping schools to *improve* while in Norway the terminology used is school *development*, but I interpret those as parallels.

¹⁹⁹ <http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/Artikler/Norwegian-Directorate-for-Education-and-Training/> (Accessed 21.04.09)

²⁰⁰ <http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/english/Sider/WhatisSkoleporten.aspx> (Accessed 20.04.09)

The main responsibility for quality development (improvement) in schools lies with the school owners, which in Norway is the communes, but the Directorate of Education and Training also has a responsibility for aiding the development (improvements) in schools through various functions. One area of responsibility under the Directorate is *analysis and assessment* and under this responsibility area are a Department of Documentation and a Department of Pupil and Teacher Assessment, project National Tests and project School Gate ('skoleporten'). The statistics provided by The Directorate of Education and Training are the most important source of information about schools in Norway.²⁰¹ That is to say, in Norway there are statistics and research resembling some of Ofsted's work, but within a different framework, and with the important difference that on the Norwegian side, the schools provide the information themselves; it is not provided by inspectors. There is no parallel to the practice of making graded reports of individual schools. The closest thing to inspection in the sense of someone external coming into school to evaluate them on the Norwegian side is something called 'tilsyn' (supervision) which is not about school achievements at all, only about whether school activities are legal.²⁰²

²⁰¹ http://udir.no/templates/udir/TM_Artikkel.aspx?id=2132

²⁰² The Directorate of Education can give various tasks to the 'fylkesmann' (County Governor). The 'fylkesmann' (County Governor) is the stately representative in a county ('fylke'). One of the tasks delegated to the 'fylkesmann' is 'tilsyn' (supervision): a kind of inspection that is about checking whether schools are following the laws and the National Curriculum. The National Curriculum has the status of a government regulation ('forskrift': legal document). The Department can 'supervise' ('ha tilsyn med') various sides of the educational system and the schools, and for instance in 2006 it was the system for self evaluation in schools that was checked out. The reports from the 'tilsyn' (supervision) are made publicly available on the internet. This type of inspection is however not about assessing how the school or its pupils or staff perform, like Ofsted reports, it just checks whether the activities are legal. The communes (smaller units than the 'fylke' (counties), are the school owners. The communes through their 'rådmann' (Communal Advisor) also have a responsibility for 'tilsyn' (inspection), but a recent investigation has shown severe deficiencies in the system in this area (2007).

There seem to be differences regarding attitudes to what can and should be measured, as well as fundamental differences in attitudes to ranking schools. Norwegian schools are not ranked on the basis of inspections. On Ofsted's website (accessed 20.04.09) it was stated that 'Teachers welcome inspections and observation in schools: An independent survey of teachers' views of Ofsted inspections of schools have found that almost 90% of teachers think that inspections help their schools set new priorities for the future'. I do not know the full context of this statement, nor their reasons for asking this in a survey or announcing it in such a prominent place on their webpage, but I would suggest that this reflects a process of social enculturation which involves accepting external inspection, in a system where there is a long tradition for this.²⁰³

On the Norwegian side I find that the only information about individual schools is results of (controversial) national tests in Norwegian language,

A main source of this information on these issues beside internet sites of the Directorate of Education <http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/Tema/In-English/>, Trøndelag Fylkeskommune http://www.stfk.no/Om_fylkeskommunen/Kort_om_fylkeskommunen/Sor-Trondelag_County_Council/ and Trondheim Kommune <http://www.trondheim.kommune.no/content.ap?thisId=1117631041>, is Ola Moe: former director of schools in Sør-Trøndelag County, now a colleague here in the teacher education in Trondheim.

²⁰³ Her Majesty's Inspectorate was established in 1840, which is actually before the first education act which was in 1870. It was said to be more about affording 'assistance' and 'encouragement' than with 'exercising control' (Evans 1975: 21). There is not place here to go into the development of Ofsted, but since then inspection has been a part of the English educational system. It was recently renewed and about itself on the Ofsted website they now state that 'The new Ofsted – the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills – came into being on 1 April 2007. It brings together the wide experience of four formerly separate inspectorates. It will inspect and regulate care for children and young people, and inspect education and training for learners of all ages. We want to raise aspirations and contribute to the long term achievement of ambitious standards and better life chances for service users. Their educational, economic and social well-being will in turn promote England's national success' (<http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/Ofsted-home/About-us> accessed 24.04.09).

maths and English language.²⁰⁴ Additional information about the schools exists, but is based on voluntarily participation in surveys. A qualitative analysis of six schools commissioned by the Directorate of Education and Training, researchers²⁰⁵ investigated how information collected in voluntary surveys²⁰⁶ is used by schools. One of their concerns is how to raise response rates, and they even suggest that responding to these surveys should be compulsory. I will not go further into this topic here, but will just point out that the difference with regard to attitudes to external inspection or display of information about the schools is markedly different in the two countries. In the Norwegian system schools and teachers are less willing to accept external evaluation of their work. Even if these issues are also negotiated in both systems, changing with shifting policies, I see this as an important indicator of the different styles of civilities in the two systems.

Diversity vs. uniformity is another difference which is rather fundamental and which must be seen in connection to the differences with regard to inspection. The English school system is more diverse in terms of different types of schools compared to the Norwegian system. This is especially true for state schools, but also in the private school sectors. Independent schools outside of the state system have a much stronger standing in the English system, and they are much more independent than in Norway. In England

²⁰⁴ <http://skoleporten.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/default.aspx> (Accessed 24.04.09)

²⁰⁵ http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/upload/Rapporter/2009/brukerundersokelser_caseu_undersokelse_08.pdf (Accessed 24.04.2009). (The researchers are Skaar and Stakkelend from 'Oxford research': 'Oxford research' is the name of a Scandinavian based company which conducts research for political and strategic actors to provide better base for decisions, according to page 2 of the report, their webpage: <http://www.oxford.no/> (accessed 24.04.2009).

²⁰⁶ ['Elevundersøkelsen' (pupils' survey), 'Foreldreundersøkelsen' (parents' survey), and 'lærerundersøkelsen' (teachers' survey)]: <http://www.utdanningsdirektoratet.no/Tema/Brukerundersokelser/> (Accessed 14.04.2009).

private independent schools get most of their funding from fees paid by parents²⁰⁷ while in Norway they are 85% state funded, and are not allowed to take fees exceeding the remaining 15% of costs.²⁰⁸ In England independent schools must be registered with Department for Children, Schools and Families²⁰⁹, but do not have to be state approved, as must private schools in Norway.

The English schools are however subject to inspection. In England different types of schools are defined in relation to how they are funded,²¹⁰ while in the Norwegian context this would not be a meaningful way of distinguishing between types of schools since they are all fully state funded (Skeie 2004).²¹¹ Even the Norwegian independent schools (which are not really outside the state system)²¹² are 85% state funded. The differences mentioned here are examples of important differences in the school systems as such, which reflect very different history and ideologies, which could be said to reflect different *civil cultures* and different *national imaginaries*; a

²⁰⁷ <http://www.inca.org.uk/england.html> (Accessed 18.04.2009).

²⁰⁸ <http://lovdata.no/all/hl-20030704-084.html#map002> (Accessed 18.04.2009).

²⁰⁹ <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/> (Accessed 24.04.09).

²¹⁰ It needs to be made clear that certain types of state maintained schools receive some funding from other sources – for example voluntary aided schools are funded mainly by the state but partly by religious bodies: (Jackson 2004b)

²¹¹ In Norway a communal advisor, the 'rådmann' is responsible for the economy, meaning the distribution of state money to schools, for hiring staff, for maintenance of buildings and grounds and for purchasing of teaching resources like text books. The communes organize this differently, and sometimes responsibilities like hiring staff or setting up a budget, is left to the head teachers at the schools.

²¹² By October 1st 2007, there were 292 private schools in Norway, of which 152 were 'grunnskoler': counting 13 939 pupils. <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/press-contacts/Press-releases/2009/stortingsmelding-om-lareren.html?id=545074> (Accessed 18.04.2009). The private schools must follow statelily approved curricula, like the National Curriculum, or a corresponding document specially designed by the school. This according to the law regulating private schools: <http://lovdata.no/all/hl-20030704-084.html#map002> (Accessed 18.04.2009).

state's idea of its education definitely could be said to be part of the *national imaginary* (see also chapters 3 and 4).

Returning to state schools, diversity vs. uniformity is an even more obvious difference. For instance there are some faith based schools within the English state school system (for example Voluntary aided schools), including schools based on religions other than Christianity (Jackson 2004a, Chapter 3). However, because of the history of the dual system²¹³, some Church of England schools operate as neighbourhood schools. In contrast, in Norway, there are no faith based schools in the state system and in the independent sector there are only Christian faith based schools, and no schools based on any other religions or life views.²¹⁴ Further, there are still in England some schools which are only for boys or girls: another variation which is not there in Norway. There are also differences in rules for admitting pupils, a variation that does not exist in relation to Norwegian state 'ungdomsskole' (lower secondary schools).²¹⁵

The main difference reflecting different imaginaries in my view is that only one type of school is acceptable in the Norwegian unitary school tradition,²¹⁶

²¹³ States partnership with the Church of England since 1902 to provide education everywhere, (Copley 1997): see chapter 4.

²¹⁴ Except perhaps Rudolph Steiner schools, but I will not include a discussion on that issue here.

²¹⁵ All the schools in my sample were state schools and none was selective in terms of intake. However it is a difference that in England different rules of admission exist, while in Norway intakes to state schools are decided exclusively by the geographical borders of catchment areas.

²¹⁶ Telhaug (1994) describes the unitary school as four dimensional: 1. The resource dimension: that there should be equality in availability of resources (economically and other vice), 2. The social dimension: The school should include all pupils within a geographic area to come together in heterogeneous groups, 3. The cultural dimension: pupils should acquire subject culture, in their subject learning shared traditions, values and knowledge

whereas there is an acceptance of various types of schools within the English system.²¹⁷ I see this in connection to the stronger centralising feature in the Norwegian system and the tradition for decentralisation in the school system in England (see chapters 3 & 4). Both countries have local authorities as a structural level between the individual schools and the central government, but the English system is still more characterised by a tradition for local governance of schools than Norway, (which we will see exemplified in chapters 6 & 7). Applying the terminology of Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) one could say that in the English *national imaginary* variation of types of schools is seen as more acceptable. However the imagined unity in the case of the Norwegian school system must not be confused with real unity. In some formal aspects Norwegian schools would be more similar, but real differences between schools might be just as significant.

Although the social enculturation in English schools would also in theory socialise pupils into a sense of 'Englishness', this is to a lesser degree the aim of schooling as it is in Norway. In the English school system strengthening of social cohesion is encouraged, but unity is not an explicit aim in the same manner as in the Norwegian imaginary (Telhaug 1994). One of the functions of inspection is to ensure a certain common standard, but not equality in all schools. In Norway all children in theory have the same basic education, but there is little knowledge about what variations there are

should be emphasised as a common frame of reference. 4. The dimension of difference: Unitary school ideology includes respect for difference and plurality of backgrounds among its pupils. The education should be adjusted to their individual needs so that all receive education that they need regardless of different abilities. (My translation or rather paraphrasing of Oftedal Telhaugs account).

²¹⁷ <http://www.inca.org.uk/england-organisation-mainstream.html> (Accessed 24.04.09).

in practice, since public inspections are an alien idea in the Norwegian system. This is reflected in how teachers in my sample answered a question on how they see their schools compared to other schools (chapter 6).²¹⁸

Characteristics of the schools

Above I have mentioned some areas where there are major differences in the school systems reflecting different *national imaginaries*. When I go on to describe the schools in the sample it is possible to see how some characteristics stem from differences in the school systems, but also other societal factors, like a sense of plurality and immigration history since the 1950s/ 1960s, affects schools and their RE.²¹⁹ It is worth noting that

²¹⁸ There is not much research revealing what actually goes on in the schools, and what variation exists between schools.

²¹⁹ England as a part of Great Britain, consisting of several nations shaped by internal migration and colonial history, has been plural (in a traditional sense), but it was mainly a Christian plurality (see chapter 3 and 4). However, due to labour shortage, people from old colonies, such as South Asia, East African countries (such as Uganda) and the Caribbean started to arrive for work in the 1950s. In the late 1960s large number of people of South Asian origin from former African colonies came because of africanisation policies in these countries. These included Sikhs, Gujarati and Punjabi Hindus and Muslims. From the mid 1960s new legislation led to more permanent settlements. Immigration continued in large numbers, and today British society is considered to be multicultural in a more radical way than it was traditionally (Jackson 1997: 92 (note 1)).

Norway has a less plural point of departure with its state religion and romanticised sense of 'Norwegianness' due to the conscious policy of constructing a national identity in the young nation (Engen 2005), even though reality might have been that local cultural variation was just as diverse as in England (Skeie 1995). In 1967, the first 10 Pakistani men came to Oslo for work, and more immigrants seeking work soon followed. From 1975 new legislation led to more permanent settlements. From 1975, as a consequence of new laws regarding right to family reunion on the one side and immigration stop on the other, their families joined them. This was the start of a more permanent settlement. Muslims, Hindus etc. began to organize communities in Norway, including establishing mosques, temples, and graveyards. Since then there has been a permanent flow of legal and illegal immigrants into the country, presently mainly refugees and asylum seekers. Today we speak of Norway as a multicultural society with relatively large groups of immigrants or immigrant descendants from a range of different countries (Jacobsen 2001). The largest religious group is Muslims, and the largest ethnic group was Pakistani, but is now Polish, with many Poles coming for work (Jacobsen 2005). Norwegian immigrants come from a variety of countries, for example Bosnia, Turkey, Iran, Somalia, Iraq, Morocco, Vietnam, Thailand, India, The Philippines, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Chile, Poland, Russia and also from western countries. Apart from Muslims there are also some Hindus, Buddhists, Catholics, and a few Sikhs (Jacobsen 2001).

Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) also claim that integration of immigrants takes on different *national styles* in schools as a result of nation specific social enculturation. Does RE teaching and learning in English and Norwegian classrooms (that I observed) also take on different styles reflecting the different *national imaginaries*?

All the English schools in my sample are secondary schools with children aged 11-18, which means they also provide sixth form education. This is usually the case with English secondary schools, but there are some examples of 11-16 schools. All the Norwegian schools were 'ungdomsskoler' (lower secondary schools) with pupils aged 12-15. Some Norwegian 'ungdomsskoler' (lower secondary schools) are part of comprehensive schools for children aged 6–15, even if these are not. In other words when 'ungdomsskoler' (lower secondary schools) are linked with other schools it would be with primary schools, whereas in England it would be with upper secondary schools.

The English school categories of primary and secondary school include a wider age group (5-18) than the Norwegian 'grunnskole' (6-15). In Norway young people from the year 15–18 are in a separate school category, 'Videregående' (upper secondary). At 16-18 English pupils would be in secondary schools in sixth forms, designated sixth form colleges or in other forms of further education. This difference is even reflected in the English and the Norwegian language: in English it is Primary (aged 5 – 11) and

Secondary school (aged 12-18), with a differentiation between lower and upper secondary, while in Norwegian it is 'grunnskole' (6-15) and 'videregående' (16-18) with a differentiation between 'barne' (children) and 'ungdomstrinn' (youth) in the 'grunnskole'. One could say that in the structural sense the Norwegian middle level is oriented more towards the lower levels while in England the middle level is more oriented towards the higher levels of schooling.

After 'ungdomsskolen' (lower secondary school) Norwegian pupils get a general certificate, a diploma documenting a wide generic education, while the English students take more specialised exams known as the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) in certain subjects.²²⁰ Later, English students can take Advanced levels (A-levels) in a few selected subjects. Very often one of these would be chosen for further study in higher education. In Norway, pupils get a school leaving certificate with marks in all subjects after year 10. This means the sum of their marks that they get on tests during the year will appear on this certificate. Examination subjects are selected in a lottery like process and are not selected by students' own choice (see for example UD 2005: 19). If RE is selected they may have an oral exam, in which case this will appear as a separate mark on their certificate.

²²⁰ Some students do 'short course'/half GCSE option RE which often schools provide for students who don't choose the 'long course'/full GCSE. Since RE is compulsory (unless the parents opt the child out), a half GCSE corresponds in teaching time to the time that would be taken for compulsory RE. In other words, the child can get a qualification for doing compulsory RE.

In Norway pupils do not really start to specialize before 'videregående' (upper secondary school) while in England specialization begins in at an earlier age in lower secondary school (usually at age 14, the beginning of key stage 4). Specialisation, the choice of focusing on certain selected subjects, is more emphasized and occurs earlier within the English system. The relative importance of the GCSEs in the English system, compared to the exams the Norwegian pupils may get if they are selected to have exams in RE, affects the material in my fieldwork, both in the lessons observed (see below) and in answers from English and Norwegian teachers and pupils (see chapters 6 and 7).

In England government policy encourages schools to specialize and specialization has been rewarded with extra funding. This affected all the English schools in the sample.²²¹ This adds to the plurality of types of schools in the English (state) system, and has no Norwegian parallel. This kind specialisation and financial advantaging of schools would be seen as contrary to the Norwegian ideology of school unity. Telhaug (1994) describes the unitary school as four dimensional and the first of these is 'the resource dimension: that there should be equality in availability of resources (economically and otherwise).²²²

In one of the English schools (ES3) the pupils were divided into ability groups. This is a fairly common practice in English schools, but would be

²²¹ English school 1 had recently become a specialist sportscollege, English school 2 had recently become a technology college, and English school 3 had also specialised and had become a technology college, further descriptions of the schools below).

²²² My translation/ paraphrasing of Oftedal Telhaugs account.

totally unacceptable in Norway. Norwegian school politics have in recent years propagated an ideal of inclusive pedagogy, where pupils ideally get individual attention in a mixed ability context. This can be understood from a recent website of the 'Utdanningsdirektoratet'²²³ which describes how Equity in Education is a central concept in Norwegian Education. This idea is expressed clearly by Telhaug's (1994) second unitary school dimension: 'The social dimension: The school should include all pupils within a geographic area to come together in heterogeneous groups'.²²⁴

Location of the schools and characteristics of the school populations

When it comes to location, the English schools were spread out around and in a rather large city in central England, while the Norwegian schools were located in and around a rather large city in central Norway. A shared feature was therefore not being capital cities, but nevertheless having populations reflecting immigration since the 1950s and 1960s. The schools were selected to represent different types of local environments within those areas.

English school 3 (ES3) is the city centre school, while Norwegian school 3 (NS3) is the school on the outskirts of the city. They are grouped like this because schools 3 are the ones with the largest proportion of pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds. In this English city the minorities are mainly gathered in the city centre while in this Norwegian area they are located

²²³ http://www.utedanningsdirektoratet.no/Brosjyrer/_english/Equity-in-Education-for-all---understanding-central-concepts/ (Accessed 26.+4.09)

²²⁴ My translation.

mainly in a suburb. About three quarters of the pupils in English school 3 were immigrants, refugees with English as their second language or second or third generation descendants of immigrants. In the area surrounding Norwegian school 3 the population was also ethnically mixed. In addition, this school (NS3) had a special status as a 'reception school', which means that new immigrants came there for special courses before entering ordinary schooling. This added to the representation of various minority groups in this school and, because of this, many of the pupils were first generation immigrants. The area around this school (NS3) is otherwise characterised by challenged economical and social backgrounds of those who are ethnically Norwegian, a feature which is most similar to the catchment area of English school 2 (ES2).

Today both England and Norway have second or third generation descendents from immigrants: from the modern era of immigration (England from the 1950s and 1960s and Norway from the 1960s). They might now be said to form groups of ethnic minorities, but there is an issue about how to describe them. Some individuals describe their identities as being influenced by different contexts. Thus, some writers speak of 'hyphenated' identities (for example Norwegian-Pakistani or British-Hindu). In terms of children's sense of identity, Østberg (1998a) describes the Pakistani children she studied in Oslo as having an 'integrated plural identity'. Reflecting concepts of religion and cultures as dynamic and internally contested (Said 1978, Jackson 1997, 2004a), descendants of immigrants should not be considered as static members of certain cultural groups within the English or Norwegian

society. Rather all individuals in our societies shape *their* own identity by drawing on various sources including those related to their forefathers' country of origin (Jackson & Nesbitt 1993, Jackson 1997, Østberg 1998a). In both countries immigrants and asylum seekers still arrive, so it is fair to distinguish between those who themselves have recently migrated and those of families who are now well settled in the English or Norwegian society or indeed were born in England or Norway.²²⁵

English school 2 is located on the outskirts of the city while Norwegian school 2 (ES2) is the most central of the Norwegian schools. The pupils in English school 2 were mostly from a catchment area with a predominantly white population. Characteristics of this area are some government housing for people with economic and/ or social problems but also some asylum seekers live here. A significant number of pupils have special needs. The pupils in this school are mostly indigenous English/ British, but some are visitors from abroad whose parents come to study or work in a nearby University. The pupils in Norwegian school 2 (NS2) were largely of upper middle class in the sense that many belonged to families with high levels of education and earning power. In both schools 2 pupils were largely indigenous white with some examples of pupils or teachers with other backgrounds, but otherwise the schools 2 were the ones where I was less successful in providing closely similar contexts. English school 1 (ES1) and Norwegian school 1 (NS1) are both located in a rural areas with surrounding farmland. There are few ethnic minorities in those schools.

²²⁵ Regarding issues of plurality in society see also chapter 2, 3 and 4.

Are classroom activities reflecting different national styles?

Reflections on and interpretations of observations in the schools

As mentioned above, the uniforms worn by the English pupils represented one very notable difference from the Norwegian situation. With regard to appearance, the English pupils' particular hairstyles and the occasional untucked shirt were the only sign of their individual personalities, while the Norwegian pupils in addition had different youth style clothes. Because of this it was easier to make assumptions about pupils, rightly or wrongly, based on their choice of clothes and styles.

In English school 3 there were nineteen pupils in the group and it was a medium to low ability group (see above). The girls in the group were ethnically mixed; and so were the boys though there were no white boys. Eight of the boys were Asian and three were black. One girl was wearing a headscarf, three girls were of Asian descent, one was black, one mixed race and three were white. In English school 2 there were eighteen pupils in the group; one girl was black, one Asian and the rest were white. In English school 1 there were about twenty pupils and they were all indigenous English.

In Norwegian school 3 there were two Muslim girls, one Bosnian the other an Iraqi Kurd, and they were sitting together. Three Muslim boys, all of Arabic descent, also sat together. Some of the Muslim boys were possibly

Serbs.²²⁶ The pupils were all wearing different youth style clothes and one white boy had a Mohawk haircut. There were sixteen girls and eleven boys in the class in Norwegian school 2. It was a rather colourful group of pupils, but not in terms of being multicultural. The unfolding of the lesson revealed that many of the pupils had good abilities, strong personalities and high self esteem. In Norwegian school 1 the pupils were indigenous Norwegian except for two black boys who were UN quota refugees from Zimbabwe or the Congo. In the second half of the double lesson that I observed the two black boys left to have lessons in Norwegian language.²²⁷ The pupils demonstrated a great deal of independence in their work, and willingness to participate in discussions regarding the topics they had been studying.

A difference which clearly went along national lines was the use and organisation of teaching rooms. In all the English schools the rooms were the RE teacher's rooms, meaning they were decorated to reflect they were RE rooms and the teachers had kept their equipment and belongings there. The different classes came to the specialist teacher's room to receive their RE lessons. For instance in English school 3 there was a poster with different pictures of Jesus from different cultures, another about Buddhism and a third about issues to do with weapons. On the back wall there was a poster with the attainment targets for RE. In front, on the side of a

²²⁶ I know their religion because they were asked about it in the lesson. The priest visiting in the lesson observed in Norwegian school 3 asked the pupils what their religions were, and about 1/3rd of the class raised their hands to confirm that they were Christians, and about eight confirmed that they were Muslims. No one said to belonged to any other religion and they were not asked who would be humanists or 'nothing'.

²²⁷ They did not participate actively and it was obviously not seen as important that they were present in the RE lessons. In the interviews they were not referred to, but when I asked about them the teacher said they were refugees and that they were Christians.

whiteboard was a small table with some religious artefacts and a collection of various religious symbols. On the wall next to it was a picture of Mecca.

In the Norwegian schools the teacher came and went as the subjects shifted while the pupils stayed in the same place. In Norwegian school 2 the pupils had lockers in their room. On the walls were posters of pupils' work in various subjects, for example on the recent tsunami in Asia. There were no visible signs of any RE work or RE teachings there although there is no reason why RE work should not have been displayed. This adds to the impression from structural differences that there is relative more emphasis on subject specialisation in English schools while there is more emphasis on pupils' well-being ('trivsel') in Norwegian schools.

Even though there is, of course, a focus on class environment in England and on quality of teaching in Norway too, we have seen above that the structures suggests a stronger focus on (the quality of) the subjects in England (although measured in a very traditional way) since there is subject specialisation from an earlier age compared to Norway. In contrast in Norway there seems to be more focus on the class milieu and on pupils' welfare and well-being ('trivsel') compared to the English scene. That subject achievements are inspected and published in England but not in Norway also supports this. This can be said to reflect different styles of civility.

When it comes to topics covered, there are a variety of GCSE religious education syllabuses from which the English teachers select the one they want to follow with their pupils. Some have a strong religious studies or comparative religion base, while others focus more on Christianity with Biblical options, and others are more philosophical in content. The teachers here had chosen a syllabus dealing with 'religious responses to life issues'. In Norway, the National Curriculum and its local adjustment decide the content of the teachings. These teachers were following the 2002 curriculum (LS 2002), but were using textbooks which had been made after the 1997 reform (KUF 1996) (see details on curricular history in chapter 4, and discussion on the use of textbooks in chapter 6). For example the textbook used in Norwegian school 1 had a chapter which gave a presentation of all the religions and had a comparative phenomenological approach.

The main topics of the lessons were markedly different in the English and the Norwegian schools. In the English schools it was Christians' (and Muslims') attitudes towards poverty and wealth (ES3), sex in and out of marriage (ES2) and abortion (ES1). The topics related to a life theme type of RE (GCSE) syllabus. One could see these as ethical topics where certain views came across as right or wrong according to particular teachings.²²⁸ In the Norwegian classrooms I would say the topics reflected a

²²⁸ This was clearly reflected in what English pupils said about why they had RE and what they learned, see chapter 7.)

phenomenological approach: central issues in Christian belief in (NS3), 'humans and the holy' (NS2) and the world religions (NS1).²²⁹

Although these are very specific examples, in the English case influenced by public examination syllabuses, I think they reflect differences in the different national RE research and policy traditions, as well as some influence from one tradition to the other (see chapter 3). In England a strand in the tradition of RE, (following Goldman, Loukes etc. see for example Jackson & McGrady 2007) has been the use of 'life themes' while, in Norway, Rian and others at the University of Trondheim introduced ideas from phenomenology which were in part imported from phenomenology in English RE. An example of this is Ninian Smart's ideas of religious dimensions (Rian & Kværne (1983).

Interestingly a similarity between the English and the Norwegian lessons observed was that, of the different possible topics from the curricula/ syllabuses, 'Christianity', or 'Christians' views', were the most represented. A second similarity is that Islam was mentioned, and in one school, (NS1) Judaism was also discussed. In this it could be said to reflect the institutional level of curriculum where on the English side the local syllabus (a statutory document reflecting the 1988 law) requires RE to reflect Christianity and at least two other religion each year while on the Norwegian side, it has to be 55% Christianity (see chapter 4).

²²⁹ Although the concept world religions as such were not discussed.

Regarding teaching methods and styles, all the English lessons were quite strongly teacher led, as all activities were initiated by the teachers (or visitors in a teaching role), and the classes were led from the front the most of the time. For example in English school 3 the main method of teaching was the teacher's lecturing and writing on the blackboard, asking questions for the pupils to respond to.²³⁰ The only pupil to pupil communication was whispering which the teacher attempted to stop. A contrast to this could for instance be found in Norwegian school 1 where the pupils sat in groups doing presentations to each other. After first having studied one of the world religions individually they were now presenting their findings to each other in groups of five, each presenting a different religion.

The conversation in the second lesson in Norwegian school 1²³¹ started with the teacher asking the pupils' opinions on the way they had been working on this topic. All who spoke said they thought it had been a good way for them to learn. One argument for this was that it had been good to be able to learn from each other. In Norwegian school 2 the teacher did not exactly ask the pupils for their opinions, but they expressed them anyway, and she accepted that there were negotiations between the teacher and the pupils regarding having a test or not, and then about what topic they wanted to focus on next. In the second lesson in Norwegian school 1 there was a

²³⁰ An example of an argument against the statement 'none should be rich as long as there are poverty on earth' was that a lot of people mean that if you earned the money you deserve to keep it. As examples of rich people she uses David and Victoria Beckham and Bill Gates. Some of the pupils did not know who Bill Gates was. The people starving in Sudan were used as example of poor people. Compared to the Beckhams she and the people in this class were poor, while compared to those people in Sudan they were all very rich.

²³¹ Where I observed a double lesson.

conversation/discussion in class where there was also a lot of pupil to pupil communication, and where the teacher mainly had a facilitating role.²³²

In English school 1 the main activity was watching an episode of the soap opera East Enders from the 1980s, where a woman named Vicky was in a dilemma over whether to have an abortion or not.²³³ The teacher prepared her pupils for writing an essay on the topic by going through a set of six questions intended to help structure the essay. During the lesson she occasionally stopped the video and underlined relevant points which related to these questions. She asked the pupils questions and thus involved them in dialogue, but in a highly structured way. The questions were leading and seemed to have a 'right' answer for the pupils to uncover. A contrast to this could for instance be found in Norwegian school 2. Here the method of teaching was initially less creative perhaps, consisting of repeating issues related to the theme 'humans and the Holy', referring to the text book and writing on the blackboard.²³⁴ However, the teacher (NS2-T) allowed for pupils to use their initiative to decide the course of the lesson. When the teacher (NS2-T) reminded the pupils of having previously agreed that it is not always possible to describe 'the holy', one of the girls put her hand up and gave the comment that the holy is too 'large' in a way to relate to. This led to more pupils wanting to give their opinions²³⁵ and discussion followed,

²³² The lessons were part of a larger scheme of work about five world religions. Their textbook was one important source of information, but they had also used internet sources and the library.

²³³ She consulted various people who gave their different opinions. At one point she discovered there was something wrong with the baby. During the course of the episode she changed her view from wanting to keep the baby to having the abortion

²³⁴ It was the last of a series of lessons on this topic. In summing up the theme the teacher talked about humans and the holy using examples from several religions.

²³⁵ Examples 'When we are little we have our parents, but as we get to be grownups we still need parenting figures, so we make them, gods, as a replacement for parents.' 'Religion is

very much on the basis of the pupils' interventions. From time to time the teacher contributed viewpoints or summed up major points; in other words the teacher also had a facilitating role.

Dietz *et al.* (2009) reports the main findings in the country specific qualitative (Knauth *et al.* 2008) and quantitative (Valk *et al.* 2009) studies of the EU Framework 6 REDCo Project on religion, education, dialogue and conflict.²³⁶ These studies look into teenage perspectives on religion, interreligious dialogue and/or conflict in the eight European countries involved. One of their findings was that in Norway 'students see school as a place to learn about different religions and discuss religious and ethical issues' (Dietz *et al.* (2009): 12) and one of the conclusions of the English researchers was that RE lessons in school in England were the most likely place for students to engage in discussions (dialogue) between different religious viewpoints, while outside the RE class students were more likely to discuss religion with those from similar backgrounds to themselves. In other words, if (inter religious) dialogue is seen as an educational aim, the RE class is currently the place where this is most likely to take place.

In Norwegian school 2 many pupils were very eager to participate in the pupil initiated discussion about 'humans and the holy', displaying quite an

however sometimes related to power, like class system, like the cast system, and then it is used to say that whatever bad happens to you, you deserve it.' 'Well, Christianity is not exactly perfect. For instance in the story of Adam and Eve, when they are tempted to eat the forbidden apple: the effect of eating the apple is that it gives them knowledge of right and wrong, so prior to this they could not have known the difference between right and wrong. So, how then could they have known that eating the apple was wrong?'

²³⁶ <http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html>

engagement in the topic. At some points they expressed opposite views to one another. The discussion showed both the pupils' courage and willingness to express their own opinions but also to accept the other pupils' opinions even when these were different from their own. This observation supports the REDCo findings that pupils were quite accepting of different views (Dietz *et al.* (2009)). The Norwegian researcher concludes that there is generally a high tolerance among religious students for religious plurality and students from minority backgrounds, though more on the ideological level than in practice. However in this lesson in Norwegian school 2 there was a good pupil to pupil dialogue where there was acceptance for different religious and non religious views, even when very different points of views were argued. For instance, one pupil argued that 'Before we had scientists I can see that humans had the need for religion, but why do we need religion now when we know everything?' and another said 'Humans need religion to explain why things are the way they are.' A boy who clearly came from a religious background still had the courage to argue his contrasting view: 'I believe that it was religion that came to humans and not the opposite. I believe that religions are based on something that happened, that they are based on something that is true. I don't think religion would occur without a reason.' There was acceptance of the right for both views to be held among the pupils in this class.

In Norwegian school 1 there was also dialogue in class, but this was not so much about their opinions, as discussion of elements in their learning. They started summing up of the topic, the world religions, and covered Christianity

and Judaism and were to proceed with the other religions in the next lesson. The conversation had many digressions where the pupils stopped and discussed issues more or less central to Christianity and Judaism respectively. For example, at one point they talked of the Pope's health (John Paul II), since someone commented that they had heard on the news that he had had a heart attack. This led to discussing how new Popes were elected and also about what happened when the Pope was attacked in 1982. In connection with Judaism at one point they were discussing circumcision not just in Judaism but also in Islam. Some were very well informed and especially one girl who stood out as giving very sophisticated responses. The teacher clearly showed that he appreciated her contribution. There was a high degree of pupil involvement and pupil initiative in both lessons in this school (NS1).

The English lessons all seemed to be planned in detail beforehand and delivered in a very structured way.²³⁷ I would say that in the Norwegian schools there was a different style, less formal and less teacher led and lacking this 'starter, main and summing up' structure. For example when the teacher approached the room in English school 1 the pupils lined up outside the classroom. The instruction for a starter activity²³⁸ was given in the hallway before they entered the classroom in a very orderly fashion. This was the clearest contrast to the teacher style I found in Norwegian school 1.

²³⁷ The very use of the term 'deliver' in relation to teaching is another sign of national difference. In the Norwegian context teaching would not be conceptualised as delivering something, but perhaps rather as organising or facilitating learning or perhaps as doing something together with the pupils. This is one of many differences in development in the languages: of how pedagogy/ teaching and learning is conceptualised.

²³⁸ It consisted of patching together pieces of paper with information as a means to repeating the content of the last RE lesson.

Here (NS1) the pupils were mingling in their room as the teacher and I entered. No immediate order occurred, and the atmosphere was very relaxed. The teacher greeted them and told them to get on with their work, which they did. The presentation in groups had started the lesson before, and seemed to continue automatically when the teacher told them to proceed.

Norwegian school 1 stood out as having the most pupil led activities with a teacher in a facilitating role. There were however also variations within the national samples. Of the Norwegian schools, school 3 (NS3) had the most teacher (visitor) led²³⁹ lesson while in Norwegian school 2 the lesson was initially teacher led, but the pupils were both allowed to negotiate future tests and topics of coming lessons, and to initiate discussion. In the English cases the teaching was more formal, organised and rigid in its structure and had teachers in more formal roles. In the English schools teachers were addressed by pupils with their surnames, 'Mrs Lakes'. (ES3-T), 'Miss Haley' (ES2-T) and 'Miss Fields' (ES1-T), while in all the Norwegian schools the pupils used the teachers' first names, 'Oline' (NS3-T), 'Ingunn' (ES2-T) and 'Jon' (NS1-T).²⁴⁰ This added to a general impression of a more formal tone in the English schools and a more informal atmosphere in the Norwegian schools.

²³⁹ The interview with the pupils indicated that the class was normally quite strongly teacher led, as they complained that it was just 'Oline' talking all the time, see chapter 7.

²⁴⁰ Pseudonyms used here.

Two schools, one Norwegian (NS3) and one English (ES2) had visitors in class presenting insider Christian views. A priest from the local State Church congregation was visiting Norwegian school 3. She was a woman in her late 40s wearing a red leather jacket, high heeled red shoes and a red scarf and earrings. Issues she talked about included God's nature and Jerusalem being a holy place for three religions.²⁴¹ She said she thought it was important to know what makes 'us' different from other religions. This could be seen as her supporting the idea of learning about different religions. After a period of the visitor doing most of the talking pupils were losing attention. This improved again when she attempted to involve the pupils with questions and especially when, towards the end of the lesson, she told a personal story of how she got a strong calling from God despite initially being opposed to the ordination of women priests. This commanded everyone's attention.

English school 2 also had visitors, a group called 'Youth for Christ',²⁴² to present an insider Christian view on the topic 'sex in and out of marriage'. The moral was that it was best to wait until marriage. The group was leading the class from the front the whole lesson, and they also followed this pattern of starter, main activity and summing up in the end.²⁴³ Like the other English

²⁴¹ In more detail, topics she covered was Jerusalem being holy for three religions, and for Christians because this was where Christ was crucified. She asked about the trinity of the Christian God, (and one of the Muslim girls' answered). The priest further explained about God's nature - being human and divine at once - about Jesus being a bridge between God and humans, about conflict in the religion; the reformation, Northern Ireland, ecumenical work, about Christian holidays and about prayer.

²⁴² The class teacher had a student teacher on placement from a university, a Christian with a Pakistani background. He was responsible for the lesson I observed and had invited this group to present their view on this topic.

²⁴³ In the main activity they talked about what influenced people with regard to sexual behaviours, for example parents, friends and the media. The visitors compared God to a loving parent who did not want their children to play where it was not safe. The moral was

lessons I observed it seemed very well planned and organized, which is interesting because they were visitors. The scheme they had prepared for school visits was following the same pattern of teaching as could be observed in lessons where there were no visitors.

Different *national imaginaries* could be seen to include certain basic ideas about schooling, especially about what constitutes good quality teaching. This facilitates dealing with the same international challenges, for example dialogue in RE lessons, combating prejudice, learning about different religions and life views, in different nations. As stated above, I am commenting on specific examples and have no foundation to judge whether they represent a national tendency. One should note, for example, that in Kevin O'Grady's work (2003) there is more student initiative, but O'Grady was specifically experimenting with ways to include and motivate his students. Also, my English example reflects teaching for public examinations. Teaching might be less rigid structured in the case of younger pupils where exam pressures are not so dominant, but the culture of meeting attainment targets is still there. Then again the new reform in Norway from 2006 introduces similar kinds of targets (see chapter 4). However, in my sample, the lessons in all of the English school were very

that it was best to wait until marriage. They showed a video of an old moralist man who told a group of young people that it was best to have as little sex as possible. This was presented as an example of a stereotype and not representative of Christians view. God, they claimed, had created sex for people to enjoy but had also provided rules so that it would be safe. At one point they asked if any of the pupils would fancy a chocolate, and a boy volunteered. Before offering the chocolate bar to him a person from the group licked it. This put the pupil off wanting the chocolate and symbolized how sex was better if the persons involved were untouched by others.

teacher led, though in controlled ways they invited pupils to contribute and involve themselves.

Because of the different styles, reflected in factors like more acceptances of pupils' initiative in the Norwegian sample and a more rigid structure in the English sample, it was easier to observe pupil's interest and involvements in the topics taught in the Norwegian lessons. In Norwegian school 3 which was most strongly teacher led of the Norwegian schools the pupils seemed interested in the topic Christian beliefs in the beginning of the lesson, but they lost interest after a while because of the priest doing most of the talking. In Norwegian school 2 pupils did not seem too engaged in the beginning, when the teacher led the class from the front, but their interest was triggered by the opportunity to discuss. Most pupils in Norwegian school 1 were participating actively in the lessons that I observed, but interest and degree of engagement seemed to vary, which the teacher judged as acceptable. For instance when pupils were reading their texts to each other, when some groups finished this resulted in their just sitting, looking abstracted, small talking or walking around. However, one group was so eager in their presentation that they stayed in during the break to finish. The pupils seemed to be allowed to progress according to their individual pace and interest. Quite a few of them (NS1) showed a strong interest in the discussions in the second lesson but some also seemed rather indifferent.

In English school 3 (NS3) the pupil group did not look very interested in the topic (poverty and wealth). Some were obviously not paying attention, but some engaged in answering the teacher's questions. At one point the teacher asked them to make a start on the essay they were to write. Despite the teaching being very clear, some of the pupils had not been able to follow her arguments. For example, one boy sitting in front asked what question they were supposed to answer, although this was written on the board at the beginning of the lesson and was still standing there. When asked, some had difficulties in distinguishing between wealth and poverty.²⁴⁴ However, some gave interesting answers and some of the chatting among the pupils was actually about the topic of the lesson. Of the English classes this was the one with most 'chat': the teacher did try to stop them but was less rigid in her attempt than the other lessons I observed.²⁴⁵

A group of 14 year olds would be expected to be interested in the theme of the lesson in English school 2 (sex in and out of marriage), and I think they were. The pupils were invited to participate actively through the types of activities chosen, in a quite structured way. The visitors introduced themselves through the starter activity. They gave some 'facts' about

²⁴⁴ It is tempting (but unpleasant) to say that a reason for this might have been that this was a so called low ability group. If pupils are divided in ability group this is perhaps not ideal for pupils learning from each other.

²⁴⁵ It is another issue related to different styles of discipline that in the English classrooms 'chat' seemed less acceptable and was more or less effectively stopped by the teachers. However this also varied somewhat between English and Norwegian classrooms respectively and again Norwegian school 3 stood out as the most disciplined. Small talk did occur in Norwegian school 3, but was silently stopped by the class teacher (not the visitor) who went and touched pupils' shoulders and gave them a 'look'. There are examples of a good deal of talk in some English classes, for example in O'Grady (2003) and also in examples in the REDCo qualitative study where having a chance to talk and express opinions was seen as a feature (Ipgrave & McKenna 2008).

themselves and the pupils were asked to stand up if they believed a point to be true or remain seated if they thought it was false.²⁴⁶ Afterwards they made the pupils stand up if they agreed to certain opinions: 'to stand up for their opinion', and they were in some cases asked to share that opinion. The pupils were active and responsive although some seemed a little insecure, looking around to observe what their classmate meant before 'standing up' for an opinion for instance. There were some giggles but some looked quite serious. My impression was that this lesson made some sort of impact on many of them (see chapter 7). In English school 1 it was not easy to observe signs of whether the pupils were interested or enjoyed the lesson regarding abortion, but some were quite active in responding. One girl at one point made the remark that she hoped they would not be watching any more soap operas, but I am not convinced this meant she did not enjoy the lesson.

National styles and civil enculturation

I started this section with the question if classroom activities reflect different *national styles*? In summing up this part I have found that in many instances they are. This is not to disregard the great variation within national samples. However, differences along national lines are for instance wearing of school uniforms, division into ability groups, the way classrooms are used, the focus on subject vs. the well being of pupils, ethical themes regarding different people's views vs. more phenomenological content about the religions as such, more teacher led in the one case (England) and more pupils' initiative in the other (Norway), and the use of teachers surnames vs. first names.

²⁴⁶ One 'fact' presented was 'I am from Jamaica and married to an American woman'. The truth was he was from Rwanda married to an English woman..

One could see this as supporting Schiffauer and his co-researchers' (2004) view that a nation specific civil enculturation²⁴⁷ can be traced in all schools.

Reflecting on the empirical studies in the methodology

With regard to my methodology I see my case studies in relation to the wider context which is defined and limited by the combination of Goodlad's levels and the three dimensions of subnational, national and supranational processes. This is the function of the fieldwork here: to look at aspects of practice in relation to those 'more remote' levels (Goodlad & Su 1992: 239). Goodlad sees the levels as more or less remote from that level which is most important, and 'the final test of all curriculum practice': the experiential level. This is how within my theoretical framework (see chapter 2), it becomes logical to consider the societal and institutional level as the context of the cases. Burawoy (1991) and Leganger-Krogstad (2007) represents other ways of making this logical: In extended case method (Burawoy 1991), a case must be considered in a wider context than just the immediate local topography of, in my case, the schools. Leganger-Krogstad (2007) includes globalisation as a contextual factor for RE today.

When it comes to the dimensions the sub national dimension is important as this would be the close context of the cases. The material discussed here in chapter 5 reflects the sub national level, but since the sample is not representative, this is discussed in relation to ideas about the national

²⁴⁷ *Civil enculturation* is 'the process by which an individual acquires the mental representations (...) and patterns of behaviour required to function as a member of (civil) culture, (...) taking place as a part of the process of education' (Schiffauer *et al.* (2004: 2).

dimension, that different *national imaginaries* give schooling different national specific *styles*. The national dimension is expanded through applying the concepts *civil culture, national imaginary and civil enculturation* from Schiffauer *et al.* (2004). Applying these concepts I can discuss how findings in the case study are representative of the imaginaries, even if I can not say if it is representative statistically. I could say something about characteristics reflecting different styles of civility, like with the examples of the school uniform and inspection.

Initially even the supranational dimension can be seen as the wider context, as Leganger-Krogstad (2007) suggests. Teachers and pupils might have a direct participation in supranational processes, especially in RE where the topics often relate to world religions, life views or ethics (for example in the human rights), which are international phenomena. Chapter 2 includes reflection on how a supranational dimension influences RE, and I think I have demonstrated how that influences both the societal level (chapter 3) and institutional level (chapter 4). However, in the empirical part I explore how the supranational dimension affects practice. Being an explicit comparison of English and Norwegian RE however this study is more than a discussion of how supranational processes affect each of the systems, and because of this the national dimension will be important. With regards to this the ideas of *national imaginaries* and *social enculturation* are useful.

As I try out this same methodology in chapters 3 and 4 as well, these chapters are also considered the context of the cases. Only through investigating what goes on in practice is it possible to discuss, for example, the institutional levels relevant for practice, or to what degree document on the institutional level reflects the level of practice. The institutional level is where we find legally binding aims and a description of content for RE, so the relationship to practice is interesting even from a legal point of view.

Afdal (2006) interviewed fifteen teachers (Afdal 2006: 25) in his study. He investigates how the concept of *tolerance* is understood in the intentional and perceived curriculum in Norwegian compulsory education. His basic conceptual framework comes from Goodlad's theories of levels of curriculum, but he uses a different definition of the levels from that which I use and sets out to interpret tolerance as a curricular value in three different curricula domains: perceived, formal and ideological. He argues for more communication between the levels, but tends to see them as separate systems (Afdal 2006: 332). He concludes that there is a lack of communication between the domains, and suggests two alternative explanations for this: one is failure of implementation of formal curricula (seen as normative) which he basically rejects for the second alternative: '(...) the multicultural classroom is not a place for teaching tolerance, but for finding out what tolerance is all about' (Afdal 2006: 350). This I see as an argument for policy to be based on better knowledge and understanding of the levels of practice, which I support. Taking Afdal's (2006) point, there is also a question of how relevant those documents on the institutional level

are for teachers and pupils in practice. This issue will be investigated in chapters 6 (teachers' perspectives) and 7 (pupils' perspectives).

Conclusion: What is compared and why?

In this chapter I have introduced the fieldwork and explained its purpose in the overall structure of the thesis. The main purpose of this chapter has been to contextualise the empirical part, and the analysis in chapters 6 and 7, but this is also done comparatively. I have pointed out a few differences in the education systems which I interpret to represent the different *national styles* of civility in those systems. I have discussed examples of observations pointing out elements that might be said to reflect the different *national styles*. This I see as a valuable context for the interpretation of the teachers' perspectives in chapter 6, and the pupils' perspectives in chapter 7, which in this thesis represents the instructional and experiential level of curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992).

In this chapter (5) the sub national dimension is present through the observations about and from the schools: the cases, and the local factors which influence those schools. At the same time the national dimension has also been focused, through applying Schiffauer and his co-researchers' (2004) concepts (for example social enculturation and national imaginary). This provides a framework for my interpretation of a non representative sample in the context of a comparative methodology, since it makes it

possible to consider differences in styles between English and Norwegian schools which reflect different social enculturation and different *national imaginaries*. However I have also kept in mind the supranational dimension as some imaginaries might also be international.

In the next chapter (6), I will explore the instructional level, which is represented in this thesis mainly through interviews with six teachers. Following that, in chapter 7, the experiential level will be discussed, and that is represented in this thesis mainly through interviews with six groups of students.

Chapter 6

Instructional level: Teachers' perspectives

Introduction

In this chapter I explore the *instructional level* of the curriculum (Goodlad & Su 1992, see chapter 2, 8). In one way this is identical in England and Norway, but the differences lie in the ways in which this level relies on regulations and expectations which come from the more remote levels of curriculum (as described in chapters 3 and 4). These are 'more remote' from the perspective that the most important level is the experiential level: (Goodlad & Su 1992: 239).²⁴⁸ Nevertheless, it is on the instructional level that the final decision is made about what is delivered in the classroom.

Teachers' perspectives are represented mainly through six semi-structured interviews I conducted with the teachers of the lessons that I observed (see chapter 5). The interview schedules were designed to explore the relationship between the levels of curriculum (see appendix 1), and were related to central aims expressed at the institutional level of curriculum. The institutional level of curriculum was, in the English cases, represented by the Education Reform Act of 1988 and the Local Agreed Syllabus (two different ones).²⁴⁹ In the Norwegian cases the examples from the institutional level

²⁴⁸ The levels of the curriculum, according to Goodlad & Su (1992), are societal, institutional, instructional and experiential.

²⁴⁹ With pupils of this age group the GCSE syllabuses, organised on a national basis, have a greater determining influence on what is taught in class than the local syllabi which tend to be sidelined at this level. This was however not considered for framing the questionnaires,

that the questions were based on were the law²⁵⁰ and the National Curriculum for RE (LS 2002).

Based on these documents it was possible to formulate *almost* identical questions for the English and the Norwegian interviews. In other words, regarding the aims for RE at the institutional level as specified above, there were strong similarities between England and Norway.²⁵¹ At the same time I must note that differences in phraseology in those documents' descriptions of 'Christianity and other religions' were reflected in teachers' answers. Further, there were topics that I chose not to ask about²⁵² because I attempted to confine the interviews to issues where there seemed to be direct parallels at the institutional level. The schedules for the interviews had four main sections related to *general aims for RE, the content of the teaching, learning about and from religion, and respect and personal growth*. In analysing the material there was clear coherence between the two last sections.²⁵³ For this part of the research, my key research questions were:

- What are important similarities and differences between the instructional level in England and Norway as expressed by teachers in this sample material?
- How do we account for these?

but is taken into account in the analysis.

²⁵⁰ at this time reflecting the changes in 2002, see appendix 2.

²⁵¹ See chapter 4 for more details about similarities and differences in the institutional level

²⁵² Philosophy, secular life views such as secular humanism, and ethical issues.

²⁵³ Others interested in the role of the teacher have had an interest in looking at the importance of teachers' biography in relation to their style of teaching (Everington & Sikes (2001), Haakedal (2004), van der Want et al. (2009).

- How do we account for these with reference to the other levels (institutional and societal) of curriculum?

The teachers and their contexts

The context of the teachers includes personal issues, such as their age, educational background,²⁵⁴ teaching skills and religious affiliations. Further, it also includes subnational factors such as local geo-culture and school environment, and national factors including *national imaginaries* (Schiffauer *et al* 2004, see chapter 5). Supranational processes could also be seen as part of their context (Leganger-Krogstad 2007), and international links may, for example, be their pupils' connections to other countries, or their own or their pupils' participation in supranational processes through media or travel (globalisation), or the fact that the major religions taught are themselves international phenomena. Actually *the local* and *the global* became two sides of the same coin when teachers drew on the experiences of the pupils in their classes. For example Hajj is a yearly global event, but, if anyone in the class has been to Mecca, or someone in their family is in Mecca, this event is both *local* and *global*.

Age wise all the English teachers and 'Ingunn' (NS2-T) were relatively young (between 25 and 35), while 'Jon' (NS1-T) and 'Oline' (NS3-T) were older (Between 50 and 60). Haakedal (2004) investigated how the role of RE

²⁵⁴ For details, see appendix 3.

teacher of compulsory (Norwegian) school was formed.²⁵⁵ She found that teachers of different ages are 'influenced by their own time' and that the older teachers tend to be more influenced by local geo-culture while a younger teacher typically would be more globally oriented.²⁵⁶ Lund Johannessen (2009)²⁵⁷ has recently conducted research which shows that Norwegian teachers seem to value 'sameness', while research on RE teachers in England includes studies reported by Everington and Sikes (2001)²⁵⁸ and Everington (2009)²⁵⁹ which both illustrate how English RE teachers view diversity positively and see promoting understanding of and a positive view of cultural difference as imperative in their teaching.

English secondary schools usually have a Faculty of Humanities and a Department of Religious Education, to which all the teachers in this sample

²⁵⁵ Including to what extent their philosophies of life influenced the forming process, and how much occupational freedom individual RE teachers had. It was a qualitative empirical study of general teachers who were also RE teachers, a common position in the Norwegian schools. Haakedal (2004) interviewed primary school teachers in three different Norwegian counties. Based on a quite extensive material from three sets of data, in 'REPILOT' she interviewed 17 teachers, in 'REBUS 1' she collected 100 texts and in 'REBUS 2' 14 teachers participated.

²⁵⁶ Haakedal (2002, 2004) presented a typology of teachers: which demonstrates that theories of culture generations as well as theory of life interpretations explain variations in how the role of RE teacher is formed 1. The traditional religious elderly teacher; who systematically have additional assignments as an RE teacher specifically: 2. The self conscious young Christian teacher; with personal initiatives in religious socialisation in school: 3. The tradition conscious sceptic who loyally conducts his/ her role as RE and class teacher: 4. The self conscious agnostic RE teacher, often aged 40/50, emphasizing values education: 5. The privately religious younger teacher with occasional experience in teaching RE. See also Slanders' (2004) description of Haakedal's study.

²⁵⁷ A study in the REDCo project in a book about *Teachers Responding to Religious Diversity in Europe* (van der Want et al 2009) which was based on qualitative interviews of six Norwegian teachers

²⁵⁸ Who followed 'a cohort of students on a one year post graduate training course for secondary RE teachers through their course and into their first year of training' (Everington and Sikes 2001:183). These English students/ teachers all had degrees for example in theology, religious studies, and sociology, philosophy or women's studies. Like Haakedal Everington and Sikes were also interested in the importance of the teachers' own life views, and what they see as aims for RE (more below).

²⁵⁹ A part of the REDCo research, in a book about *Teachers Responding to Religious Diversity in Europe* (van der Want et al 2009)

refer.²⁶⁰ This does not have a parallel in the Norwegian 'ungdomsskole' (lower secondary) schools, but there will be someone officially responsible for the subjects.²⁶¹ We have little knowledge of how much work is done in this capacity, and this is not something which the Norwegian teachers in the sample refer to. Many English secondary school heads of department will have some form of specialist qualification, but some do not. Only a few would have a masters degree in RE or religious studies, and a tiny number would have a doctorate.²⁶² A key point is that in both countries RE is in many cases taught by non specialists, but in Norway many would be formally qualified for teaching RE without being subject specialists (see appendix 3).²⁶³

Describing their school and its RE

There was a difference in English and Norwegian teachers' ability to describe their school and its RE. The Norwegian teachers had difficulties with describing their school in relation to other schools, and mostly referred to their personal experiences. The English teachers, however, immediately knew what criteria to describe their schools by and did not refer to their personal experience. All the English teachers also included comments on how their schools were improving. For example 'Ruth' (ES3 – T) described

²⁶⁰ The English schools are organized in Faculties and Departments, so in a school there will be, for instance, a Faculty of Humanities and a Faculty of Maths and Science. This is a kind of organization we traditionally only find in Universities and University Colleges in Norway, but also now in 'Videregående' (Upper secondary). In the Faculty of Humanities in an English secondary school there will be a head of Department for Religious Education. In primary schools there is usually a designated co-ordinator of RE, but these are usually non-specialists who may have had some in-service training in RE.

²⁶¹ See Appendix 3.

²⁶² Only very few persons hold a PhD in pedagogy of religion in Norway, and all (who still work) work in higher education (see chapter 3).

²⁶³ This is the case with one of the teachers in this sample, 'Ingunn' (NS2-T).

her school as a 'state run inner city school, with approximately 1000 pupils from 11 to 18 years of age, which achieves well'. 'Vicky' (ES2-T) described her school as follows:

(...) it's a mixed comprehensive. We've got about 600 pupils on our role. A significant amount of our pupils have special education needs. We have an area within the school which caters for special needs children. And we're a growing school and an improving school. Our results are getting better. And we're attracting pupils from outside the (...) catchment area now (...).

An example from the Norwegian teachers' responses is given by 'Jon' (NS1-T):

Wow. I have only worked in this school you know, I have worked here 25 years when this term is over. So, I can't say anything about this school in relation to other schools. My perceptions about the (Norwegian) school in general I have through the media, you know, TV, radio and newspapers and ... so it is difficult for me to say anything about that I think. (NS1-T)

I was not able to get him to say anything about how the pupils were achieving either. Instead he said he thought they had a good school where most pupils learned a lot and were *thriving* (well-being).²⁶⁴ 'Oline' (NS3-T)

²⁶⁴ 'Trivsel' (thriving) is a frequently used concept in Norwegian context, and one of the things which may in fact be inspected. It refers to the degree to which pupils feel well in school.

answered in a similar way, but 'Ingunn' (NS2-T) described her school as having well resourced pupils who usually had good exam results and a good reputation in the city. Perhaps a reason why she was more knowledgeable was related to her age. Haakedal (2004) suggests that older teachers tend to be more influenced by local geo-culture while a younger teacher would be more globally oriented. It may be that 'Ingunn' as a younger teacher was more aware of criteria for comparing schools from knowledge of other countries' educational systems, for example.

One explanation for the different abilities to describe schools and their achievements is to be found in the different culture for inspections and for ranking schools in the two countries (see chapter 5). In the Norwegian context it was not altogether unexpected that the Norwegian teachers had problems identifying criteria for describing their schools. They had little knowledge about real difference between schools within the unitary school system, because little research is done or communicated to them regarding this. The English teachers, however, knew exactly what criteria were normally used to describe schools, which could also be expected in view of the way Ofsted identifies explicit areas that need improving (see chapter 5).

The English teachers also volunteered information about what the school did to improve. For example 'Ruth' (ES3-T) explained that RE in her school is well respected among staff and pupils and is quite high on the school's

agenda.²⁶⁵ In the Norwegian case, the question about describing RE in their school was answered with reference to activities in RE lessons. In Norwegian school 1, I probed to see if the teacher might give similar answers to the English teachers. After having talked about sorts of activities they do in RE lessons, 'Jon' (NS1-T) asked if this was the kind of answer I was looking for:

O: (...) in England they are preoccupied with issues such as whether a subject has got a low or a high profile, for example in relation to other subjects. For example, in this one school I visited, they talked about how they worked to improve the subject's status in that school, to get more recognition from the management and things like that.

L: Mm. This is not a known approach to a subject here, I must say.

The question of a subject's status was not seen as meaningful in the Norwegian case, and I found it irrelevant to ask it again in the other Norwegian schools. There was no talk about school or subjects improvements, nor were concrete areas for improvement identified or mentioned by the Norwegian teachers.

²⁶⁵ Another example of the same was 'Vicky' (ES2-T) who said: '(...) my predecessor (as head of the RE department) was part time for starts, so I don't think that did anything for the credibility of the subject. It wasn't a GCSE subject; it was a certificate of achievement subject. And it was sort of tacked on and there wasn't much subject specialism, because when the lady who was officially head of RE only was here part time, when she wasn't delivering lessons, it was taught by a number of non – specialists around the school. ... things like environment and teaching strategies and all the things that are making RE better now, weren't in place then.' (ES2-T). (Half GCSE certificates compulsory RE, while full GCSE means they do more RE than they have to, and that RE is prioritized in this school.)

Aims of RE

All the teachers agreed with the aims of RE that I read to them, which is interesting in relation to the idea of social enculturation: that there is a socialisation into certain civil values or ideas through school activities.²⁶⁶ The aims that I read to the teachers were, on the English side, that RE should be about Christianity and the other principal religions in Britain, that it should be non-denominational, promoting spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils. In Norway, the aims were that KRL should provide *thorough knowledge* of the Bible and Christianity as cultural heritage, and the evangelical Lutheran faith, give *knowledge* about other Christian denominations²⁶⁷, provide knowledge of other world religions, life views and ethical and philosophical questions, promote understanding and respect for Christian and Humanistic values and promote understanding, respect and dialogue between people with different opinions in questions regarding faith and life views.

All the English teachers identified promoting a positive attitude towards other people as especially important, which is consistent with the findings of Everington & Sikes (2001)²⁶⁸ and Everington (2009: 32): 'All are concerned

²⁶⁶ It was also the case with English and Norwegian teachers in a study in the REDCo project to, that they all agreed with the formal aims of the subjects (van der Want *et al.* 2009).

²⁶⁷ The difference between *through knowledge* and just *knowledge* was eliminated in the 2005 curricula and law change, see chapter 4.

²⁶⁸ They stress the need for RE teachers to reflect on their own world views, values and attitudes, the need to understand racism, and the need to have knowledge and understanding of the pupils' world views, values and attitudes. Everington & Sikes (2001) concludes that RE teachers should resolve tension between their personal and professional beliefs and goals, and that in order to effectively contribute to reducing prejudice and promoting intercultural understanding, pupils must be given the opportunity to explore their

to promote an understanding of and a positive view of religious and cultural diversity'. On the Norwegian side there was a different tendency: 'Oline' (NS3-T), for example, made one comment on the aims: that the first – giving pupils thorough knowledge of the bible and Christianity as cultural heritage and the evangelical Lutheran faith – was 'quite important actually'. This is consistent with Haakedal's (2004) typology that the two older teachers were more focused on traditional content and values. 'Ingunn's' (NS2-T) sole remark was that learning about *other religions* and promoting respect for *Christian and Humanist values* are perhaps especially important. This could be explained with reference to her local context where voices of active members of the Norwegian Humanist Association made themselves very clear (see chapter 5, 7). This is however also consistent with Haakedal's (2004) finding that younger teachers would be more focused on global issues.

The aims of RE as defined here are quite similar but, while English teachers saw promoting harmony between diverse societal groups as essential, the Norwegian teachers tended to see learning about 'our cultural heritage' as more central.²⁶⁹ It is an interesting contrast that the Norwegian teachers did not see addressing plurality as equally central, even if this was *the* new element in the 1997 reform and has been at the heart of the debates (including the legal cases) and the various curricula since (see chapter 4). An important aspect of these debates has, of course, been resistance to this change, and disagreements over what it means that Norway is now a plural

own world views, values and attitudes.

²⁶⁹ This was less true for the youngest Norwegian teacher 'Ingunn' (NS2-T).

society (see chapter 3). In the English case other aims of RE, for instance promoting a cultural heritage perspective (*Christianity in Britain*), was not seen as central to the teachers, even though this perspective also exists on the English side (see chapter 3 and 4).

The importance of RE

Also here there was a tendency among the English teachers to see the importance of RE in relation to plurality, while, on the Norwegian side, there was more of a cultural heritage perspective. Again the age of the teachers could be seen as a factor as two of the Norwegian teachers were older²⁷⁰, but seen in relation both to the curricular and legal texts (institutional level of curriculum see chapter 4) and differences in the debates of RE at the societal level (chapter 3), this can be interpreted as demonstrating different ideas of plurality and integration within the different *national imaginaries* (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004).

(...) Especially now I think we are moving into a religious age. People are much more aware of religion because of the media. A lot would say that people are less aware of religion because there is much bias and that things are incorrect in the media. For example like the September 11th attacks, that is full of... um, you know, anti Islamic feeling, and kind of lots

²⁷⁰ Of the Norwegian teachers 'Ingunn' (NS2-T) had a more pluralistic approach to what the importance of RE was: for example that it gives pupils opportunity to discuss things that are important to them, for instance in relation to culture, and understanding other cultures: 'They 'chat' online, they have contact with many different young people, and it is important in relation to tolerance to have knowledge both about yourself and the world you are in.' (NS2-T).

of, you know, lots of people's misconceptions about what Islam is. And I mean I think we need to counteract that in school. (ES3-T)

'Ruth' (ES3-T) had the broader debate about religion in society from the societal level (see chapter 2 and 3) as her frame of reference for formulating what she saw as the importance of RE. 'Ruth' (ES3-T) saw RE as an important aspect of education because 'if you can't tolerate and understand people who are different, then I think education is a little bit pointless really'. 'Ruth' (ES3-T) displayed in her answers an individual interpretation of the debate about what goes on around her in society, and, in a sense, she participated directly in the debates at the societal level.²⁷¹ She could also be seen to refer to the general educational aims of RE as contributing to citizenship and social cohesion, which also relate to those same societal debates. 'Ruth' (ES3-T) was teaching in the most plural school in the English sample. For her, RE had an immediate importance for her pupils for two reasons. The first is tolerance and understanding, and the second is to acknowledge the expertise of those who bring a lot of religious experience to the school.²⁷²

²⁷¹ This is interesting for example in relation to ideas of secularisation/ desecralisation and resacralisation, which for instance Berger (1999) and even Habermas (2006) write about. Interested to see how she would relate further to this debate, I ask her if she believed we are developing from a not so religious to a more religious world, and she adds these nuances to her answer: '(...)I think it has always been important, but I think now with, you know, the media is so fast and is so readily available everywhere, and religion has a much higher profile on the agenda, mainly because of religious problems, religious conflicts that are happening. And I think people are starting to, um, to understand that there are different religions. I think that in Britain 50 years ago, people could only name one religion; maybe two if you were lucky, um, but I think now people know about religion more and it is in the press more, and I don't think people are becoming more religious, I think people are becoming more aware of religion and religious choice, and religious freedom I suppose. (ES3-T)

²⁷² I think we owe it to our pupils, if they're coming in with lots of religious knowledge and understanding (...) who have never had the opportunity to express these beliefs in an academic way through examination (...) I think we owe it to our pupils to build on that. And I think we are lucky that we can do that. (ES3-T)

The English teachers all saw religious plurality among pupils as a strength for RE, providing good conditions for doing RE well.²⁷³ Where the school's populations were more 'monocultural' (schools 1 and 2), the lack of actual plurality in the pupil population was seen as a challenge, but also as a factor making RE important. For example 'Sally' (ES1-T) stressed that widening pupils' experiences and understanding of other people was especially important in her school since many of its pupils had little first hand experience with the mix of cultures and religion in society at large. In all the English cases RE's importance was seen in relation to education for living in a plural society. This is consistent with findings in Everington & Sikes (2001), and Everington (2009).

In contrast, the Norwegian teachers tended to see plurality as more of a challenge to RE, although when I asked leading questions about how plurality could be seen as an asset to RE, they did see this point. However the totality of their answers, and the way the pupils answered as well (chapter 7), indicate that the positive way of thinking about plurality as an asset to RE is not established as *main* idea of the importance of RE among the Norwegian teachers. For example 'Oline' (NS3-T), the teacher in the most plural of the Norwegian schools (NS3), said:

It has got to do with, I would say, having some knowledge of one's own background, and most of the pupils *are* still members of the State Church.

²⁷³ Also consistent with findings in Everington (2009)

(...) I also think those who come from other cultures should know a little about things that are happening in this country, like why we celebrate Christmas and Easter, and things like that. (NS3-T)

Oline (NS3-T) did think that KRL was an important subject, but she emphasised the cultural heritage perspective, which at the institutional and the societal levels can be found along side the aim that RE should address the plural context. This is consistent with findings in Lund Johannessen (2009: 104): 'But more than that, they value KRL as a subject that serves the goal of making students more reflective and aware of their own faith, opinions and tradition.' However when 'Oline' (NS3-T) said 'one's own background' the *subject* in this sentence was a State Church member. In exemplifying knowledge which *all* need she pointed to those 'from other cultures' needing to have knowledge about Norwegian customs, for example 'why we celebrate Christmas and Easter': but her *we* is one which includes mainstream Norwegian Christians, and excludes, for example, both those belonging to other religions or life views and Christian immigrants – who might celebrate Christmas and Easter in different ways but largely for the same reasons. 'Oline' (NS3-T) was not inclusive in her choice of words²⁷⁴:

NS3-T: Some (pupils) think the subject is OK, some find it interesting, and some say that: 'No I am not a Christian so I do not want it'. You have all

²⁷⁴ Ingunn (NS2-T) have a broader and more inclusive *we* than 'Oline' and in my interpretation relates to the same kind of grand debates about religion, society and plurality as Ruth (ES3-T) above.

shades, and some say 'OK, that is fine, this is something I do not really want to know about, but I am still a Muslim'.

O: Yeah? That is ...

NS3-T: And I say: fine, we do learn about Islam as well.

O: Yes!

NS3-T: And then there are the most eager secular humanists that would rather we stopped teaching Christianity altogether.

O: Mm.

NS3-T: Especially if we are reading from the Bible. I try to tell them that, listen to me, well, what this is actually also cultural history, it is not just religion.

Even though it is stressed in the curricular texts that teaching about 'other' religions and life views are a part of Norwegian RE on equal terms as Christianity, there is a feeling here that these 'others' are somehow an addition to that which is the main focus, namely teaching about Christianity/ the Norwegian tradition. One factor forming 'Oline's' (NS3-T) answer above was the presence of secular humanist voices: something which we have seen consistently through all the curricular levels (chapter 3, 4, 7) on the Norwegian side. Her approach to secular humanist critics here is, however, not that of inclusion, for instance in her use of 'we': rather it is trying to convince *them* that knowledge of the bible, for example, is useful for *them* too. 'Jon' (NS1-T) too expressed a very traditional view of the importance of the subject, leaning heavily on a cultural heritage perspective:

(NS1-T) Well, it has got something to do with 'barnelærdom' (childhood learning), and deeply ingraining in, or the confidence in these things, or the deep rooting in these things, 'barnetroen' (childhood faith) and things like that.

O: Oh, really?

(NS1-T) Of course, yes, well, yes it is, I guess it is, well I think it is natural that this has its place in school, frankly, and...

It is difficult to translate the concepts of 'barnelærdom' or 'barnetro' adequately. A direct translation of the first would be 'childhood learning' and the frame of reference is from very traditional Christian RE: to nurture children into religion as children, as a means to create a deep rooted sense of religious identity. 'Barnetro' could perhaps be translated as 'childhood faith' or 'childlike faith or a 'child's faith', referring to Christian nurture.²⁷⁵ However the concept 'barnelærdom' ('childhood learning) has been generalised in the language not necessarily to refer to religious learning, but rather to something essential that is learned in childhood. With reference to the Norwegian unitary school tradition it could be understood as a common base of knowledge that we share, and that forms a basis for living together in a society (social cohesion). The concept *social enculturation* perhaps covers it (see above). 'Barnelærdom' (childhood learning) could also be seen in relation to *formation*: 'bildung' or 'social cohesion' in society. 'Barnetro' including includes the word faith ('tro') and has a more direct reference to religion, but both concepts are very common and have a varied

²⁷⁵ Or to the special kind of faith that children have, and that Jesus values especially according to the Bible (for example in Mark: 10: 14-15).

use in the language. One should therefore perhaps not emphasise the religious reference too much.²⁷⁶

However, seen together with 'Oline's' answers above, these two teachers' answers form an interesting contrast to what the English teachers saw as the importance of RE. This contrast is also consistent with differences between findings reported in Everington (2009) and Lund Johannessen (2009). In the English case, the view of RE as contributing to intercultural education already has a long tradition, and is a well established, even dominating, aspect of RE from the teachers' (and school leadership) perspectives. On the Norwegian side, as we have seen also in chapter 3, this is not equally true. However, while 'Oline' (NS3-T) and 'Jon' (NS1-T) leant on the aspects of the societal debate that enhance the importance of Christianity as part of Norwegian cultural heritage, 'Ingunn' (NS2-T), like the English teachers, leant more towards the 'plurality' end of those debates.

My case studies suggest that interpretations made by teachers at the instructional level of curriculum reflect different perceptions of plurality. Despite participating in many of the same supranational processes, the differences which come from the national processes, the different styles of the debates on the societal level, the difference in specific national history, or the perception of this in their respective *national imaginaries*, seems to be decisive in explaining how similar aims are interpreted in the different

²⁷⁶ Perhaps he just never really thought about it, and when he was asked this is what comes to his mind. Perhaps the answer would be different had I come back the next day. His pupils said they learned a lot about different religions from him, see chapter 7.

national contexts. The examples reflect slightly different civilities. English and Norwegian teachers depend on different views of the role of multifaith RE in relation to plurality in the societies at large and in the schools. Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) found that *integration of immigrants* takes on different styles in different nations; and my findings indicate that multifaith RE too takes on different *national styles*, even where the formal aims for RE are quite similar.

National aims and local adjustments

There is a dynamic at both the English and Norwegian institutional level, between centralised national aims for RE and adjustment to local contexts, but this is structured very differently. The ‘middle level’ of local adjustments in England consists of the system which includes the Standing Advisory Councils for Religious Education (SACREs) and the Local Agreed Syllabus Conferences (see chapter 4).²⁷⁷ In Norway it is clear in the core curricula (KUF 1996)²⁷⁸ that local as well as individual adjustment of the teaching should be done. On page 68 of the 1997 National Curriculum (KUF 1996), for example, there is a model demonstrating how much of the curriculum should be decided by the central document and how much should be decided locally. In the 1997 KRL Curriculum (KUF 1996) this point was only

²⁷⁷ The SACREs are, as the name imply a standing council, while the agreed syllabus conference which actually makes the local syllabuses, is convened especially for this purpose. Usually it will consist of members of the SACREs, but this may vary and other members might be co-opted. The agreed syllabus conferences have four committees: a Church of England committee, a other Christian denominations and other religions committee, a teachers representative committee and a local authority committee. At the same time there are also the national GCSE examinations which in English secondary schools present a different authority influencing what is taught. See http://www.gcse-coursework.com/res_bor.html (Accessed 11.05.05)

²⁷⁸ This part has been kept on in revised curricula.

concretised by a recommendation to visit local religious communities.

However, the 2002 KRL Curriculum (LS 2002), which the teachers formally and legally were following at the time of interview, made the following point about local adjustment:

(...) the centrally decided learning material increases during the school years and is most extensive in the 'Ungdomsskole' (Lower Secondary school). In 'Barneskolen' (Primary school) the centrally decided material and the locally decided material constitutes equal parts (KUF 1996: 13).

At the time of my interviews with the English teachers, the Non-Statutory National Framework for RE (QCA 2004) was recently out. The centralising tendency associated with this document (see chapter 4) made the system a little more like the Norwegian, with its National Curriculum. However, all the English teachers in my sample defended the system of producing RE syllabuses locally. For instance, 'Ruth' (ES3-T) praised the richness of the competence of the people on the local SACRE, and both 'Ruth' (ES3-T) and 'Sally' (ES1-T) saw the way their teaching reflected the faiths of the local communities as important, that RE is 'finely tuned to the area you live in'. When 'Ruth' (ES3-T) was asked to make a comment about the Norwegian system, she said:

I wouldn't want to be personally responsible for teaching or not teaching my pupils something. (*That is*) the job that SACREs do; they have so

many kind of important devotees, kind of respected religious individuals on there, I think that they can come to a better understanding about what needs to be taught, because they're a step back. (ES3-T)

Even as a qualified RE teacher, she considered that she could not have done the job of local adjustment equally well, and suggested that this might possibly have led to some teachers choosing not to do the local adjustments as required. I find reason to ask if this might actually be the case with the Norwegian teachers in my sample. In Norway the schools/ teachers were formally responsible for the local adjustments, but it could seem that these Norwegian teachers were either not fully aware of this opportunity/ obligation or felt they did not have the possibility to do it. When I rephrased from how they *did* adjust locally to ask *if they would have wished for* more opportunity to adjust the teaching locally, 'Jon' (NS1-T) said he was quite content with the way it was, and that he generally had most experience with following the textbook. 'The Norwegian teachers understood 'local adjustments' in a rather narrow way, mostly referring to opportunity to visit places of worship. However, 'Oline' (NS3-T) was in the process of asking the Imam from the Mosque in the city to come and speak to the class, but she did not mention this in relation to my question of how she contextualised her teaching.²⁷⁹ Maybe it was a question of vocabulary, how things were understood and conceptualised. It could be the case that the teacher did not have awareness of the ways in which her own teaching was contextual, which could be seen as consistent with Leganger-Krogstad's (2007) point that *all teaching as such is contextual*.

²⁷⁹ This was revealed later in the interview.

In the comparative perspective it is reasonable to take the view, that the work of local adjustments and contextuality in Norwegian RE could have gained from using local expertise and authorities in the local adjustment work in a manner similar as for example a Local Agreed Syllabus conference.

The difference in the size of the populations in England and Norway does also mean differences in terms of available resources for RE. For example the city of Birmingham is very multicultural²⁸⁰, and has therefore many potential religious experts from various faith communities who can be involved in the SACRE/ Local Agreed Syllabus Conferences. There are also quite a number of experts in religious education who could be co-opted on to the SACREs and Local Agreed Syllabus Conferences from the four universities in the area.²⁸¹ However the amount of available resources would of course also vary in England and in most Norwegian regions there are a range of local experts and representatives of religious and non-religious organisations who could have been involved in a process of local adjustment in cooperation with local school authorities. This would also have ensured wider representation as more different experts and representatives of

²⁸⁰ In terms of having in its population a wide of different religious views and cultural backgrounds

²⁸¹ Aston University, University of Birmingham, Birmingham City University and Newman University College, http://translate.google.no/translate?hl=no&langpair=en|no&u=http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/GenerateContent%3FCONTENT_ITEM_ID%3D93043%26CONTENT_ITEM_TYPE%3D0%26MENU_ID%3D15392&prev=/translate_s%3Fhl%3Dno%26q%3Duniversities%2Bin%2Bbirmingham%26tq%3Duniversities%2Bin%2Bbirmingham%26sl%3Dno%26tl%3Den (Accessed 12.05.09)

Church and other organisations would have been involved.²⁸² Norwegian RE would probably gain from engaging a broader range of representatives both locally and nationally. At the same time there should also be an awareness of the further question of representation: how far are religious leaders and authorities representing individual children in schools regarding their life views?

Textbooks and schemes of work

The textbook ('læreverk') in the Norwegian context and *the schemes of work* in England represent another layer in between the institutional and the instructional level of curriculum as defined in this thesis (see chapter 2). In the Norwegian sample, as we have already seen, the textbook ('læreverk') is very decisive for the content of the lessons.²⁸³ In the English cases textbooks were also used, but here these were seen as a resource among others to draw from in teaching.²⁸⁴ On the English side, it seems that teachers relate to their school's locally produced *schemes of work* in a similar manner to the way the Norwegian teachers relate to their 'textbook' ('læreverk'). A Norwegian textbook, called 'lærebok/ læreverk' is more of a general scheme

²⁸² An odd kind of precedence has been established in Norway in that the same handful of people represent the different religions and life views in many different contexts (Egil Lothe of the Buddhist organisation, Lena Larsen of Islamic Council of Norway, Bente Groth for the Jewish community and Bente Sandvik and Hans Christian Nes for the Norwegian Humanist organisation for example), but also with regards to professional expertise there has been a tendency that political authorities ask people within the same limited group of people.

²⁸³ I see this in my sample and it is also the same conclusion in studies of Norwegian KRL textbooks, for example Winje (2008).

²⁸⁴ I see this in my sample and this is also confirmed in the 'Materials Used in Schools to Teach World Religions project': a government funded research project done by the WRERU unit at the University of Warwick in 2008-2009, <http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/wie/research/wreru/research/current/dcsf/> (Accessed 11.05.2009).

of work for lessons to be followed during a whole year,²⁸⁵ and therefore perhaps more a parallel to English schemes of work than to English textbooks. A difference is, however, that the English schemes of work are produced locally by teachers, and therefore also relates to how Norwegian teachers plan to deliver lessons based on the textbooks.

As my research interest was concerned with finding out about the relationship between the levels of curriculum, I asked the Norwegian teachers if they would use the curriculum text in addition to just following the textbook. 'Jon' (NS1-T) answered 'No, jut the textbook (...) and occasionally clips from newspaper or magazines to actualize the teaching'. There did not seem to be any reflection on this on his part; he obviously regarded this as a normal and correct way to go about his teaching. Since the textbooks used in Jon's (NS1-T) school related to the 1997 National Curriculum (KUF 1996) this means that the 2002 KRL curriculum (LS 2002), which was in legal effect at the time, was not being followed in his school. This means that the relationship between the institutional and the instructional level, in this case, is dependant on similarities between the 1997 and the 2002 curriculum. Thus the changes made in 2002 (see chapter 4) would be of no consequence for the practice of the subject. This answered in a very direct way my question about what was the relationship to the institutional level of curriculum.

²⁸⁵ The Norwegian textbooks ('læreverk') would include texts for students to read, assignments and tasks for them to do following a pattern of pedagogy which will vary between different textbooks (Winje 2008). In addition to the pupils' books there will also be a manual for the teachers containing central principles for teaching the subject with additional resources for the lessons, like for instance crossword puzzles or additional stories which could be told during lessons.

'Jon' (NS1-T) did not seem to be aware that there was a new KRL curriculum in 2002. How representative this is I can not say, but all three schools in my sample used textbooks that followed the 1997 curriculum. 'Oline' (NS3-T) and Ingunn (NS2-T) were aware of the new curriculum from 2002, but said they had not taken the time in their schools to implement it. 'Oline' (NS3-T) admitted this was not a satisfactory situation but in her mind she had to use the textbooks that the school had bought for the pupils.²⁸⁶ However they are only obliged to follow the law and the National Curriculum; there is nothing formally that says they have to use a textbook. It would be possible, for example, to use the new textbook even if there would not be copies for all the pupils. For example, the schools or the local authorities could have made a plan based on the new curriculum and teachers could have used textbooks as one resource among others without following the book's scheme in a precise way. However 'Oline's (NS3-T) understanding of her situation was that she was dependant on using these 'textbooks' ('læreverk') from 1997.

The publishers in their turn depend on teachers' and schools' choice in order to sell their books, and could therefore produce books that they based on surveys of potential purchasers.²⁸⁷ The different Norwegian publishers'

²⁸⁶ The school wish to buy new ones but this had not yet been prioritized in the budget.

²⁸⁷ In the spring of 2008 I participated in several meeting at the publisher (Aschehoug Forlag) where a possible new textbook following the 2005 curriculum was being discussed. This made me realize more than before how important the textbook is for the Norwegian school, and to what degree teachers selecting textbook actually decide the profile through their choice of textbook. On the other hand, once a textbook is chosen, the school can not buy another one for a while, because it would not be prioritized in the school budget, so then the textbook decides for the teachers. On these meetings a publisher told an anecdote of how they had once produced a really innovative new textbook for a certain subject, while

textbooks ('læreverk') have slightly different approaches to the subject, but all follow the National Curriculum closely (Winje 2008). Textbooks would, in other words, be interpretations of the National Curriculum. Using a textbook would therefore also normally ensure that even non specialist teachers follow the curriculum. However, the frequent changes in the National Curriculum for RE has made publishers hesitant to produce new textbooks and schools equally hesitant in buying them (Winje 2008:75). This makes it plausible that my finding that schools used outdated textbooks for RE was indicative of a general trend that in many cases schools are not following the curriculum as they are legally obliged to.

As inspection²⁸⁸ does not exist in the Norwegian system, there is nothing to ensure a 'standard' of teaching except trust in the professionalism of teachers and school leaders. If the teachers (or school leaders) are not aware of or do not have the resources (or the will) to deal with the actual National Curriculum or changes in it, then I would say the textbook ('læreverk') in the case of Norway fills the function of both the SACREs and the Local Agreed Syllabuses and the schemes of work produced in schools in England. This means that a huge responsibility and a great deal of power over what actually goes on in practice lies with the publishers of textbooks. Publishers have a great responsibility in both countries, but more so in Norway where the structures supporting local adjustment by other means than choice of textbook is so weak.

their competing publisher had gone for a much more traditional and in his words 'boring' solution. The one that sold was the traditional one, because this was what the teachers wanted. The moral was obvious: because they rely on sales they have to make traditional textbooks.

²⁸⁸ In any form similar to what Ofsted do (see chapter 5).

Regarding the question of the relationship between levels of curriculum, in this section I have found that in England this relationship relies on a number of well established processes such as the activities of the SACRES, Local Agreed Syllabus Conferences and the production of schemes of work in schools.²⁸⁹ In the Norwegian sample, however, I found indications that changes in the National Curriculum at the *institutional level* made no difference to practice (the instructional level of curriculum) because the implementation of change depended on textbooks that were not updated. Seen together with findings from other investigations into the question of the use of textbooks in Norwegian RE (Winje 2008), I found it likely that this would be the case in many Norwegian schools. If I combine this with findings in chapter 4, that changes in the Curriculum have been a main tool used by central authorities to responding to the international lawsuits which has ruled that Norwegian RE is in violation of Human Rights, this is remarkable because it indicates that these changes which should represent a certain development in the Norwegian RE since 1997, may have had little effect on teaching in schools in practice.

Content of teaching

One of the important similarities between English and Norwegian RE is that in both countries Christianity and 'other' religions are taught. The formulation *Christianity and 'other'* signals a difference between 'Christianity' and the 'others', which has a certain resonance at the institutional level. At the same

²⁸⁹ And inspections.

time, in both contexts, it is stressed that that all religions should be treated equally (see chapter 4). The English 1988 Education Reform Act says it should be Christianity and the other *principal religions represented in Britain*. This can be taken to mean that the focus should be on the British context, but it could also simply mean that the substantial presence of a religion in Britain legitimates its inclusion. The Norwegian education act²⁹⁰ does not say explicitly that it is religions *in Norway*, but the curriculum text reflects a traditional Norwegian outlook in that the first point refers to (thorough) knowledge of the Bible and Christianity both as cultural heritage and Evangelical – Lutheran faith, then secondly it refers to (knowledge of) *other* Christian denominations. Then follows the points which regards other religions, world views, etc. (LS 2002: 11, see chapter 4). The order in which the topics are listed is not coincidental.

My approach to the question of the content of the teaching was whether teachers emphasised the national contexts or had a more global perspective. To start with the English side, Ruth, for example, (ES3-T) denied that her teachings of *Christianity* would be linked to a British context: 'No, international context'. She stressed that they 'try to look at Jesus from an international perspective, and often I find we turn things on their head'.²⁹¹ When I put the same question about the other religions, whether that would be linked to a British context or set an international perspective, Ruth (ES3-T) said:

²⁹⁰ the version from 2002 which was the one which legally is in action at the point of the fieldwork

²⁹¹ In her classroom there was a poster with different pictures of Jesus from different cultures (see chapter 5).

Well it's funny actually, because I suppose on the flip side: if we talk about (...) Hinduism or Islam I try and relate it to (*the local area*) more than the rest of the world, because I don't want people to think oh well Hinduism is this strange religion that only happens in India and (...). Yeah, the danger is that people teach Christianity as a white middle class British religion, with, you know, Jesus, really, white British middle class, you know, and he is not, so I suppose as a teacher, I suppose to teach Christianity effectively you have to teach it as a world religion that, you know, people all over the world follow, while I suppose when you talk about Islam and Hinduism, I suppose you try and bring it closer to home, and say it is not something that people do on the other side of the world. (ES3-T)

In the middle of 'Ruth's' reflection over this a colleague in the RE section entered and this topic was discussed at length²⁹², so the question caused reflection over how they did things. Nevertheless a main point was how they saw their teaching as aiming to counter the idea of Christianity as a British phenomenon. In the other two English schools this tendency was less clear since they said they taught Christianity both in an international perspective and through different denominations in Britain. The *other* religions would

²⁹² 'We bring the other religions home, because that makes it relevant, but we take Christianity abroad because it is irrelevant if it is taught as a white middle class religion', 'Ruth' (ES3-t) explains. They say they 'are thought' not to teach Christianity as a British 'thing', '(...) because it is an international thing.' Her colleague (among other things) brings in that 'Religion is not something that belongs within a border, to which 'Ruth' (ES3-T) replies: Yes. It's not cultural is it, it is international. But then it is cultural, isn't it, it's dependant on your culture.' To which her colleague answer 'Yes of course!' They also have a very interesting discussion about the difference between 'White and Black Christianity' and how some African Christian now sees Britain as an evangelical field: 'It is really interesting when you look at people who are coming from abroad, and they see England as a mission field, as a place where people need to hear the gospel. You know, yeah, it's gone completely full circle.'

also be both about, for example, Muslims around the world and specifically about British Muslims.

On the Norwegian side, all the teachers said teaching about Christianity would be linked mainly to the Norwegian context, but they would also emphasise the Norwegian context in their teaching about other religions. Both the teaching of Christianity and 'other' religions would also sometimes include international perspectives. For instance 'Ingunn' (NS2) had recently taught about different Christian denominations in Norway, but her class had also placed religions on the world map. 'Oline' (NS3-T) and 'Jon' (NS1-T) often picked up events from the media, for example the recently the death of the Pope,²⁹³ or that it had been Ramadan. This would make their teaching both contextual and international, as it refers to pupils' personal experiences of international events. When I asked if they also linked teaching to a Norwegian context when it was about other religions, 'Ingunn' (NS2-T) said: 'Mm, yes I guess I do, without necessarily being very conscious about it. I guess it has developed a bit like that, yes, that we talk about others, people with other types of backgrounds who come to Norway (...)' (NS2-T). 'Jon' (NS1-T) said:

Yes, (...) and it is not difficult to base it within a Norwegian context now, because we have so many with other backgrounds now in Norway, (...) so that is an OK context to have as a starting point, really. I think it is easier

²⁹³ Jon Paul II: 'Jon' (NS1-T) said his health; 'Oline' (NS3-T) said his death.

to work with this now than many years ago when we did not have that many with different ethnic backgrounds. (NS1-T)

In the way they express themselves, immigration is represented as a more recent phenomenon than with the English teachers. Also the impression is that it is a less conscious choice to link their teachings to the present plurality. In Lund Johannessen (2009) six Norwegian teachers' evaluation of diversity varied from enthusiasm to 'a more down to earth and neutral acceptance of plurality as a fact of life'. The Norwegian teachers in my study would fit into the latter category. Linking the teaching to the present plurality in society was more something which seemed logical given the changing social context of increasing religious plurality rather than a result of idealism, which was perhaps more the case with the English teachers (see also Everington 2009).

The pattern that emerged in relation to the content of the teachings was consistent with the way English and Norwegian teachers understood the aims of multifaith RE (see above). In the English cases the emphasis was on the plural societal context, while the Norwegian teachers tended to emphasise a cultural heritage perspective. The idea of England as plural seemed more established than the idea of Norway as plural, which is consistent with my findings in chapter 3 that English RE is negotiated on the basis of *difference* (as essential to the English [British] National Imaginary) while developments in Norwegian RE are negotiated on the basis of *sameness* (as an essential idea in the Norwegian National Imaginary). In a

recent book from the REDCo project (van der Want *et al.* 2009: Lund Johansen 2009, Everington 2009), ‘sameness’ is put forward as a distinguishing characteristic for how RE teachers in Norway respond to religious diversity while individuality and inclusion (diversity/ heterogeneity) is put forwards as characteristic in the English case. I see this as strengthening the possibility that there is a degree of representability in this tendency detected in my own work. However, the important point is that it serves as a source of explanation for differences in the way these particular teachers’ answered my questions.

Learning about and from religion

In the case of England learning ‘about and *from*’ refers to explicit goals for RE described in the Non–Statutory National Framework for Religious Education (QCA 2004) and in many Local Agreed Syllabuses. It also refers to a debate on the societal level of curriculum which has been generalised from the English context and made international (see chapter 4). The Norwegian National Curriculum (LS 2002)²⁹⁴ did not use the exact terms of ‘learning about and from’ but said, for instance, that pupils should get both *knowledge and experiences* (‘opplevelser’) in the subject. I see this as a parallel:

²⁹⁴ Or any of the other curricula since 1997, see chapter 1, 4.

In all age groups the pupils should get both knowledge and experiences in their encounter with the content of the teaching. Variation in approaches are emphasised, including for instance repeating what they have learned, play, drama, artistic activities, music, work in projects and dialogue adjusted to age stage. Making connections to local events should contribute to making the subject more alive. (LS 2002:14)²⁹⁵

Seeing this as a parallel depends on an argument that the word 'experiences' ('opplevelser') includes the possibility for pupils to *learn from* religion. 'Experiences' ('opplevelser') need to be interpreted as not just happening 'outwardly', but rather as having an 'experience' from, for example, reading a text that makes you think of something new, or analysing a picture which provides the student with new insights into its symbolism – in other words an experience that offers the learner something on a personal level. I find support for the idea that learning *from* religion is an aspect also of Norwegian RE in the mention of dialogue and also in other parts of the curriculum (see chapter 4).²⁹⁶ I see the aims of learning *from* and not just *about* religion as connected to aims that RE should promote spiritual, moral, cultural and mental development (England) and contribute to understanding, respect and dialogue (Norway) (see aims above). It is hard to imagine any teaching as meaningful without aiming at developing pupils in some way. I see no reason why this should not also be an aim in RE, but there are

²⁹⁵ My translation to English.

²⁹⁶ The concepts learning about and from does exist on the societal level of the Norwegian Curriculum, but are not used explicitly in the National Curriculum; see also Lund Johannessen (2009: 104). Implementing the terms learning about and from ('lære om og fra') in the Norwegian curriculum would in my view help make this point clearer.

issues of parents and others being afraid of pupils learning things that go against their religious or non-religious convictions.²⁹⁷

Against this backdrop, the question is raised as to how the English and Norwegian teachers understood the ideas of ‘learning about’ and ‘learning from’, or having knowledge and experience (Norway) in the subject? From these teachers’ perspective, how were pupils influenced by RE, and what in RE teaching would contribute to pupils’ personal development?

The English teachers all knew the concepts of ‘learning about and ‘learning from’ religion, and exemplified this. They are basically convinced that their pupils are learning *from* religion as well as learning about it.²⁹⁸ For example, Ruth’ (ES3-T) said:

‘I think it is important that they feel it is related to their lives, because (...) a lot of our pupils are not interested in the academic study for the sake of academic study; we are looking for how the academic study can help you.’

(ES3-T)

‘Vicky’ (ES2-T) said that the ‘about bit’ was ‘the bit that the pupils like the best. And that’s the bit that generates all the conversations and discussions’.

²⁹⁷ This is of course reflected in the national and international legal cases against Norwegian KRL and a reason why there need to be opt out rights (see chapter 4).

²⁹⁸ But they were equally convinced that their pupils would not be able to answer the question about what the difference between learning about and from would be, and they were right: see chapter 7.

The Norwegian teachers did not immediately understand 'having knowledge and experience' as learning *from* religion. The Norwegian teachers tended first to understand it in relation to exciting methods of teaching, especially excursions.²⁹⁹ However, when I explained what I meant, they all did think that their pupils were also learning *from* religion and got personal gains from RE teaching:

We talk about things; that this gives them something which, which ... they feel are engaging them and make them want to share their own points of view about it and, that they have experienced something in that lesson, and ... that it was valuable in a way. (...) I often say that the KRL subject I see as a place to draw your breath in the hectic everyday life in school, where we can lean back a little and have awe and wonder. 'Jon' (NS1-T)

One of the English teachers also talked about wanting to inspire to awe and wonder because she did not think the children got much opportunity for that kind of experience in other learning contexts. Ruth (ES3-T) also claimed the children sometimes experienced awe and wonder from their encounter with each other's religion.³⁰⁰ She connected the issue of 'learning from' with promoting positive attitudes to other people, and thought this was especially important in her school as it was so religiously plural. Related to the

²⁹⁹ 'Oline's (NS3-T) first response is representative of how they first understood the question. When she was saying that the great 'experiences' may be far between she was referring to 'outwardly' types of experiences that they might get from working with art in the religions, like Islamic calligraphy, or the rose window of the cathedral in town

³⁰⁰ "I think they are sort of having that respect for each other. They are kind of in awe of each other about things. We watched a video, you know, Michael Palin when he went to The Golden temple recently (...) and then when we watched it the kids were like 'oh wow, have you been there? Oh what is it like?' and I think it does create respect." (ES3-T)

multicultural makeup of 'Oline's' (NS3-T) school she said that she had never seen any cultural conflicts or any racism. This was a positive statement, but still a very different perspective from that of the English teachers who strongly put the multicultural makeup of the school forwards as an asset to RE.

When I asked the Norwegian teachers whether they thought pupils were *influenced by* what they learned in KRL, my reference was an understanding of Norwegian RE as pluralistic and aiming to influence pupils to a better understanding of different religions. The teachers' primary reference was, however, of a different kind. 'Oline' (NS3-T) first got defensive and stated that they were not proselytising! When I explained what I meant, as, for instance, to learn to have respect for others, she did not at first 'connect' to this idea. It appears that this was not in accordance with her understanding of the central aims of the subject, namely to pass on the (Christian) cultural heritage and inform those who come from another background about that (see above). The debate in Norway on whether children get too much of a religious/ Christian influence through the KRL or too much influence from the 'wrong' religion also makes it a sensitive issue whether pupils are *influenced* by the teaching in KRL. 'Jon' (NS1-T) very hesitantly replied that it would depend on whether I meant influenced in a good way or in bad way. When I explained I meant the latter he said he did try to influence them positively and saw a good opportunity in KRL to work with attitudes.

When 'influenced' by the teaching was understood positively, the Norwegian teachers did think RE contributed to developing pupils. For 'Oline' (NS3-T) this was connected to the belief that respect would become a result of knowledge: 'the more you know, the less dangerous the unknown would seem. (...) and I assume that at least some would get some more respect'.³⁰¹ 'Ingunn' (NS2-T) said she liked to think that KRL contributed to pupils becoming respectful of other people. She saw pupils' participation in discussions as contributing to this, but, like the English teacher 'Vicky' (ES2-T), 'Ingunn' (NS2-T) also stressed that influences outside of the school from homes, peer groups and other school subjects (Norwegian language and Social Studies) would also be important. 'Jon' (NS1-T) too saw it as an ideal aim that KRL should contribute to developing respect for different people, but was unsure whether it would have this effect. On the English side 'Sally' (ES1-T), for example, said:

We have a saying here, you can take a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. It's the same here: you can introduce all these ideas to the kids, but if they don't want to accept it, then you're not going to develop them spiritually. They'll just know about things without ever taking it onboard.
(ES1-T)

One similarity was that in both countries teachers did think RE promoted positive development of pupils, but chose to be modest about how much of an influence (positively understood) they thought they had. Both English and

³⁰¹ The teachers in Lund Johannessen (2009: 103) study too believes knowledge about is important for making pupils more tolerant and open minded.

Norwegian teachers mentioned RE as one of few opportunities to discuss important life issues related to religion, life views or ethics. In the findings of the EC REDCo Project too, the opportunity to discuss and to have training in expressing one's opinion (dialogue) were seen as key elements that could contribute to personal growth/ development of pupils through RE (Dietz *et al.* 2009).

Reflecting on multifaith RE as integrative RE

Some have called Norwegian multifaith RE '(...) a half way house between Christian instruction on the one hand and a multifaith study program on the other' (Alberts 2007: 328). Alberts (2007) uses the term *integrative RE* descriptively approximately in the same way that I refer to multifaith RE, that is teaching that includes pupils with various religious or non-religious affiliations in the same physical space, and including teaching about 'all' the religions and life views (see chapter 1). However, I would argue that 'integrative' could also be understood *normatively*, referring to a desired function of multifaith RE. In both England and Norway aims for RE in state schools include that it should aid integration and thereby strengthen social cohesion in class, school and/ or society. In other words, both the English and the Norwegian teachings are integrative in a normative sense. But what kind of normativity is implied by this integrative function?

We have seen in this chapter a tendency that the (older) Norwegian teachers accentuate a cultural heritage perspective while there is relatively

more awareness among the English teachers of the potential of RE to work within the plural context. I first found this surprising since Norway has had a multifaith 'integrative approach' since 1997. This does, however, become understandable in view of findings that the ideas of the national contexts as plural are different: negotiated on the bases of 'difference' in the case of England and on the basis of 'sameness' in the case of Norway (see chapter 3). English and Norwegian teachers do, in other words, seem to have different ideas about integration. The Norwegian teachers did not have a very conscious idea of RE contributing to intercultural (or multicultural) education.³⁰² Were they still contributing to RE as having an integrative function for all, or did they actually rather reproduce stereotypes which could be seen as constructing some pupils as 'others'? Were they, through their teaching, constructing 'culturally Christian' Norwegian citizens? And is this a (more or less hidden) agenda in Norwegian RE? For the sake of balance, the question must also be asked as to whether the English teachers on their part reproduced any stereotypes.

Differences in the way RE was seen to have an integrative function became especially apparent when I compared the ways in which the teachers from the two most 'multicultural' schools (English school 3 and Norwegian school 3) expressed themselves. There were some similarities, which came from the similar social settings, and some differences which came from different

³⁰² Although multiculturalism can be understood differently, as group plurality (McIntyre 1978, Gravem 2004), others have more flexible and malleable idea of multiculturalism (Baumann 1996, Jackson 1997, 2004, Hylland Eriksen 1993, Davie 2007). In current political rhetoric in the UK (and in the White Paper on Intercultural Education from the Council of Europe), multicultural education is seen in a negative light as something to leave behind in favour of *intercultural education*, which allows more easily for cultural change and cultural interaction.

understanding of what were the main aims for RE. Regarding 'other' religions, a similarity was that both said it was natural to start with their own class. For example 'Oline' (NS3-T) said: '...and then one of them could share that his father had recently been to Mecca'. If there had not been any Muslim pupils in the class, teaching about Islam would have been more theoretical. She thought pupils did better on a test because there were Muslim pupils in that class. This point made by 'Ruth' (ES3-T) is a similar one:

(...) you know, here we are talking very first hand about different faiths, different religions and if I say 'Who's been to Mecca?' five hands go up, and 'Who's been to The Golden Temple?' five more hands would go up, and we're not talking about these strange far off unrelated religious people who do these things; we're talking about, you know, people who we know, people we can relate to who have done these things. (ES3-T)

Both 'Oline' (NS3-T) and 'Ruth' (ES3-T) saw it as an asset to the teaching that their pupils brought in experiences from different religions, but Ruth (ES3-T) expressed herself more enthusiastically, while it was more just an interesting observation in the case of 'Oline' (NS3-T). Also while 'Oline's' (NS3-T) focus was that this made them perform better in tests, 'Ruth' pointed to the instrumental usefulness of it. This perspective on the instrumental was lacking on the Norwegian side. The feeling was that being respected for being religious was not equally taken for granted in the

Norwegian plural school (NS3). At the same time the potential of RE to contribute to a tolerant school ethos was less recognized.³⁰³

When it comes to contributing to social cohesion, to RE's potential integrative function, this was in the English case, done with reference to an 'imaginary' multicultural (intercultural) British culture, while in the Norwegian case it was more linked to 'our' shared cultural (Christian) heritage.

Norwegian teachers even mentioned learning about this heritage as a reason why it would be important for 'others' with a non- Norwegian ethnic background to have RE (see above). Critically one could remark that this would leave some pupils in a state of 'otherness'. In the study done by Schiffauer and his co-researchers (2004) a finding was that in Germany the (idea of a) shared past of the 2nd World War was so strong in the German *national imaginary*, that it was difficult for immigrants to be fully integrated because they could never share this past. Is the idea of 'Norwegianness' also such that it is difficult to be integrated into for those who do not connect to a certain religious tradition as cultural heritage?

A parallel question to the English material could actually be whether the idea of 'Englishness' is so plural that indigenous English pupils are alienated or marginalised. For example in the recent 'white season' on the BBC and in studies such as Dench, Gavron & Young (2006) it has been pointed out that an emphasis on global links in the classroom can lead to indigenous white

³⁰³ This impression is strengthened if one also takes the pupils perspectives into consideration (see chapter 7).

children thinking they are boring and ‘from nowhere’ (see also Rudge 1998, May 1999 and Maylor & Read 2007). This relates interestingly to the English teacher ‘Ruth’s’ discussion on the teaching of Christianity above: that she tried not to teach this as a white middle class British religion.

The contrast between the English and the Norwegian contexts that this brings out makes me relate to a widely used (and debated) metaphor from the Norwegian debate, printed in (KUF 1998).³⁰⁴

I have a different relationship to my own house than to a house where I am a guest. In both places my conduct is respectful and reflects devotion and engagement. Both what is mine and that which belongs to those who welcome me into their house, concern me. I can get impulses from others which can enrich me and my house.

That which is mine is still not the same as that which belongs to the others. I am a participant and a co-owner in my own house but only a guest or a spectator in the houses of the others. To be a guest in another’s home provides possibilities to learn about what it is like to live in a place where you yourself do not live. In the same way one can relate to one’s own and others’ traditions: I am a participant in my own tradition, but merely a spectator to the others (KUF 1998).³⁰⁵

This metaphor reflects a static idea of traditions as bounded, and also an idea of identities being firmly grounded in one tradition. This has a clear

³⁰⁴ This was the first circular from the Department of Church, Education and Research that came after the 1997 KRL curriculum (KUF 1996) was released.

³⁰⁵ My translation

resonance in *Identity and dialogue* (NOU 1995: 9), which was an important background document for the introduction of KRL in 1997. Here firm identities rooted in one's own tradition were seen as a platform from which to have dialogue. The view reflects 'group pluralism'; it describes society as plural but on a group level more than on an individual level (see chapter 3). This metaphor indicates that ready 'houses' exist for individuals to choose, while a different perspective taking account also of modern plurality (Skeie 1995) would be that these houses are constantly constructed, negotiated and reconstructed both by residents and visitors, who perhaps both come and go.

This group plurality metaphor would be challenged by the discussions of plural identities and identities in a plural society (for example Østberg 1998, Skeie 1995, 1998, Jackson & Nesbitt 1993, and Jackson 1997). However, based on this case study, I raise the question whether this metaphor may reflect a general *idea of* the multicultural (a multicultural imaginary) in parts of society, including these teachers. If, in this idea of plurality (multicultural imaginary), group plurality is preferred rather than individual plurality, what is the consequence of this for RE's integrative function? The problem with this in relation to RE's potential integrative function is that individual variation, and variations outside or between, in RE – the 6 defined 'houses'³⁰⁶ – are not captured. Thus some could be described as 'homeless', conceptualised as 'others'. There is also a danger of forcing young people into 'houses' they

³⁰⁶ Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Humanism (in Norway): in England it would be Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism (see chapter 4).

would like to escape from, or at least to live in differently. From positions representing one of the indicated groups, however, the Church of Norway, this may be seen as ensuring continuation of certain traditions within a multifaith approach to RE.

Both 'Norwegianness' and 'Englishness' can be imagined in different ways, some more plural, others less so. Thus I must underline that the above reflects these particular teachers' imagery of the 'English' or 'Norwegian'. It is likely that a different sample could have given a different result and, for example, one question I am left with regards differences between (Norwegian) regions. Would a sample of teachers from multicultural Oslo schools for example bring out more similarities to views on plurality expressed by English teachers in my particular sample? Another is how much the age of the teachers is a variable which is equally important as their national context. Having analysed a non-representative sample this raises a number of questions which would need further attention in future empirical school research. However, I see the differences between these particular teachers' imagery of the 'English' or 'Norwegian' as related to different *national imaginaries*.³⁰⁷ In Norway no doubt the history of nation building and the traditional strong standing of the State Church are important in this imaginary (see chapter 3). In England, being a part of the heterogeneous Great Britain with several strong religious traditions could be suggested as central components (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 35). The debates on issues of

³⁰⁷ This reflects ideas of historic events for the nation, see chapters 2, 5.

shared history and nationalism are connected to the way *plurality* (and integration) is understood and negotiated in England and Norway.

It is possible to see the debate in Norway regarding whether those who did not belong in any of the 'houses' were *homeless* as a parallel to the new debate in England that the indigenously white English children are *from nowhere*. However a difference is that in Norway it is not the indigenous Norwegian pupils who are from 'nowhere' or 'homeless'. The idea of the Christian cultural heritage is, as my small and limited sample illustrates, much stronger in the Norwegian case than the idea of an English cultural heritage, which may have been more challenged (see chapter 3). Sharing this cultural heritage is still a strong feature of being Norwegian (Norwegian national imaginary), which the current debate about formation (*danning*) illustrates, in my opinion.³⁰⁸ I see being a multicultural (intercultural) society as a stronger feature of the imaginary of being English (English national imaginary), which I think the debate about 'whiteness' illustrates. However, neither with the English alleged privilege of the ones who are not ethnically English, nor with the Norwegian apparently privileging those who share the indigenous cultural heritage, does the teaching become normatively *integrative* in a non-discriminating way. In both cases it keeps on (re)producing certain kinds of 'otherness'. What *imaginary* – one may ask - would facilitate normatively integrative RE in the sense of 'inclusive on equal terms for all who participate'? (See chapter 7 and 8).

³⁰⁸ See for instance <http://www.apollon.uio.no/vis/art/1999/2/stopeskje>

Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed teachers' perspectives on RE in England and Norway comparatively. I have looked at how different contextual factors affect their ability to describe their schools, and their views on the aims and importance of RE. I have discussed similarities and differences in how national aims are filtered through to the level of practice, and looked for explanations for differences and similarities in the content of the teaching and its functions. Some main conclusions are as follows:

Firstly, with respect to the subnational processes, there are differences between schools within a country, reflecting the local context of that school. For example a school could be dominated by strong humanist viewpoints (NS2) or be situated in a socially challenging environment (ES2, in part NS3), or be ethnically homogeneous with mostly ethnically English (ES1) or Norwegian (NS1) pupils, or ethnically heterogeneous (ES3, NS3).

Sometimes there are more similarities between schools within one country and sometimes there are similarities between schools in similar settings in the two countries – for example, the most ethnically mixed schools and the least ethnically mixed schools.

Secondly, and this has been the main focus here, there are important differences between national processes.

Thirdly there is also the issue of how supranational processes affect teachers' practice (see chapter 2).

Regarding the relationship between levels of curriculum, we have seen that there are in England some well established structures to support this which have historical roots in times when the educational system in England as a whole was less centralised. We have seen that changes at the institutional level of curriculum do not automatically lead to changes in practice. In Norway the structures to ensure cohesion between levels of curriculum were weaker than in the English case. It is well understood from other research that changes in the institutional level of curriculum do not automatically lead to changes in practice (see for example Goodlad 1979, see also chapter 8), but this might not always be sufficiently considered by policy makers.

This disconnection becomes especially evident on the Norwegian side as some changes at the institutional level caused by formal supranational processes – the international legal cases (see chapter 4) – have not filtered through to the instructional level. This raises the question why implementation has not been ensured and whether the changes in the national curriculum are perhaps not primarily aimed at practice, but rather at the debates on the societal level. The societal level is also important, but the main aim of curricular change is to change practice, in which case practice needs to be addressed explicitly. Taking Goodlad's point that practice is the most important curricular level, and also Afdal's (2006) point about the communication between domains³⁰⁹, I would also argue that changes at the institutional level should be made based on a thorough understanding of the

³⁰⁹ i.e. levels of curriculum, should be better and that '(...) the multicultural classroom is not a place for teaching tolerance, but for finding out what tolerance is all about' (Afdal 2006: 350), see chapter 5.

field of practice. This could ensure a closer relationship between the levels of curriculum.

When it comes to the question of how English and Norwegian teachers understood their practice, it became clear that English teachers' way of conceptualising RE teaching reflected an English context, while the Norwegian teachers' understandings and practices reflected a Norwegian context. Even when aims at the institutional level were quite similar; they were understood differently in the two national contexts. There was, for example, a clear contrast in the way in which RE was seen to have an (integrative) function in relation to intercultural learning and integration. My interpretation is that the teachers' understandings of plurality were different in the two national settings.

For example, the English teachers tended to see a plural local setting as an asset to RE, while the Norwegian teachers did not immediately think in this direction. One reason for this difference is that society's plurality is conceptualised differently, reflecting differences in *national imaginaries* (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004, see chapter 3, 5). This view is confirmed in the REDCo research which indicates different perceptions of diversity in the two countries. In the one case, 'Norwegian teachers tended to over-accentuate sameness: a result of a desire to treat everyone equally and to avoid drawing attention to difference unless a student chooses to do so' (ter Avest, Bakker & van der Want 2009:118); in the other, 'All the English teachers

valued the potential of cultural and religious difference in the classroom.’ (ter Avest, Bakker & van der Want 2009:115), and ‘In England (...) teachers preferred to approach all students in an appropriate and unique manner.’ (ter Avest, Bakker & van der Want 2009:118).

Further evidence that multifaith RE can take on *different styles* in different national settings is provided by other sources. For example, in the English case, RE teachers saw their role as promoting tolerance. This can be related to the English tradition which relates RE to anti-racist and multicultural education. Everington and Sikes (2001:80) point out, for example, that ‘for the past forty years RE has been viewed as a major contributor to the battle against racism and the promotion of intercultural understanding and respect’. In contrast there seemed to be a lack of understanding of the possible contribution of RE to intercultural education among the Norwegian teachers³¹⁰.

The understanding of KRL as traditional RE is consistent with these Norwegian teachers’ views and may be a reason why they considered RE to be inconsistent with contributing to intercultural education.³¹¹ It is important to point out that this finding is not representative, and that in another sample the results might have been different (see chapter 5). Incidentally, in my sample none of the English teachers made any references to an English tradition similar to what is found in Norway (Christianity as Norwegian

³¹⁰ This is also reflected in the interviews with the pupils (see chapter 7).

³¹¹ An alternative explanation is that civility as perceived by the teachers in Norwegian school 3 is so secular that they dismiss religion as such as a less important factor - despite a strong likelihood that religion is a very important factor in some of these pupils lives.

cultural heritage), but a more representative sample would be needed to judge the degree to which this is representative or if a sample of older teachers in England would have given a different result, for example. In this particular sample, however, the idea of Christianity as British is only represented as something that needs countering in order to make Christianity relevant.

Regarding the supranational dimension (see chapter 2) I found examples that some of the teachers participated in supranational debates, while others were more locally oriented. All the teachers from both countries referred to the new plurality in the national dimension, which is in fact the internationally shared challenge of the growing religious plurality in societies. The degree to which they see and address religions as global or national phenomena varied. The international connections are there as both Christianity and the 'other' religions' are both national and international phenomena, but there may be differences in the degree to which they are represented as national or supranational.

A central concern of Schiffauer *et al.* (2004: 10) was 'How do Nation State-schools manage to maintain and update their old links with the national imaginary despite there being so many school pupils who are not nationals or else not ethnically recognizable as such?' In view of individual (modern) plurality (Skeie 1995), everyone potentially has global links, through belonging to a religion or simply through experiencing travel or internet chat,

to mention but a few possibilities. From the perspective of these aspects of globalisation (see chapter 2) distinctions between natives and those who could be recognized as non-natives by certain criteria, such as mother tongue or own or parents' country of origin, becomes blurred. From this perspective all are global citizens, and the national consists of all individuals and groups which are actually there, even if this indicates a plurality which may be difficult to conceptualise and understand by teachers and pupils as well as others who participate in the societal debates (see chapter 3). As we have seen, however, links to traditional ideas of the national (*national imaginaries*) are still being maintained, in debates at the societal level, at the institutional level of curriculum, and also at the instructional level. But they are also evolving, and it is perhaps the domain of practice which continues to challenge the levels 'above' rather than the other way around.

In the next chapter (7) I will explore the pupils' perspectives on English and Norwegian multifaith RE, focusing on the final level of curriculum as conceptualised in the thesis (see chapter 2, 5, 8): the experiential level.

Chapter 7

Experiential level: Pupils' perspectives

Introduction

I understand the *experiential level* of curriculum to mean the curriculum that is internalized and made personal: this level reveals the effects of the curriculum on the individual learner.³¹² Within my theoretical framework (see chapter 2), it becomes logical to consider the societal (see chapter 3) and institutional level (see chapter 4) as the context of the cases (see chapter 5). In chapter 6 the focus was on *how* the societal and institutional levels were reflected in teachers' practice. In this chapter the focus will be the pupils' learning.

The pupil's perspective is here represented mainly through six semi-structured group interviews with pupils in year 10 in three English and three Norwegian schools, but I will refer to other sources when required. I am fully aware that this is not a representative sample, and will take notice of this in the analysis (see chapter 5). As with the interviews with the teachers the interview schedule (see appendix 1) had four main sections related to *aims for RE, the content of the teaching/learning, learning about and from religion, and respect and personal growth*: the latter two sections are seen to cohere in the analysis. The questions were largely similar to those used in the

³¹² The levels of the curriculum according to Goodlad & Su (1992): societal, institutional, instructional and experiential.

interviews with the teachers, and were designed to capture relationships between the instructional and experiential levels of curriculum.

Using concepts from Schiffauer *et al.* (2004), I have suggested in the preceding chapters that multifaith RE takes on different styles in the two countries, reflecting different school and research traditions, but also different *national imaginaries*. Is this also the case with the pupils' learning since Schiffauer and his co researchers (2004) claim that *social enculturation* is nation specific?³¹³ My main focus will be on national processes, but the cases will also illustrate subnational processes, as well as providing an opportunity to discuss the influence of supranational processes (see chapter 2).

For this part of the research, my key research questions were:

- What are similarities and differences in the English and Norwegian curriculum's experiential level as expressed by pupils in this sample?
- How do we account for these?
- How do we account for these with reference to the more remote levels of curriculum?

³¹³ *Civil enculturation* is defined as 'the process by which an individual acquires the mental representations (...) and patterns of behaviour required to function as a member of (civil) culture, (...) taking place as a part of the process of education' (Schiffauer *et al.* (2004: 2). Further, as they define *civil culture* to include *civil society*, *civic culture* and norms of civility and a *social imaginary*, and define *social imaginary* as 'the dominant national self representation of a nation state', also called '*national imaginary*': this makes social enculturation depending on *national imaginaries*.

I will proceed to describe the pupils and their contexts, and analyse how questions of religious affiliation are answered. This will be seen in relation to REDCo research (see chapter 2, 5, 6, 7) especially Dietz *et al.* (2009) which reports the main findings in the country specific qualitative (Knauth *et al.* 2008) and quantitative (Valk *et al.* 2009) studies of the EC Framework 6 REDCo project on religion, education, dialogue and conflict.³¹⁴ These studies look into teenage perspectives on religion, interreligious dialogue and/or conflict in eight European countries.³¹⁵ Further I will look at pupils' responses to questions about aims of RE, the content of their learning, and what they have learned *from* religion in RE. I will consider pupils' answers in relation to how their teachers answered similar questions (instructional level), as well as in relation to the institutional and societal levels.

The pupils and their context

The context of the pupils includes personal issues, such as religious affiliations and influence from parents and peers, subnational factors, such as their school environment, national contexts, including *national imaginaries*, and international links. Examples of international links are when pupils have memories of living in other countries, or have identity tied to parents' (or grandparents') country of origin, or when pupils simply take part in supranational processes through media or travel (globalisation). In chapter 2 I distinguish between subnational, national and supranational

³¹⁴ <http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html>

³¹⁵ I will refer only to the English and Norwegian studies. (Qualitative: Ipgrave & McKenna (2008), and Norway von der Lippe (2008), Quantitative:). The sample in the English study included 109 students in the qualitative study and 402 in the quantitative, and in Norway it involved 154 students in the qualitative study and 707 in the quantitative.

processes affecting RE, and in the way I see this as the context of these individuals, it starts to resemble Jackson's (1997:67) model of membership groups: My intention is to capture the relationship between individuals, specific groups to which a person belongs and the wider context. I see the context of these pupils in a similar way: that they are affected in their views by individual choice, by various local factors, like peers and the school environment, but also by their national context and their international links.

The pupils were interviewed in groups of four; they were from the class that I observed (see chapter 5), and their teachers were the ones I interviewed (chapter 6). English school 3 and Norwegian school 3 were the schools with the largest proportions of pupils with ethnic and religious minority backgrounds (see chapter 5). In English school 3, the interview was with two girls and two boys. Both boys (ES3-PB1, ES3-PB2) said they were Muslims; one girl (ES3-PG1) said she was Hindu and the other Christian³¹⁶ (ES3-PG2). The two boys and the Hindu girl were of Asian background, while the second girl was of mixed race, her father being of Caribbean origin. In Norwegian school 3, the interview was with four girls. Two were indigenous Norwegian (NS3-PG1, NS3-PG2), one was a Bosnian Muslim (NS3-PG3), and one a Kurdish Muslim (NS3-PG4). The Muslim girls were both first generation immigrants, and the Kurdish girl had memories of living in other countries before coming to Norway.

³¹⁶ Catholic: her mother being Irish.

English school 2 and Norwegian school 2 were both schools with a predominantly indigenous English/Norwegian pupil population, with just a few pupils from other backgrounds (see chapter 5). In English school 2, there were two girls (ES2-PG1 and ES2-PG2) and two boys (ES2-PB1 and ES2-PB2), all indigenous English. In Norwegian school 2, there were two girls (NS2-PG1, NS2-PG2) and two boys (NS2-PB1, NS2-PB2), all indigenous Norwegian. In English school 2, and Norwegian school 2, all but one girl (NS2-PG2) said they were not religious. English school 1 and Norwegian school 1 were both rural schools, and here too the pupils were indigenous white. In English school 1, there were two boys (ES1-PB1 and ES1-PB2) and two girls (ES1-PG1 and ES1-PG2) and in Norwegian school 1, the interview was with two girls (NS1 – PG1 and NS1 – PG2) and two boys (NS1-PB1 and NS1 – PB2). All the pupils in both the English and Norwegian rural school identified themselves as Christians, but as not *very* Christian.

An interesting pattern occurred across the country borders as all the pupils in schools 3 (ES3, NS3) self-identified as religious, whereas all but one pupil in both schools 2 (ES2, NS2) self-identified as *not* being religious. All pupils in the rural schools in (ES1, NS1) self-identified as Christian, but not *very* Christian. In English school 3, both the teacher and the pupils talked about how normal and accepted it is in this school to have different religions, and to be respectful of each other's religions. The *Christian* girls in English and Norwegian schools 3 also said they were not *very* Christian. Perhaps a school context where religion and religious issues are seen as normal and

respected encourages pupils to have the confidence to reveal their religious identity.

Even though, in Norwegian school 3, most had a religious identity, this was not revealed enthusiastically by pupils; the religious diversity was undercommunicated by the Norwegian pupils compared with the pupils in English school 3 (see chapter 6). It is as if the civility around Norwegian school 3 was more secular in tone than in the English case. Their religion was accepted as part of their individuality, but tuned down in the discourse. Lund Johansen (2009) writes about under communication of difference among Norwegian teachers, and how *sameness* is a recognised value (see chapter 6). It was said explicitly by pupils in Norwegian school 2 that it was ‘taboo’ to talk about each other’s religious backgrounds and that it was never addressed in class. This adds to the impression that difference was undercommunicated in Norwegian schools.³¹⁷ However, pupils in Norwegian school 2 said it would have been better if they could have talked about religious differences and been able to hear about the religions from someone who actually believed in them. In other words, from the pupils’ perspective, this taboo could very well be broken. They did not reject addressing religious plurality more directly.³¹⁸

³¹⁷ The Norwegian teachers (NS1-T, NS2-T) were largely unaware of their pupils’ religions, not seeing this as relevant to how they would teach. In Norwegian school 3 the teachers knows what religions her pupils are connected to, but does not seem to take notice of it in her planning of teaching. The understanding that the pupils’ backgrounds are an important factor to consider was more integrated in the English side of this sample.

³¹⁸ In the REDCo research young people did not see religion as a factor which would contribute to conflict in the classroom, see Dietz *et al.* 2009.

In English school 2 and English school 1 there was not an equally strong acceptance for religiosity and diversity as in English school 3, so is important to consider how the local contexts of the schools vary. In the REDCo Project (Dietz et al 2009) researchers found that discussions of religious issues and personal belief was problematic for the indigenous white English pupils in more rural areas where they face a climate of youth apathy and negativity towards religion, and I think this is relevant with regard to English school 1 in my sample, and perhaps also to English school 2, which was set in a predominately white suburban area.

In English school 1, pupils talked as if there was a danger of being bullied if one showed too much interest in religion outside of lessons, and similar tendencies are reported also by Ipgrave & McKenna (2008: 143) and Ipgrave & Bertram-Troost (2008: 383). The pupils self-identified as Christians but excused this by adding that this was 'because of their upbringing and the influence of their parents'. While a difference between the schools 3 (ES3, NS3) was that there was more acceptance of religion in the English plural school than the Norwegian, there were more openness and acceptance for religiosity (Christian) in Norwegian school 1. However, pupils showed more of embarrassment about their Christian connection in English school 1.

This relates interestingly to findings in chapter 6 showing that in English RE promoting tolerance for different religions is emphasised more by these

pupils' teachers, while in Norway promoting the understanding of Christianity as cultural heritage is emphasised more. In other words, in my (limited) English sample, it is in the plural setting that religiosity is seen as normal and accepted, while in the (limited) Norwegian sample, it is in the least plural setting that religiosity (being Christian) is seen as normal and accepted. I would have to stress that I can not conclude that this finding is representative nationally; this would need further investigation and a representative sample.³¹⁹

Another possible explanation for this pattern is that pupils may adapt to what in their environment is regarded as normal. This suggests an interesting supranational pattern between similar social settings. In some instances subnational processes (local social context) may be more relevant for young people's religious choices than, for example, national processes (national context). Then again, reflecting on supranational processes, this cross national pattern can also be explained through supranational impositions: forming 'similar' settings and variations between types of social environments in different nations.

I take this also to supplement the argument stated in chapter 6 that plurality is understood (imagined) differently in England and Norway, but the question

³¹⁹ It would be interesting to investigate differences between regions with regards to acceptance of being religious: I would for instance hypothesise that in regions near Oslo where there has been more focus on different religions, in some schools which have pupils with many different religions I would have found more acceptance of being religious compared to my one example of a plural school, which are from the Mid-Norway region.

is raised as to whether society and its plurality are imagined differently in such different subnational contexts.

Which modernities?

In his reflection on Western modernity's defining cultural formation, Taylor (2004) argues for the idea of 'multiple modernities'. He remarks:

Western modernity (...) is inseparable from certain kinds of social imaginary, and the differences among today's multiple modernities need to be understood in terms of divergent social imaginaries involved (Taylor 2004: 1-2).

His idea is that different social imaginaries form different coexisting modernities, and he digs deep into western history to trace the ideas that formed our main ideas about ourselves. He does this in order to counter the idea that modernity is a single process that occurs in the same form everywhere (Taylor 2004: 195). To understand other cultures as civilised and modern, he begins with 'provincializing' Europe which he hopes can contribute to (a new) order and peace (Taylor 2004: 196). On the basis of what the pupils in my sample said about 'what religion if any they felt themselves connected to', what can be said about which modernities these pupils occupied?

The main 'labels' (identity markers) the pupils chose are indicated above,³²⁰ and I have indicated that schools may be set in local contexts which reflect different variations on modernity, including different views about what religious choices are normal. Further, there is a tendency in *my* sample for the English pupils to answer this question mainly by referring to such pre-existing 'labels',³²¹ while the Norwegian pupils are triggered by this question to have lengthy reflections on their personal world views. For example:

I feel I am kind of in the middle, I feel there is much that sounds right or things that I can take with me from many different religions and you can have opinions and thoughts from all the religions, and make your own religion (NS2 – PG1).

It is a characteristic of late (or post) modern western religiosity to be free to pick and choose from various religious traditions in order to construct private individual religiosity/ spirituality (for example Winje 1999, Heelas & Woodhead 2005, see chapter 2). This phenomenon was described by Bellah (1985: 221): A young nurse named Sheila whom he interviewed described her religion as 'Sheilaism': 'I believe in God. I am not a religious fanatic. I can't remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It's "Sheilaism". Just my own little voice'. Bellah claims that 'Sheilaism'

³²⁰ For example the non religious children, three in Norwegian school 2 said to have chosen a civil confirmation ceremony, arranged by the Norwegian Secular Humanist Association as an alternative to conformation in Church. Which of the two alternatives they had chosen was a significant identity marker in the Norwegian sample and the reason for the second girl (NS2-PG2) in Norwegian school 2 to label herself 'Christian': but stressing this was mainly due to her grandmothers wish and that she was not very Christian.

³²¹ Except one girl (ES2-PG1) who nuanced the label she had chosen (not religious) by saying she used to be Church going but was currently in a phase where she had not decided what to believe.

is strangely representative of current religious life in America. Radically individualistic religion like 'Sheilaism' may seem very different from for example fundamentalist religion, but they both emphasise personal religious experience (spirituality). 'Sheilaism' is rooted in an attempt to transform external authority to internal meaning. Some may prefer to choose a religion of external authority (Bellah 1985: 235). That religion in principle is a choice, is a result of the religious freedom gained in the Western world through secularisation: a central trait of western modernity (Taylor 2004: 185, Taylor 2007, see also chapter 2).

The girl (NS2-PG1) quoted above had the same attitude towards religion as Sheila ('Sheilaism') (Bellah 1985). One of the boys (NS2 – PB2) also said he picked up elements from philosophy and religions which in his mind sounded right, in constructing his own life view. One boy (NS1-PB2) who labelled himself Christian, as he was baptised and confirmed in Church, first said he felt most connected to Buddhism. He did believe 'a little' in God, he said, but just liked the way of thinking in Buddhism. As he argued that position, one of the other pupils (NS1-PG2), also formally Christian, agreed that Buddhism was 'a bit cool'. It is as if these pupils play out recently learned material without feeling committed to a particular religion, not even the one stated as their own.³²² This could be seen as part of a process of developing individual identity, as indicated in Skeie's (1995) concept of 'modern' plurality (see chapter 2). Much relevant existing ethnographic research demonstrates how

³²² There is a hint of the same with the Hindu girl (ES3-PG1) in English school 3: 'I started to believe in the other religions as well', but in her case I would think her Hindu background must be seen as part of the explanation, along with the possibility that the modernity she is in opens for the possibility to pick and chose.

young people draw from different sources in their construction of (religious) identity (for example Jackson & Nesbitt 1993, Jackson 1997, and Østberg 1998). Some pupils in my sample who labelled themselves as Christians also said that this does not necessarily mean they had to believe *everything* in the Bible, like Jesus walking on water:

NS1-PG2: (...) I do not have to believe that even if I am a Christian (...)

NS1-PB1: But then you do not have to be a Christian!

NS1-PG2: No, but I choose to be.

NS1-PB2: Yes, I do too.

NS1-PG2: You just got to respect that!

This girl (NS1-PG2) takes personal charge over what in Christianity she believes in, still demanding respect for her choice of labelling herself as a Christian. She has the right to choose to be a Christian even if she does not understand it all, and even if she does not believe it all. When I asked if she felt she could choose freely what in the Christian religion she wanted to believe, the whole group (NS1-P) agreed to this. When I asked if they also felt they could choose from the other religions she (NS1-PG2) said:

I do not know so much about the other religions, or I know a little bit, but I don't think that only Christianity exists and what I really believe is that religion can be very individual, that if it works for you, you ought to believe in it (NS1-PG2).

This fits very well with descriptions of modern western religiosity/ spirituality for example by Heelas and Woodhead (2005). In the EC REDCo Project, researchers also found that the relationship between belief and practice was not straightforward, as exemplified in the English material with statements like 'I believe it's possible there may be a God, but don't have a religion'; 'religion ain't very important to me, but God is important in my life': 'I am a Christian, but I am not really religious' (Ipgrave & McKenna 2008: 122). In my material the Hindu girl (ES3-PG1) stood out as more open to individual religiosity and using elements from different traditions for her own life view, while than the Muslim boys (ES3-PB1, ES3-PB1) stood out as having the least individual kinds of answers.

It seems that 'Sheilaism' or *playful constructions of personal beliefs* among the young could be found in both countries, and that it is representative of the way many modern western young people relate to religion, regardless of national context. They are, in other words influenced by supranational processes in the way that they relate to religion in this individualistic style. In summing up findings of all eight countries in the REDCo qualitative research, Ipgrave and Bertram-Troost (2008: 376-377) distinguish between ten different ways in which pupils relate to religion.³²³ They state that 'some approaches are more strongly represented in some countries than in others'

³²³ As personal faith, as spiritual experience, to seek comfort and support, to seek moral guidance, for communal belonging, as group classification, as factual knowledge, philosophical theory, as having a societal role, or as being irrelevant to their lives.

(Ipgrave & Bertram-Troost 2008: 376) without specifying a pattern in this.³²⁴

There are, in other words, also some nation specific differences regarding individual choice of how to relate to religion.

Muslims stands out as more committed to their religion and holding strong theistic views (Dietz *et al.* 2009). They were more explicit about their religion than, for example, committed Christians, who would keep their religious identity more hidden (Ipgrave & Bertram-Troost 2008: 383). Both in my material and in the REDCo material, many who labelled themselves as Christian added that they were not very Christian. Ipgrave & Bertram-Troost (2008: 383) suggest that 'the public nature of being Muslim coupled with negative images of Islam increase a sense of solidarity and pride', which is interesting in my context because this also refers to supranational processes as an explanatory factor, but to other processes than those who described their relationship to religion in a very individualistic way (Sheilaism).

Christians, however, may be influenced by another supranational process, namely the secular critique of religion understood mainly as western Christian traditions. One possible interpretation of the various ways in which pupils describe or talk about their relationship to religion is to see Muslims and Christians, for example, as referring to different modernities (Taylor 2004).

³²⁴ They do indicate some nation specific factors, like the sharp distinction in France between learning about religion in school and religious learning as a private matter, whereas in England there is a more holistic approach as schools also aims to help develop pupils spiritually (Ipgrave & Bertram-Troost 2008: 387).

In both my sample and the samples in Ipgrave & McKenna (2008) and von der Lippe (2008) all the Muslims and some Christians in organised religion outside the mainstream established churches, such as Charismatic Christians (Norway) and African Christians (England), were less private and more collectively oriented towards sharing the same religion and belonging to religious groups, meaning that they would not 'pick and choose' in the same individualistic manner. This could be seen as a process of developing identity with reference to what Skeie (1995) calls a traditional plurality. This Muslim girl in my sample, however, was hesitant to identify as religious and Muslim:

NS3-PG2: I am Muslim, but I am not the kind of Muslim who would wear a headscarf or the kind who prays every day. That would be real Muslims, but I am not. I am Muslim, but I am not like that ... No, I do not believe everything.

O: No?

NS3-PG2: but some things I believe. There are a lot of things I am wondering about, and I ask my mother and father. They help me explain what it is. It is a bit difficult (NS3-PG4).

Even if she is more modest in her self definition than the Muslims in my English sample, and in both the English and Norwegian REDCo samples, I see this girl's identity work as more oriented towards searching out what the content of her religion was than picking and choosing freely within her religion or from other religions. I interpret this girl's (NS3-PG4) first attempt

to be similar to her 'lightly Christian'³²⁵ privately religious peers on the basis of her comment 'I do not believe everything'. This would make subnational processes the explanation for her way of identifying as a Muslim.³²⁶

Difference in *social enculturation* may explain differences between nations in how young people relate to religion. Thus there may be differences in how, for example, 'Christianness' or 'Muslimness' is constructed in different European countries. Pupils' answers could then be seen as attempts to situate themselves within a certain national sense of, for example, 'Muslimness'. Then again as Christians and Muslims are obviously heterogeneous groups, there would have to be competing ideas of 'Christianness' or 'Muslimness' as well.

In this section I have discussed some possible reasons for the way young people identified as religious or not, and the way they talked about their relationship to religion. Some of those reasons relate to specific local processes, some relate to different national processes, and some relate to supranational processes, like secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation (see chapter 2). In conclusion it may seem that there may be different national 'styles' which will be challenged by sub national factors. It may also be challenged by supranational factors, for instance if Muslim pupils share a

³²⁵ In the sense that they self-identified as Christians but stressed that they were not very Christian.

³²⁶ In the case of this Muslim girls in my sample I would suggest that circumstances like being first generation immigrants in a setting with strong secularist – or even traditional Christian 'Norwegianness' around her forms her views. This may be why the two Muslim girls in my sample reveal their personal doubts and questions more than the Muslim students in both my English sample, and in Iprgrave & McKenna's (2008) English material and in von der Lippe's (2008) Norwegian material.

sense of solidarity in a world where Muslims in the media are often portrayed as a threat to society (an international imaginary). Taking Taylor's (2004) point that many types of modernities coexist in today's world, it could be argued that pupils within one school or class may in fact have different modernities as their frame of reference, and that this affects the way in which they relate to religion.

Aims of RE

From the pupils' perspective: why did they think they were taught RE? Was RE seen to be of importance? What did they see as the importance of RE? I discuss this in relation to what their teachers said to be central aims of RE, and I am also interested to see if there are differences between English and Norwegian pupils' perspectives. Even if my sample is not representative I can discuss this against suggested characteristics of national styles indicated in chapters 5 and 6. Do pupils' perspectives reflect their teachers' views? How do they relate to the way aims are formulated at the institutional and societal levels?

The English teachers' views on the aims of RE could be summed up as promoting respect and understanding for different religions. They tended to see plurality in school and in society as a strength to RE. There was a great deal of harmony between this and what the English pupils believed to be main aims of RE. They all persistently repeated how the main reason why they had RE was to learn about different people's viewpoints on certain

topics, and to avoid being offensive to other people. For example, one girl (ES1-PG1) said that 'You know (in) the world that we live in now we can't be ignorant of everybody else so you just have to know what they believe and respect it.' In English school 3 pupils clearly related the importance of RE to their plural school context: '(...) this is a mixed race school, so we have to know about other people's religions so we don't say anything bad and not realize it' (ES3-PG1).

In Norwegian school 3 they thought that the reason why they had RE was 'probably because Norway is a Christian country'. Between the two multicultural schools (ES3, NS3) it is a contrast that in the Norwegian school 3 RE is not seen as instrumentally important because they were a 'mixed race school'. This is consistent with the Norwegian teachers' views about aims of RE being to promote knowledge about religions, and especially Christianity as part of Norwegian cultural heritage. On the Norwegian side, teachers were not equally explicit that promoting tolerance and respect was the primary aim, but said that they hoped this could be a result of learning about religions (see chapter 6). The Norwegian teachers were also more ambivalent towards the present plurality in schools and in society, and did not immediately see RE as especially important in a plural school environment as the English teachers did.

Their teachers' perspectives was however both reflected in and challenged by the Norwegian pupils. In their answers they tended to say that a main

point was to learn about 'our' cultural heritage and to learn about the religions as such. In this, their answers reflected their teachers' responses. However, they were also critical of RE as they had experienced it.

This critique especially included a wish that RE should be more about plurality, and included a desire that the quality of learning about other religions should be better. For example, one girl (NS1-PG1) said the aim of RE was 'To learn about the different religions and not just our own Christianity'. She had a societal perspective when she added that 'It is important to understand the religions in order to understand humans, sort of improving our social intelligence a little'. In Norwegian school 2 there was a strong secular humanist perspective among pupils in the group, and even if they shared the general perspective on what the aims were, they had a critical angle – with clear links to the Secular Humanist Association's official critique of KRL at the societal level:

Even if many people are members of the Church of Norway, there are also many who resign and who might convert to another religion: or one will perhaps be working with someone belonging to another religion, and in Norway there are quite a few who have got other religions than just Christianity. So then it is OK to know about them (...) their habits and bad habits (...) what is sacred to them and things like that. (NS2-PB2)

Pupils in the Norwegian schools use vocabulary which distinguishes very clearly between that which is 'our own' (Norwegian Christianity) and that which is 'other'³²⁷. This distinction reflects their teachers' views. I would say this is a different sense of 'otherness' than in the English sample where, I understand 'other' as 'others' related to oneself as an individual. This might be attributed to the shorter history of multifaith RE in Norway compared to England, but also I think a different understanding of society as plural is a factor (see chapter 6). In this aspect, the English sample represents more a 'modern' view of plurality while in the Norwegian sample it is a traditional or group plurality which is reflected (Skeie 1995).³²⁸ However, despite the Norwegian pupils lack of awareness of the language of plurality as 'others' tended to mean other than Norwegian Christians, they expressed positive views regarding the shift towards multifaith RE:

NS1-PG2: because old people are quite prejudiced and stuff, because they have not learned anything about it ...

O: So, you think that KRL actually works in that way then, at least for your own parts?

NS1-PG2: Yes, at least in this school with the teacher that we have, right, and... then I think that it does eliminate prejudice. ...

NS1-PB2: Yes.

³²⁷ Including here even secular humanism: which in the institutional level are named in a similar manner as Christianity as part of our cultural heritage. For example in the school law preamble (both the old and the new from 2008) it says 'Our Christian and Humanist cultural heritage'.

³²⁸ But both views of plurality exist in both countries: and in describing their religion the modern plurality was more reflected in the Norwegian pupils' answers in my sample: but could be found also in the English sample of the REDCo research (Ipgrave & McKenna 2008).

NS1-PG2: ... it does help so much that I do think it is very important

NS1-PG1: Yes, you become more open minded

There was a tendency that those pupils who liked their teachers most (for example English school 3 and Norwegian school 1) were also the ones who were most positive both with regards to liking RE and seeing it as relevant and important. However pupils were also able to distinguish between whether they personally liked RE and whether RE as such was seen as important. For example one boy (ES2-PB1) said he liked RE because it was interesting, but did not think it was important compared to Science, English and Maths which could ensure him a good job in the future. 'Oline's' (NS3-T) pupils were very critical of her, saying her teaching was boring³²⁹, but they still expressed that it was good that they learned about other religions.

While there was a great deal of harmony between what teachers and pupils said was the importance of RE, in the Norwegian sample some pupils enhanced the importance of learning about *other* religions' more than their teachers, whereas there was a stronger similarity between teachers' and pupils' views in the English sample. Perhaps one explanation is that RE is seen more in relation to the present plurality by the younger people, and seen more in relation to both traditional religion and traditional RE by the older Norwegian teachers,³³⁰ but another plausible reason for this difference

³²⁹ Because they rarely had discussions and that it was mostly about listening to her talking.

³³⁰ Haakedal's (2004) findings suggests that younger *teachers* were more globally oriented than younger (see chapter 6), so it could be reasoned that young pupils would be more globally oriented while especially their older teachers would have a narrower national or local perspective.

is that the history of multifaith RE is shorter in Norway (since 1997) while well established in England (one could date its practice in at least some parts of the country from the Birmingham 1975 syllabus). The theory that plurality is perceived differently in the English and Norwegian *imaginaries* is yet another possible source of explanation.

Generally, all pupils spoke favourably about inclusive multifaith RE, the kind of RE that they (in principle) received. The same finding appeared for English and Norwegian pupils in the REDCo studies (Dietz *et al.* 2009). This could be taken to mean that young people in England and Norway favour a multifaith type of RE because this is seen as relevant for them, with respect to their context (local, national and/ or international). However, the REDCo research indicates that pupils in general had a tendency to support the kind of RE that they experienced within their own education systems, a finding which is a consequence of the differences in *social enculturation* in the different countries. Here school through *social enculturation* as a process is successful in instilling a certain (nation specific) pattern of civility. In this perspective the explanation for young people in England and Norway supporting multifaith RE may be simply that this is what they have learned.

³³¹ I would like to conclude that *both* perspectives can be combined in explaining these pupils' general support for multifaith RE: it's because it is relevant for them, and it is because this is what they know.

³³¹ A similar explanation I find in McKenna, Neill and Jackson (2009: 61): 'Muslims, Christians and non-religious alike, had assimilated the multi faith and inter faith ethic promoted by the English model of RE'.

Content of learning

While the content of RE in some aspects could be seen as similar at the English and Norwegian institutional levels there are also some significant differences (chapter 4), and we saw that *teaching* about Christianity and other religions were understood differently (chapter 6). In the English case, efforts were made to present Christianity as an international phenomenon, while in Norway it was more acceptable to present Christianity as a Norwegian tradition. Teachings about the ‘other’ religions were in both cases tied to local or national context – to the religious plurality that had resulted from immigration (while globalisation was a less central aspect).

From the perspective of *pupils’ learning*, the most immediate national differences in my limited sample were that the Norwegian pupils were much more able to answer factual questions about religions and Norwegian Christianity especially, while the English pupils struggled with factual questions about either Christianity or other religions, and were largely ignorant about what would characterise Christianity *in Britain*. For example, in Norwegian school 2 (NS2-P) pupils were actually at one point discussing the content of the book of Job critically,³³² and they had no problems saying, for example, what the central message of Christianity was. They had some knowledge of Christianizing of Norway,³³³ and they could tell me, for example, that Catholicism is the largest of the Christian denominations

³³² (...) I get angry when I see that it encourages people who are suffering to believe blindly that they will be rewarded later (...) preferably in an afterlife (...) this downright pisses me off (...) I believe you only live once (...) this goes against everything I believe in’ (NS2-PB2). Later he considered the point that the book of Job may also give poor people hope, but obviously in his opinion this was false hope.

³³³ by sword, one boy (NS2-PB2) ironically remarked, ‘that is not much of a choice’.

worldwide and that, while this dominates in South America, Protestantism is dominant in North America. In contrast, for instance in English school 2, I had to prompt in order to get pupils to say Christmas was Jesus' birthday:

O: Do you know what the core message of Christianity is? What's the most important message in Christianity? ... Essential message in Christianity?

(Silence)

O: What do you think it's got to do with?

(Silence)

O: What's Christmas about?

ES2-PB1: Jesus.

O: Yeah. What's Easter about?

ES2-PB2: Easter bunnies.

O: Easter bunnies? (Smiles) ...

ES2-PB1: Jesus again.

O: Yeah, so what happens at Christmas?

ES2-PB2: You get presents.

O: yeah, but I mean to Jesus?

ES2-PB1: Celebrating his birthday.

ES2-PB2: Yeah, his birthday.³³⁴

³³⁴ The conversation goes on like this: O: So why is that important? Why do they celebrate that in Christianity? (Silence) O: Who is Jesus? ES2-PB2: He's a good man. O: He's a good man. What else is he? ES2-PB1: Jew. O: He was a Jew, that's true. Ah, when did he live? ES2-PB1: Ah, 2000 years ago. O: Yeah. Well, he's the son of God they claim in Christianity, right? ES2-PB1: (low voice) yeah.

In English school 3 they discussed whether the dominant Christian religion in Britain would be Protestantism or Catholicism. The two Muslim boys (ES3-PB1, ES3-PB2) were quite persistent it was Protestant, but the Hindu girl (ES3-PG1) kept arguing that there were a lot of Catholics as well and was supported by the other girl (ES3-PG2). Eventually she yields to it being 'mixed, really' but the one boy (ES3-PB1) points out that the Church of England which is the main one, is Protestant. The discussion was civilised and mature (except for the level of their knowledge), confirming there was an atmosphere of respect for different viewpoints in this school, as their teacher claimed.

Obviously I cannot say whether these findings were representative. The REDCo research does not include a question about what is actually learned. It would probably be difficult to establish level of or quality of knowledge in any representative manner. It is hard to imagine international knowledge tests such as PISA and SIMS in mathematics for the field of RE, because of the differences in curricula, and because aims of RE include developing pupils' identity and ability to reflect as well as gaining knowledge and understanding.

The English and Norwegian pupils' knowledge must be judged against what they had in fact been taught. An overview of this is found in the institutional level of their curriculum (Local Agreed Syllabus, GCSE³³⁵ syllabus and local schemes of work (England) and National Curriculum and text books

³³⁵ The General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), see chapter 5.

(Norway). In addition, there is the question of the efficiency of the teaching and the pupils' personal abilities and interests which are also factors which would explain variations such as differences in quality of factual knowledge about religion revealed during interview. What factors can be identified as possible explanations for this result in this specific (and limited) sample?

It is easier to establish the degree of direct links or not between the institutional level of curriculum and the experiential in the case of Norway because there is one National Curriculum for all (even if it has changed frequently: which is a complicating factor here)³³⁶ as opposed to many Local Agreed Syllabuses in England (in the case of this sample two different ones). However, interviews with the English teachers suggested that the Local Agreed Syllabus had a very limited influence on work at public examination level. With regard to my specific sample, which was from year 10, key stage 4, the main influence was the GCSE examination syllabus. GCSE syllabuses, organised on a national basis, have a greater determining influence on what is taught in class and the local syllabi which tend to be sidelined at this level.³³⁷

³³⁶ In Norway, the National Curriculum and its local adjustment decides the content of the teachings. These teachers were formally following the 2002 curriculum (Læringsenteret 2002), but were using textbooks which had been made after the 1997 reform (Det kongelige kirke-, utdannings-, og forskningsdepartement 1996) (see details on curricular history in chapter 4, and discussion on the use of textbooks in chapter 6).

³³⁷ There are a variety of GCSE religious education syllabuses from which the English teachers select the one they want to follow with their pupils. Some have a strong religious studies or comparative religion base, while others focus more on Christianity with Biblical options, and others are more philosophical in content (see chapter 5). See http://www.gcse-coursework.com/res_bor.html (Accessed 11.05.05)

We saw in chapter 5 that the main topics of the lessons I observed were of different types in the English and the Norwegian schools. In The English schools it was Christians' (and Muslims') attitudes towards poverty and wealth (ES3), sex in and out of marriage (ES2) and abortion (ES1). The topics related to a life theme type of RE (GCSE) syllabus. Although these are very specific examples, in the English case influenced by public examination syllabuses, I think they reflect differences in the different national RE research and policy traditions, as well as some influence from one tradition to the other. In England a strand in the tradition of RE, (consistent with Goldman, Loukes etc. [see for example Jackson & McGrady 2007]) has been the use of 'life themes', including an emphasis on ethical teachings seen as relevant to the lives of learners, while, in Norway, Rian and others at the University of Trondheim introduced ideas from phenomenology which were in part imported from English RE. An example of this is Ninian Smart's ideas of religious dimensions (Rian & Kværne (1983) (see chapter 3). In other words, the emphasis on ethical teachings in the English examination syllabuses may possibly have diverted attention from gaining a solid basic factual knowledge of each of the religions or denominations.

In English school 2 pupils hesitated when I asked whether they had learned anything about Christianity *in Britain*. They discussed among themselves before concluding that 'We haven't learned about that maybe'. At one point I revealed that The Church of England had a special history and that it was special to England, and this made the pupils so curious (ES2-P) that I was

tempted to start telling them about it (but did not). After having asked the pupils in English school 2 about what they had learned about Christianity and other religions, there was an exchange of words between the boys about what they did and did not learn in RE, and one of them concluded that ‘Yeah, we learned about the different views that different types of Christians have on euthanasia or abortion.’ (ES2-PB1)

I was trying to find out something about English pupils’ knowledge about religions when I asked about the content of Christian faith, or the history of the Church of England, for example. I believed this to be a reasonable interpretation of ‘Christianity in Britain’ in the wording of the 1988 Education Reform Act and the discussion about cultural heritage on the societal level (which has a parallel in Norway: see chapters 3 and 4). In hindsight, however, reflecting on my findings in chapter 6, I wonder if the reason why I was asking this was influenced by the strong position of the ‘Christianity as a cultural heritage perspective’ in Norwegian RE. Was this a ‘Norwegian style’ interpretation of ‘Christianity *in Britain*’?

However, the apparent emphasis in the English sample on ‘different people’s views’ and ‘how not to be offensive’ reflects the examination syllabuses rather than the Agreed Syllabus. For example a closer look at the Agreed Syllabus which English schools 2 and 3 followed (for reasons of confidentiality I cannot identify this 2007 syllabus) revealed that there was no shortage of aims concerning learning *about* religion. Indeed ‘providing

accurate information about the main religions' (p. 2) is a main aim. This is specified for each key stage focusing on five main areas (authority, beliefs and teachings, celebrations (including of course Christmas, p. 22, 32, 47 in other words on each key stage 1-3), relationships and worship, (p. 6.). This thematic organisation gives this element of the syllabus a phenomenological feel. There is not much focus on historical questions, for instance on the development of Christianity in Britain, or any of the religions as traditions in their own right. This may explain the pupils' lack of ability to answer questions about what would characterise the Church of England, but not their lack of ability to say what the main ethos of Christianity is.

(...) you know we don't actually get told what the main ethos of Christianity is about (...) Basically it all comes down to not wanting to offend anyone and being politically correct (...) We've been told that in any essay we have to put 'some Christians', so that we don't offend anybody (ES1-PB1).

Other main aims for RE for key stages 1-4 and Post 16 (p. 2)³³⁸ in this Agreed Syllabus include offering means by which pupils can understand the influence of religion on people's attitudes to life and death, and 'help people to develop a positive attitude towards other people, respecting their rights to hold different religious beliefs and value systems from their own' (p. 2).

³³⁸Regarding Key stage 4, this Agreed Syllabus say that pupils are seen to meet the syllabus requirements if they if they follow either of five alternatives which all include the study of Christianity and at least one other religion (p. 59). a) A GCSE Religious Studies course which is based on the study of Christianity and at least one other religion, b) A GCSE short course (which was not the case with any of the pupils I interviewed), c) A COEA (Certificate of Educational Achievement (which was not the case with any of the pupils I interviewed), D) An approved school based syllabus or e) An approved combined or integrated GCSE course.

These aims are in great harmony with the what these pupils said RE was about: so in the case of these (few) pupils in my small sample the case was that there was a close connection between the levels when it came to the aims of promoting certain attitudes, but a weak connection regarding aims of learning factual information about the beliefs and teachings of the religions.

However the child's mistaken view of saying 'some Christians', for example is not connected with not offending anyone, but with accuracy; it would be inaccurate to say that 'all Christians' shared a view on euthanasia for example. Based on this small sample I can only raise the question whether there is some slippage, in the teaching and in pupils' understanding, between 'respecting the rights of people to hold their chosen religious or secular beliefs' and fostering the attitude of not causing offence to anyone? This is something that maybe needs close attention in English RE

On the Norwegian side the aim of RE contributing to respect for others and their rights is less explicit at the formal level of curriculum, even if it is a strong subtext reflected for instance in the debates about multifaith RE on the societal level (see chapter 3). Until the 2005 curriculum (UD 2005, see chapter 4) the content was not formulated as aims for learning but rather as content of teaching, saying for example how teaching should include education about the history of Christianity (LS 2002, p. 12). There was much emphasis on storytelling in 'småskoletrinnet' (lower primary school), more emphasis on presenting each religion/ tradition and their histories in

'mellomtrinnet' (upper primary), and on contemporary perspectives, comparisons and dialogue on 'ungdomstrinnet' (lower secondary) (LS 2002, p. 12-15).³³⁹ On 'ungdomstrinnet' (lower secondary) the religions are not presented separately, but through themes: 'sacred texts' and 'present day plurality of religious and life views', so it could be characterised as more phenomenological at this stage while more historically oriented especially in the 'mellomtrinnet' (upper primary).

What seems to be the case then, in a comparative perspective, is that there is a very close link in the English case to the institutional level of curriculum as pupils' answers reflected recent work based on GCSE syllabuses.

However, links to aims in the Local Agreed Syllabus which indicated that they should have a good knowledge base about religions, were weak.³⁴⁰ In relation to the Norwegian sample, a link to the institutional level of curriculum can be identified also, but this is more indirect because of the situation with the textbooks (see chapter 6); however, aims of learning about religions were reflected more in these pupils' answers, so on this point there were a closer link in the Norwegian sample than the English.

³³⁹ For more details about the relationships between types of schools in England and Norway, see chapter 5.

³⁴⁰ The non-statutory National Framework for RE (which now influences many Local Agreed Syllabuses) recommends building a sound knowledge of the religions by the end of key stage 3, so that pupils can move on to broader topics at key stage 4. 'Christianity should be studied throughout each key stage (...) the other principal religions represented in Great Britain (here regarded as Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism and Sikhism) should be studied across the key stages. It is important that ASCs and schools ensure that by the end of key stage 3 pupils have encountered all of these five principal religions in sufficient depth.' (QCA 2004: 12), see

http://www.qcda.gov.uk/libraryAssets/media/9817_re_national_framework_04.pdf

The responses from the pupils in schools show that this level of sound knowledge had not been reached.

Moving on in the search for connections to the instructional level, I have no basis to claim the English teaching was of poorer quality than the Norwegian. On the contrary, judging from the school observations as well as the interviews with the teachers, the English teachers came over as more reflective and better oriented about formal levels of curricula than their Norwegian colleagues, so in this respect this result is an enigma.³⁴¹

However, it may be the case that it is the very explicit aim of the English teachers of promoting respect and understanding, which is so clear to pupils, that it overshadows the basic aim of learning *about* religions. As we have seen, this was less explicit in the Norwegian sample, where teachers' framing of aims reflected more learning about religions as the principal aim, (which actually reflects differences in the institutional level of curriculum also.) This may be one factor in explaining why Norwegian pupils in this (specific and small) sample were more able to reveal factual knowledge about religions. Only further research could determine whether this is representative.

The final area which may explain differences is the individual level, and I did not obtain details about pupils' backgrounds, including their home backgrounds and individual levels of ability, in this study. What I do know from the basic experiences of the interviews, school visits and general knowledge of the school systems is for example in Norwegian school 2 some participating pupils were reading books which demonstrated an

³⁴¹ It is an enigma how in my sample the English teachers were so well oriented and ready to answer questions about RE, while the Norwegian teachers were more hesitant and gave answers indicating they had not reflected much about their roles as RE teachers: and then in the interviews with their pupils it was the Norwegian pupils who had better knowledge of religion.

interest in topics regarding religion or philosophy. Also, the level of discussion in Norwegian school 1 was of high quality. The styles of teaching in the English schools were generally more rigid and achievement based, most likely because of their forthcoming GCSE examination.

My case studies do not provide enough data to explain this difference in ability to answer questions about religions in a satisfactory way, but a main point here is that the difference between the English and the Norwegian material reflects the institutional level in various ways, the different understandings of teachers to some degree. Reasons are also very likely to be found in the middle layer of learning material such as textbooks or schemes of work (see chapter 6). Also teachers' and pupils' different understandings of society as more or less plural are relevant, for example, having different ideas of the role of Christianity as cultural heritage, reflecting different *national imaginaries*, could be seen as an explanation for national differences.

Whatever the reason, it is the case that, regarding the content of learning about religions, I found significant differences between the English and Norwegian sample. What can be concluded with regards to my methodology is that these differences must be explained with reference to different traditions for what is actually taught and learned in practice. These differences were not obvious from reading documents alone (chapter 3 and 4). This finding made it necessary to re-examine documents at the

institutional level of curriculum with a different and specific focus, and this is an interesting suggestion for how this methodology could be developed further in the future. It is an argument for the importance of including an empirical element in a comparative study, even if this is also complicates the comparison.

Learning *about* and *from* religion

The English teachers were familiar with the concepts of learning about and from (see chapter 6). They predicted that their pupils would probably not be able to say what the difference between learning *about* and *from* religion would be, and they were right. Some of the pupils did, however, try to reason what it could mean, and for example one of the Muslim boys (ES3-PB2) reasoned that 'Like if some religion says you should give money to charities, you learn from that and you give money to charities'. On the Norwegian side the teachers were not familiar with the concepts of learning about and from as such. Even if this is an aspect of Norwegian RE according to the institutional level of curriculum (see chapter 4), this is not clear either to the teachers or the pupils. Like their teachers the pupils understood the terms 'getting both knowledge and experience' as referring to outwardly experiences from excursions or interesting methods of teaching (for example drama), rather than personal gains from encounters with learning material (see chapter 6).

Looking beyond the barriers of how concepts were understood by pupils, both in the English and the Norwegian samples, I conclude from my material that pupils were learning both about and from religion in RE. For example in English school 3 the pupils said they thought RE was special compared to other subjects, because 'RE's got to be contemplated (...) because you may get the religions mixed up, and people do get defensive. It isn't like Maths or English, you might get defensive' (ES3-PB1), and that they could express thoughts and feelings in RE (ES3-PG1). It was quite clear that they related RE learning to their own lives; because they said, for example, that RE made it easier to talk to their friends about their different religions and understand them better.³⁴² They expressed a first hand experience of why it was important, much in accordance with how it was expressed by their teacher. They (ES3 – P) also confirmed that they did think RE contributed to their personal growth. Also in English school 2 they seem to have learned from religion: 'Because before we were like laughing and everything about what they were doing and everything, but now we know more about what they're doing and why they're doing it. So, it's their life' (ES2-PG1).

The clearest indication of learning *from* religion in the Norwegian sample was found in Norwegian school 1: where they (see above) used information from their RE to construct personal life views. They could not have done this, even if it might have been in a playful manner, if they had not been learning both about and *from* religion. They also explicitly agreed that it was

³⁴² In the REDCo research it was found that RE lessons in school was the most likely place for pupils to engage in discussions (dialogue) between different religious viewpoints, while outside RE class students were more likely to discuss religion with those from similar backgrounds to themselves (Dietz *et al.* 2009).

contributing to their own life: 'I think we all develop a lot when we have KRL' (NS1-PG2). In Norwegian school 3, the pupils first said they did not think KRL was an important subject and did not see that it has any relevance for their own life. However, as the questions of the interview revealed the aims for the subject according to the institutional level (the National Curriculum), it turned out they did think RE might be important 'because they learn more about *other* religions'. In other words these pupils think RE might be important when the perspective of the existence of *other* religions is enhanced, but not as they have experienced it, where the main aim of the learning was seen as learning about the Norwegian Christian tradition.³⁴³

The question whether RE was contributing to pupils becoming more respectful was answered with explicit reference to the two girls' (NS3-PG3, NS3-PG4) experience of giving a presentation about Islam³⁴⁴: 'We *get* more respect when we tell about Islam'. Both the indigenous Norwegian girls (NS3-PG1, NS3-PG2) also agreed they gained respect through learning about different religions but were sceptical of whether it had that effect on their classmates. In English school 1, they did think RE *promoted* respect for other people: 'this is the big thing (...) and the most important point', but they were also hesitant as to whether it had the effect of making them or their classmates more tolerant.

³⁴³ This bias comes through to them both through their teachers understanding of the subject and through their textbooks.

³⁴⁴ The teacher and the two girls themselves (NS3-PG3 and NS3-PG4) said that they had recently prepared a presentation about their own religion, Islam and presented this both in their own class and in other classes.

In Norwegian school 2, they said they thought RE was an important subject, because 'the things we learn in KRL might be stocked at the back of our heads for later in life, while things we learn in maths for example will be forgotten'. In both the Norwegian and the English cases the 'learning from' aspect was seen as an element that gave RE a different quality from other school subjects. In Norwegian school 2, the pupils did see themselves as respectful of other people, but not because of their RE.³⁴⁵ In this group they also distinguished between getting a better understanding and becoming more respectful: for example one boy (NS2 – PB2) was so critical of Christianity and religion in general that it was difficult for him to say he had respect for it. At the same time this was also the boy who criticised textbooks for being biased and said it would have been better if someone who really believed in Islamic religion for instance, could explain it.

Signs that pupils were learning from religion in RE were found both in the English and Norwegian schools, but in varying degrees. In the English schools they all saw RE as promoting learning to be respectful, for example, but were, like their teachers, hesitant as to whether it had this effect on themselves or their classmates. Even in English school 3 they expressed doubt that it had the same positive effect on everyone, saying that some would still be racist. On the Norwegian side it is often the case that they say they do gain respect through RE despite this being a less explicit instrumental aim here at the instructional level. Both English and Norwegian pupils were ambivalent as to what degree they or their peers do gain respect

³⁴⁵ This was exactly what their teacher (Ingunn NS2-T) said they might say.

through RE, which is in good harmony with their teachers' modesty too as to whether this was actually an outcome of RE teachings (see chapter 6).³⁴⁶

The relevance of RE for their own lives was immediate for the pupils in English school 3, but in all the other schools in both countries pupils tended to understand 'relevance for your own life' in a very concrete way. Some were noting that it would only be relevant for people wanting to become priests, while others said it was interesting, but did not see what they could do with this knowledge, as they did not see its relevance for future jobs.

This was for instance the case with the pupils in Norwegian school 3 (NS3-P) which is an interesting contrast to the immediate relevance of RE for the pupils in English school 3. When in Norwegian school 3, I explained that 'having use for' could for instance mean help them in forming their opinions; they did see the use of it.³⁴⁷ In English school 1 we had this discussion:

O: But you never know what your life is going to be like, maybe you will be doing engineering in say Africa, and you need to know about African religion and maths...

ES1-PG1: We don't do that.

(Laughs)

ES1-PB1: We don't.

³⁴⁶ It may be that pupils have different understandings of certain concepts, like for instance *respect*. Anker's forthcoming PhD thesis will discuss pupils' ideas of respect and disrespect.

³⁴⁷ The Kurdish girl (NS3-PG4) said she might get use for it if in the future she would be involved in discussions about religion. She (NS3-PG4) said it might be important to learn, that she learned a lot that she did not know before and that it is good that they have KRL and can learn about religion. This girl did not have much schooling before she came to Norway as a nine year old, and her teacher spoke highly of how well she managed in school despite this. I interpret her negativity as adjusting to class or school environment, but that she might in fact enjoy school learning more than it is socially acceptable to admit.

ES1-PG2: We never learned about African religion...

ES1-PB2: There are only two religions during the whole ...

ES1-PG2: There's Muslims...

ES1-PB2: Islam and Christianity, they're the only two ...

ES1-PB1: Really, yeah, that's about right,

ES1-PG1: ... we should do more ...

ES1-PB2: They're the ones they teach us because they are the biggest, the biggest two.

ES1-PG2: It would be interesting to know about other religions...

The largest religions in Africa are of course Christianity and Islam, but the point here with regard to seeing the relevance of RE to their own lives, is that some pupils' lack of ability to see its relevance (in all schools but English school 3 and Norwegian school 1) makes it necessary perhaps to explain explicitly and make clear to pupils and teachers alike why multifaith RE is relevant in modern days school curricula. According to Jackson & O'Grady (2007: 193) 'The principle that religious education needs to be existentially relevant has been prominent ever since Loukes' in English RE. As the aims of RE in England and Norway have shifted from traditional Christian nurturing RE, it might still not be obvious to some pupils and perhaps even some teachers exactly what the point of multifaith RE is. This is perhaps not totally unexpected given the ambivalence on the levels above on this point. However it is important for RE teaching and learning to become meaningful that the purpose of multifaith RE is clear for teachers and pupils.

What kind of imaginary would be inclusive?

When it comes to learning about and from 'other' religions, the differences were less obvious in the two countries. Both in England and Norway 'difference' is tied to the national context of increased religious plurality. The Norwegian pupils' knowledge of the other religions was still better than that of the English pupils, but of a poorer quality than their knowledge about Christianity. I was not able to detect clear differences in quality in the English sample between the teaching and learning about Christianity and 'other' religions. However, in both countries, Christianity was the religion with the strongest representation at the institutional level of curriculum (see chapter 4), and this was reflected also in the practice that I observed during my school visits (see chapter 5).

You remember these stories, like about the one on the mountain who had to ah, who were to sacrifice his son, and but then God came; you remember a lot of these stories that you have either seen on film or they have been read to you. It kind of remains in your head, like Abraham and a lot like that, but I can't remember anything like that from any of the other religions. Then it's kind of just 'they think this' and 'Islam kind of has him' and stuff like that. We know a lot about Christianity, but we kind of just know that which, well very little like that about other religions (NS2-PB2).

This critique demonstrates that despite the effort at the institutional level (the National Curriculum for KRL: see chapter 4) to say that all parts of the subject should be presented on equal terms, this principle had not filtered through to the experiential level. One reason is the teachers' dependence on textbooks, which had not been successful in translating this principle of equal quality in teaching about Christianity and *other* religions into pedagogical material - and which were not updated since the last curriculum reform which enhanced this principle more than before (see chapter 6). Another reason is the quality of the teaching, as the teachers could have made other pedagogical choices to improve the teaching with regards to avoiding a different quality of teaching about Christianity as opposed to about other religions, despite the situation with the textbooks.

That pupils reported such a difference in quality between learning about Christianity and other religions could be because they were aware of the critique on the societal level regarding this, for instance from the Norwegian Humanist Association. However, this was also confirmed through their answers. They knew facts about the 'other' religions, but did not reveal the kind of insights that would enable them to discuss topics on the same level, as for instance they did (NS2-P) about the book of Job or original sin. For example, pupils did not know that there is not a concept of original sin in Islam, or that Islam and Judaism share some of the stories.³⁴⁸ Neither are they very well oriented about other religions in Norway, nor in their

³⁴⁸ Although how to handle the shared stories on for example Abraham, Moses, Jesus, has been a central topic in some parts of the societal level: among educators and scholars and also some textbook publishers.

knowledge of religion in the local area, like knowing the location of the mosque. While they had other important sources of information about the Christian religion, for example, from novels that they had read, what they knew about the other religions depended more on school learning.³⁴⁹

Norwegian pupils even expressed the criticism that Christianity as 'our' heritage is emphasized too much, as we have seen above. They seem to be interested in more and better quality learning about the 'other' religions. For example, one boy (NS2-PB1) said he thought the other religions were explained from a Christian point of view, which he thought was not right. In his view, Islam should rather be explained by a Muslim, thinking it was wrong if Christians explained the other religions. In Norwegian school 1 (NS1) too they said that their study of the 'other' religions was 'sort of done with Christian eyes, so that it is seen in a different way' and said this might have been different if there had actually been Muslims in the class.

NS1-PG2: (teaching would have been) more interesting perhaps

NS1-PB1: Yes

NS1-PG2: Would have learned more

NS1-PB2: We would have had more different viewpoints and perhaps been less judgemental of things than if one only hears of Islam as this strict religion which suppresses women and stuff.

³⁴⁹ REDCo researchers also found that religious pupils learn about their own religion at home, and other religions in school, pupils who labelled themselves as not religious (including some of the domestic Christians who were stressing that they were not very Christian, see discussion above) had school as their main source of information about religion in general (Dietz *et al.* 2009)

NS1-PB1: We see it through our eyes you know and not through theirs.

Here these pupils' concern was how to represent religions in school. It is the same kind of concern in which the pupils in Norwegian school 2 expressed criticisms of their textbooks use of 'we' referring to 'we Christians' while it is 'they' and 'the others' when the reference was to a secular life view or other religious life views. In other words the Norwegian pupils in general expressed the same view as the English pupils and English teachers, that having representatives of the different religions' (in class or through visitors) would be a strength to RE. I take this to indicate that Norwegian pupils were more oriented towards the plural and the global aspects of RE than were their teachers. But also in the English sample, pupils expressed themselves critically about the way religion had been represented in school:

ES1-PB1: It's not a problem with religion and stuff; it's how you go about telling me about it. I suppose in primary school, that's when your opinion is being formed. When you get to 16-17 you've got your own mind made up. So that's the really important thing (...)

ES1-PG1: In my primary school, I wish they would have given us all the options. Not just the ones that they thought were right, which is what they did, because now I have ideas based on those. And I am now learning that there are other ideas. And I agree with those more. But because I couldn't agree to them earlier, I sort of base whatever I do around that.

These 14 year olds were reflecting on their own identity formation and how this could have been different. Their main criticism is that they did not like it when teaching was biased and too normative, much in accordance with Loukes' findings in the UK about teenagers and religion (Loukes 1966). Education is by definition a normative task. There is often a tension in education between, on the one hand, enculturation into a certain sense of civility, necessary for the coherence of a society (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004) and on the other hand instilling in pupils an ability to think critically, which is also an important democratic value. The pupils interviewed expressed points of criticism of various kinds, towards RE in general or RE as they have experienced it, including perspectives on how to improve it.³⁵⁰ Independent of what system they were in or the quality of their teaching or learning, the pupils' ability to reflect is impressive, even on why their knowledge was poor. In several instances pupils connected directly to debates on the societal level of curriculum.³⁵¹

In the REDCo material it was a conclusion in the English findings that the idea of a harmonious multifaith community was widely shared, and in the Norwegian findings that the pupils did not believe religion was a factor contributing to conflicts in the classrooms (Dietz et al 2009). In summing up some general trends in findings in the qualitative and quantitative studies of

³⁵⁰ For example in English school 3 they discuss critically the public debate about headscarves, and the banning of headscarves in French school: in English school 2 the point that RE should be optional is strongly made, and in English school 1 one boy who had gone to a church of England primary school was critical of having had to participate in religiously affiliated morning assemblies. In Norwegian school 3 they would have liked to have more pupils involvement and more discussions in class, in Norwegian school 2 they had criticisms reflecting a the secular humanist criticism on the societal level, first and foremost that it is biased favouring Christianity, including in the textbooks, and in Norwegian school 1 they also criticized their textbooks.

³⁵¹ For further reflections on such 'bypasses' of adjacent levels of curriculum, see chapter 8.

all the eight countries involved in the REDCo research, the researchers mention for example that ‘students wish for peaceful coexistence across differences, and believe this to be possible’ (Dietz et al 2009: 16). This resembles a cross national finding in the comparative study done by Schiffauer and his co-researchers (2004: 329):³⁵² that ‘their process of enculturation is not only marked by the nationally specific civil cultures, which limits this explanatory framework. (...) ‘we encountered highly convergent phenomena concerning pupils’ visions of what a just society would look like from the view of minorities providing cultural experiences other than those of the majority population. With their shared demands for a value-neutral recognition of their being different and for equal access to the arena of achievement-based competition (...)’. Based on my own and the above mentioned, much larger comparative studies an idea of the existence of *shared supranational imaginaries* among *young people* emerges.

Reflecting on globalisation as a supranational force affecting national and local contexts, this is also highly plausible. In chapter 6 I asked what kind of imaginary would be inclusive for all, and such an international imaginary shared by young people, in my view exemplified by the statement from the summing up of REDCo findings that ‘students wish for peaceful coexistence across differences, and believe this to be possible’, could be seen as one example of this.

³⁵² Their focus group was Turkish immigrants in four countries: how they were integrated in schools.

Summary and conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed pupils' perspectives on RE in England and Norway. I have considered patterns in how they related to religion, what they saw as aims in RE and what they had learned about and from religion in RE. The reality of what goes on in schools is a difficult subject because of the complexity of it, and – perhaps related to the first – the lack of research based knowledge of it. Lately however the research done in the REDCo project (summed up in Dietz *et al.* 2009) contributes to improving our knowledge of teenage pupils' encounters with religious pluralism in school and society (Knauth *et al.* 2008) and teenagers' perspectives on the role of religion in their lives, in schools and society (Valk *et al.* 2009), and also on how teachers respond to religious diversity (van der Want *et al.* 2009). It would have been interesting to look more closely at some patterns which occur in this research and in my own, but this exceeds what I can do in this project. Regin (1987) points out that while one can recognize patterns in complexity explaining them is more difficult because there are so many possible single reasons in each case.

Both subnational national and supranational processes are relevant for how pupils experience RE, how they understand it, and what they see to be its relevance. A pattern which occurred across national borders was that in the 'multicultural' schools pupils said they were religious, in the English and Norwegian schools 2 (the city/ city outskirts schools), pupils said they were not religious, and in the rural schools pupils self-identified as Christian (but not very Christian). For mainstream pupils who labelled themselves as non-

religious³⁵³ an individual pick and choose type of religiosity was most typical, while for pupils with religious family backgrounds it seemed more to be about exploring one's own religion. This could be seen as different pupils referring to a different sense of modernity, which must be understood as a supranational phenomenon.

A national difference was that it was in the multicultural English school (ES3) and the rural Norwegian school (NS1) that there were most acceptances of being religious. This is consistent with the idea of different *national styles* of multifaith RE where plurality is enhanced more in the case of England while the national tradition is more central in the case of Norway (see also chapter 6). In English school 3 (ES3-P) pupils had a combined experience of having peers with different religions and an enhancement of positive aspects of this by their teacher. In Norwegian school 3 (NS3-P) pupils also experienced peers in school having different religions, but in this school there is not the same positive outlook on how this contributes positively to RE. That is not to say that this school (NS3) did not take the plural makeup of their school population seriously, but the focus was not on religion or RE. Jackson (2004a: 173) has made the point that many who are preoccupied with intercultural perspectives in education policy at a European level are unaware of the potential relevance of RE. The same phenomenon seems to be reflected in practice in this 'multicultural' Norwegian school. They do not see religion as especially relevant in this context.

³⁵³ Including some who labelled themselves Christians, but stressed that they were not very Christian: see discussion of some possible reasons why pupils self identifies differently above.

Regarding what pupils saw as aims for RE, the pattern also followed the national borderlines, as on the English side the aims were said to be learning to respect other people's opinions, while on the Norwegian side the aim was of learning about 'our' heritage and about the religions as such. Again, this was consistent with teachers' answers, strengthening the idea of multifaith RE taking on different styles in different countries (see chapter 6). The emphasis on traditional Christianity was, however, also a point of critique from the Norwegian pupils. In some instances, their ideas of how it should have been is actually closer to the way it is formulated at the institutional level, illustrating how some processes may bypass certain levels (see chapter 8).

The English pupils were not able to say much about the religions as such, and explained that what they had learned was different people's opinions on for example euthanasia, abortion and sex in and out of marriage, which was largely consistent with the GCSE syllabuses they were following. The Norwegian pupils were more able to discuss religion as such, but there was a difference in quality of their knowledge of Christianity and other religions. Again findings indicate different *national styles*, and the empirical methods in this case brought out additional differences which were not immediately obvious from the reading of documents alone (see chapter 4). In both countries teachers' and pupils' answers indicate that they do learn *from* religion in RE, but both teachers and pupils expressed modesty regarding what can be achieved through RE. As far as I can see, the question of what

is actually learned about and from religion is not central to the REDCo research, so this might be suggested as a topic for further investigation.

Regarding the supranational dimension, I will include here two points: firstly that some new imaginaries among young people may emerge internationally, since so many young people interact and share each others views through the internet, other media and/ or travel. I can not conclude based on my research alone that this is the case, but based on this and other comparative studies I can point out that the question of how globalisation is shaping the youth is one of relevance for RE, and one which I would also like to suggest for further investigation. The second point is related to that: how do different international phenomena affect different youth differently? For instance Muslims and non-Muslims may relate to debates about international terrorism differently, and European secularisation probably affects religious youth (Muslims and Christians) with roots elsewhere in a different way than indigenous European Christians. This relates to the point that many modernities coexist in today's societies. Again this is more a question arising from my limited research than a finding, but also one which I think it would have been interesting to explore further. For example: Is only one kind of modernity reflected in the institutional level? And if so, is this a source of constructions of 'otherness' in multifaith RE despite explicit aims to be inclusive – in other words: are the laws and curricular documents ethnocentric still?

If I take these points regarding supranational processes together with a critique of the RE these pupils had experienced, it challenges in each case the ideas of *national styles* of multifaith RE. Should the focus be less on religions *in Britain*, or religious traditions *in Norway* (although this may mean different things); and be more internationally oriented? Should multifaith RE take more account of globalisation as a factor affecting the young? As the supranational here is conceptualised as part of the context, this could well be combined with contextual approaches to RE. At the same time I do not think that either 'white British' or the 'Norwegian cultural heritage' should be ignored. To come back to Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) again, a finding of theirs was that integration is easier if cultural patterns are explicit rather than hidden, and where rules for civil conduct are transparent. '(...) it is definitely not as easy for newcomers to meet implicit norms of internalised civility as it is to submit oneself to an explicit outward regime of rules (...)' Schiffauer *et al.* (2004: 204). The teaching of Norwegian and English religious traditions could make it clearer where some rules come from; and also what could be negotiated. That way the *national imaginaries* might be challenged, maintained and updated.

In the final chapter (8) I will sum up the findings in the thesis chapters and evaluate the method which was used (as outlined in chapter 2).

Chapter 8

Concluding discussion

Introduction

In this thesis I have compared aspects of RE in England and Norway following the development of a suggested methodology for carrying out comparative research (chapter 2). I looked at comparative studies in related fields and pioneering works in comparative RE as a background for this. A basic principle which I adopted from comparative education was that comparative studies in religious education are about studying the impact of supranational processes on different national educational systems, i.e. national processes (chapter 2). I suggested a template for comparative studies in RE which was a synthesis of two sets of ideas: Firstly, I suggested that three dimensions should be considered: supranational, national and subnational processes (Dale 2006) and, secondly, in order to capture the complexities of national contexts, I employed an idea of four levels of curriculum:

A: the societal level

B: the institutional level

C: the instructional level and

D: the experiential level (Goodlad & Su 1992).

This can be presented diagrammatically in the following way:

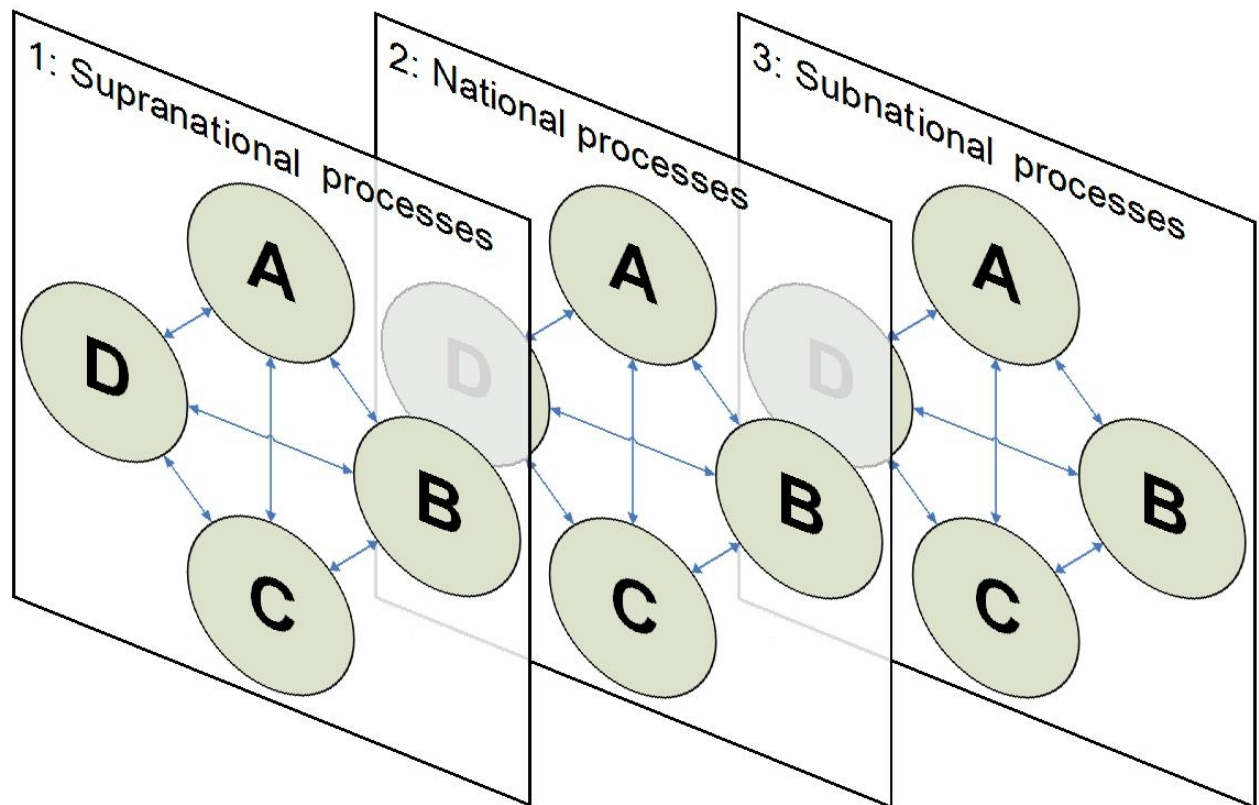


Illustration 2: Diagrammatical model of the methodology

I have used Goodlad & Su's (1992) ideas of levels of curriculum to structure the thesis (see chapter 2), so that

A: the societal level is discussed in chapter 3

B: the institutional level is discussed in chapter 4

C: the instructional level is discussed in chapter 6 and

D: the experiential level is discussed in chapter 7

In each chapter I considered supranational, national and subnational processes. In chapter 5 I discussed how the use of field data is linked to the overall methodology, making use of the concepts *civil enculturation*, *civil culture* and *social and or national imaginaries* (Schiffauer et al. 2004).

This model counteracts the idea of linearity or hierarchy between the levels, at the same time as preserving a sense of sequence through clockwise labels A-D. Goodlad (1979: 357) notes that ‘the domain to domain transactions are not always between two adjacent domains’, and that sometimes there may be more interactions between, for example, the societal and the instructional level, than between the institutional and the instructional level. I also found examples of this in my material (see chapters 6 & 7). In other words, arrows indicating mutual influence can, for example, bypass the institutional level, situated between the societal and the instructional levels. The model above catches these potential ‘bypassing’ influences between levels. Afdal (2006: 82-85) also discusses whether the levels should be understood as linear and concludes by suggesting a cyclical model. His model does not, however, keep the sense of sequence and, since his is not an international or comparative study; it also lacks the supranational dimension. However, he distinguishes between school context and local context, which in my model both form part of the subnational dimension.

All of the levels, A-D exist in one nation, and the concepts of societal, institutional, instructional and experiential levels of curriculum are tools to capture and analyse complexities in what goes on in school education in one country. For example: how are societal debates reflected in institutional curricula (for example what academic debates/ research are reflected in the non-statutory guidelines for religious education (QCA 2004) in England - or

in the National Curriculum (UD 2005) in Norway)? Or how are aims for RE at the institutional level reflected in the experiential level (what is the relationship between what, for example, the law says RE should be, and what pupils in classroom experience/ learn)? Using this way of conceptualising RE reveals differences as well as coherences between the levels (see chapters 3-7). In today's world, however, it is not the case that processes of relevance only come from within the national contexts. Some of the main forces which have changed RE in England and Norway, from traditional nurture to multifaith approaches, are shared internationally. Hence one need to consider a supranational dimension; and this is a reason for making international and comparative studies in RE. With this model, the national traditions are conceptualised as processes, stressing their continuous changing character. These internationally shared challenges are factors which develop and change RE in many countries today (see for example Jackson 2007, Willaime 2007).

When I set out to compare explicitly two nations, this task raised the question of how those nations respond to internationally shared challenges. These challenges come either from supranational formal processes, for example, policy making, or informal processes which go on through international organisations but are also independent of them, such as secularisation, pluralisation and globalisation (see chapter 2). In each of the chapters (3-7) the main emphasis is on national processes, since I wanted to explore the importance of the different national contexts in relation to how supranational challenges are met. Then differences and similarities between

England and Norway become evident, and it is possible to suggest what the reasons for similarities and differences are. If these challenges are shared, the question is raised as to why all the European nations do not respond by having multifaith RE? Why did England and Norway adopt this approach?

The same challenges are met in different ways, reflecting national traditions, and this became evident as my chapters unfolded. It was interesting to identify some of the national factors which determined how these international challenges were met in each country. I found that the main sources for explanations of difference between English and Norwegian RE were found:

1. within the domain of RE, for example in the different scholarly traditions for RE research, and traditional RE practice, and
2. outside the domain of RE, especially in the different school systems, but also in other societal factors (see chapters 1, 3 and 5).

An interesting finding/suggestion was, for instance, that the school and research traditions in England and Norway were initially so different that any direct parallels between the two countries' RE had to be considered coincidental (see chapter 4). The reasons for the type of RE which exists in England has to do with the English tradition meeting these challenges, and likewise in Norway. At the same time, the reasons for both countries having multifaith RE are a response to the same challenge of increasing religious plurality in society, which is a supranational process.

Obstacles and limitations

In this section I will take the opportunity to reflect on obstacles and limitation to this study. Firstly, it turned out to be a challenge to find arguments for doing comparative and international studies. While it is easy to argue that comparative studies are interesting, it was less straightforward to find good arguments for its relevance (see chapter 2). An additional challenge occurs when the aim is not only to identify differences and similarities, but also to explain them, but this is what I have attempted through the above mentioned approach of applying supranational, national and subnational perspectives. Further, the need to find a way of limiting what was to be compared and make the comparison systematic and valid was a huge challenge, resulting in the suggested methodology and in organising the thesis based on Goodlad & Sus' (1992) idea of levels of curriculum. Also, finding theoretical perspectives and concepts (analytic tools) that fitted the purpose has been challenging, and several different perspectives are combined in the final chapters.

As I wanted this study to be contextual, this demanded a good knowledge of the contexts of English and Norwegian RE teaching; these included the school system, societal debates and developments in research. It has been challenging understanding even the Norwegian context in sufficient depth, but especially also the English and the implied wider international context as well. Needless to say, there is always more that could have been

investigated, or elements that ideally should be investigated more thoroughly. For example, I discovered how history and school systems were highly relevant for explaining how the supranational processes led to different national processes. At the same time it would be beyond the scope of this project to do a broad comparison of the school systems and their histories as well.

In addition to reasons why multifaith RE in English and Norwegian schools takes on different styles, related to history and national context, there are also differences in the traditions of research and academic studies in RE. I have addressed this issue in chapter 3, thus making it part of my discussion. However, being a Norwegian scholar doing an English PhD from time to time I might have made particular interpretations of the nature of the academic field, which is also part of the context of this text. The evolving character of the field of *pedagogy of religious education*, (and especially if I define the field as comparative RE), has also been a complicating factor. When I started out in 2002³⁵⁴, few international and comparative studies existed, but during the course of the study several major comparative and international studies has emerged (for example the REDCo research and Alberts' (2007) thesis, (see chapter 2). This has been a strength, as it has provided additional studies to triangulate my own, and shown the wider relevance of my efforts. Some of their results and ideas or concepts have been considered in my own work, but it has been impossible to discuss fully the implications of these other studies for my own; such a discussion has

³⁵⁴ Proceeding to a one year maternity leave almost immediately, and in 2006 I had another child delaying and prolonging the project an additional year.

been beyond what I could do in a one person project working to a specific deadline.

Last, but not least, being a one person study has been a limitation since my findings suggest many possibilities for further studies, and for further development of the suggested methodology, for instance through investigating findings in other international studies. However, the limitation of being a one person project³⁵⁵ has provided the opportunity to study selected issues in some depth, most importantly in developing my suggested methodology (see above and in chapter 2).

Results: Examples of findings

An imperative for claiming the usefulness of this suggested methodology is, however, that it did lead to some interesting results in my own research. In searching for explanations for similarities and differences I looked for themes which have emerged from the material in a grounded theory style (see chapter 1). These include, for instance, how having a central curriculum or not affects the research traditions (chapter 3), how different school systems, including their traditional relationships to religion, is a source of explanations for differences (chapter 3, 4, 5), for example the different approach to rights of withdrawal (chapter 4). Others findings include the view that while aims for RE may be to promote inclusiveness, the subject can

³⁵⁵ With some very good support and sources of correction from my two supervisors: R. Jackson and G. Skeie.

also construct 'otherness' and perhaps even different kinds of otherness in England and Norway (chapters 4, 6, 7).

Applying terminology from Schiffauer *et al.* (2004), I found that multifaith RE took on different styles in England and Norway (chapter 3, 5, 6, 7). However, expanding on this terminology, in view of the inclusion of supranational processes in my methodology, I suggested there would also be *supranational imaginaries* which may challenge the *national imaginaries*. This may, for instance, be the case when some relate to *international imaginaries* such as that of international terrorism, or of an international youth cultures (chapter 7). One question which could be raised from this is how globalisation, as opposed to pluralisation (although these are intertwined phenomena, see chapter 2), is affecting the young and their relationship to religion. Another question is how one particular supranational process, or phenomenon, may affect pupils with different religious or non religious affiliations differently if they have 'different modernities' (Taylor 2004), as their frame of reference (see chapter 7).

These emerging themes demonstrate, for instance, how some supranational processes are formed differently as they are filtered through the different levels of national processes, and also how some may bypass the institutional national level altogether (see diagram above). This may, for instance, be the case when there are so called 'global links' in the classrooms, including both pupils with 'international families' (for example

due to migration particular pupils may have relatives from various parts of the world). Moreover, this can apply to pupils who participate in international fellowships online (for instance through online games or twitter/ facebook etc.), or simply if they are connected to religions with a global spread.

It is not possible, in this final chapter, to reconsider all the themes that could possibly be identified, because that would involve rewriting the whole thesis. Examples of such themes are: how concepts are understood differently (for example how plurality is understood) (chapters 2, 5, 6), what the impact of the 'new' plurality in society is (all chapters), what considerations there are regarding how religions are represented (see chapters 3, 6, 7), what is seen as RE's relevance for pupils (all chapters), how educational versus religious goals are balanced (chapters 3, 4), what the views on or contributions from 'secular' religious studies are as opposed to theology or other relevant fields (chapter 3), what concepts of civil religions could be identified (chapter 4), what are the concerns regarding Human Rights (chapter 4), and to what degree global perspectives are present in RE, including the suggestion that pupils in a class may have different modernities as their frame of reference and that this affects how they relate to religion in RE (chapter 7).

In chapter 7, I suggested that identifying a question based on fieldwork and analysing this through examining the levels of curriculum is one way of using my methodology differently from the main approach in this study. One way to develop the methodology would be to examine such themes in relation to

how they are reflected on each level A-D, (see above), whilst taking account of supranational, national and subnational processes on each level. In the present chapter (8) I will discuss two themes emerging from thesis chapters in this way:

1. The idea of different *national styles*, and
2. The question of inclusive RE and the construction of otherness.

Here I will be focusing more on the supranational processes than in the previous chapters. I also see this discussion as one indication as to how to develop the methodology further, as I will then reconsider certain findings in the wider supranational context. This discussion, however, builds on the chapters' emphasis on the national contexts.

Different national styles

In chapters 3-7 I discussed whether multifaith RE takes on different styles in England and Norway reflecting particular *national imaginaries*. In England, being part of the heterogeneous Great Britain with several strong religious traditions could be suggested as central components of this national imaginary (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 35). In Norway I suggested that the history of the nation building project and the strong standing of the State Church are central (see chapter 6). School traditions are very different, among other things reflecting different relationships between state, religion and church, and having different history and traditions with regard to the centralisation and unity of the school systems. In chapter 5 I found that certain classroom

activities did reflect different *national styles*, and that a number of differences went along national lines.³⁵⁶ But what signs of different *national styles* were identified in the various levels of curriculum? And how are these challenged by supranational (and subnational) impositions?

If I consider first the societal level (chapter 3), we saw how academic traditions in the two countries reflected differences in the traditional relationship between state, religion and school. For example, in England, the dual system of shared responsibility for schools between state and school and the existence of several strong Christian traditions led to RE being non-denominational: with reference to traditional Christian religious plurality. Combined with the decentralised character of the school system (until 1988), and the tradition of producing RE syllabuses locally, this made it possible to address the challenge of the growing religious plurality on a local level first. Change towards multifaith RE in some local areas was brought on by the actual challenge of plural classrooms. Scholars with a religious studies background were central initiators and participants in this process of change. In Norway, the strong centralisation of the school system and the tradition of having a National Curriculum made it necessary to make the policy change first. Relevant research did exist in Norway, but seemed to be irrelevant to political change. Because of the strong standing of the Norwegian state Church, in society as well as traditionally in the state school, there is less tradition for (Christian) religious plurality in Norway.

³⁵⁶ Included wearing of school uniforms, division into ability groups, the way classrooms were used, the focus on subjects vs. well-being of pupils, ethical themes regarding different people's views vs. more phenomenological content about religions as such, more teacher led activities vs. more pupils initiative, a more formal tone vs. more informal for example through the use of teachers surnames in the case of England and first name in Norway.

I would say that still today the contrast between centralised and decentralised systems for RE affects the academic debates in the two countries differently, forming part of different *national styles*. For instance, in Norway, much energy is used in discussing and interpreting the changing ‘text’ which is the National Curriculum, while this is not so central to the English debate given the devolution of RE in community schools to the local level. However, in both countries, national traditions are negotiated in meeting with supranational challenges, especially migration and pluralisation, and many of the debates can be found in parallel - but perhaps in slightly different *national styles* (for example the debate about Christianity as cultural heritage). However, academic traditions are developing more and more as international fields with international networks, publication channels and research projects (see chapter 3). This challenges *national styles*, or they are challenged to various degrees depending on whether central national academic figures participate in the international scene. As the debates increasingly become international they can be increasingly seen not only as parallel debates, but also as the *same* debate where national differences are a factor to be considered.

Moving on to the institutional level of curriculum (chapter 4), the question is what constitutes part of nation-specific styles? Again the tradition of the school systems’ relationship to traditional religion is a factor explaining differences. For example, in England, collective worship, which should be of a broadly Christian character, is a traditional part of schools’ activities, still

sanctioned by the law, and in Norway the school law preamble until 2008 made Christian nurture the central object of schooling as such in Norway (while the new version from 2008 emphasises the Christian and Humanist tradition, the cultural heritage perspective) (see chapter 4). The point is, however, that both in England and Norway the history of the Christian traditions is present still in contemporary laws and documents, and can be said to form part of the *national styles*. The (traditional) relationship between state, school and religion is therefore considered to be a decisive factor in the nation specific styles, determining what kind of multifaith RE is attempted. Again, having a central national curriculum (Norway), and a decentralised system of producing RE syllabuses locally (England), is perhaps the most important difference.³⁵⁷ At the same time these national traditions are challenged by supranational processes to introduce revolutionary new types of RE where educational aims are enhanced and traditional religious aims are reduced or removed. This has been possible both in the English and Norwegian systems, however different, and this is a similarity. How are negotiations of the national traditions reflected in relevant laws and curricular documents?³⁵⁸

To begin with the law, in England this was changed in 1988 to make it clear that the main religion in RE was still to be Christianity. The need to clarify this may be seen as created by the supranational challenge of plurality. But

³⁵⁷ Although the emphasis on local adjustment and centralisation shifts in the national processes.

³⁵⁸ The documents which I chose to focus on were *the Non-Statutory National Framework for Religious Education* (QCA 2004) and *the KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity- religion- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidelines and information* (UD 2005).

this law also included for the first time that other main religious traditions in Britain should also be taught. This change reflected the negotiation of the tradition for RE (still legally called RI until 1988, although called RE in some Agreed Syllabuses since the 1960s) in England which had been going on through some new and revolutionary locally produced syllabuses (for example Birmingham 1975). This changed the tradition for RE following what, in the vocabulary of this thesis, is identified as supranational challenges: the growing societal religious plurality. Actually since the initiative was local, it could also be described as subnational factors challenging the national style. Anyway, this now became an essential part of 'the English style'.

In Norway the same supranational challenges of growing religious plurality led to the change in the law and the National Curriculum in 1997 (and 2002, 2005 and 2008). However, also in Norway, the challenges were felt and reported from school practice. In other words subnational factors formed part of the negotiation of the traditional Norwegian style RE (at the time with the two subjects 'Christianity' and 'Life views'). While both English and Norwegian RE was challenged at the institutional level by informal supranational processes (pluralisation), in Norway the initial idea of what an inclusive multifaith RE was about in a Norwegian context was challenged further by formal supranational processes: through international legal cases, most importantly by the verdict in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg (see chapter 4).

Examples of differences at the institutional level of curriculum presently are: the inclusion/ exclusion of Humanism but relative exclusion of Sikhism (Norway) versus the inclusion of Sikhism but relative exclusion of Humanism (England); different systems for and rhythm of changes (England: this is integrated into the system as syllabuses are scheduled to be revised regularly while in Norway change has so far been imposed by central reforms of the National Curriculum); and approaches to opt out rights (England has full opt out rights, Norway has limited opt out rights). Despite important differences, however, aims formulated for RE at the institutional level are surprisingly similar considering how different religious and school traditions in the two countries are. The main similarities are that they both include learning about and from³⁵⁹ Christianity and other religions, and that they both attempt an inclusive multifaith approach to RE as a response to societal religious plurality. The reason for this similarity is the shared supranational challenge of increased religious plurality in society.

Given the similar and converging debates at the societal level, and similar aims at the institutional level, where the challenge of growing plurality has been at the core of developments in both, differences in *national styles* appeared surprisingly clearly at the instructional level (chapter 6). The challenges of the new plurality *and* concerns to preserve a sense of cultural heritage are negotiated issues at the societal and institutional levels of curriculum in both England and Norway. However, it came out as a clear contrast that the plurality aspect was at the forefront of the English teachers'

³⁵⁹ In my interpretation, see chapter 6.

thinking about RE, while the cultural heritage perspective was more central for the Norwegian teachers.³⁶⁰ Thus, in practice, it seems that multifaith RE with similar aims did take on different *national styles*.

While the English teachers all saw a plural classroom as strength to RE, the Norwegian teachers saw this more as a challenge. That is to say, they seemed to have different views of plurality, an issue which was also a concern in the EC REDCo Project research. Here too how plurality was understood differently was discussed (van der Want *et al.* 2009: 115-119). In the Norwegian case, I identified the main perspective as that of group plurality, while at the same time toning down differences and accentuating 'sameness'. In the English case, the view that we are all different was accentuated more, reflecting an individual plurality.

While the English teachers were critical of a cultural heritage approach, the Norwegian teachers seemed to see this not only as a legitimate concern, but as the central concern of their teaching. This may have been coincidental to this particular sample, but this result can be explained with reference to differences in national styles and it does have a certain resonance at the societal level, for instance in debates on the critique of orientalism (England) and nation building (Norway). Even if these are common issues in both countries' academic debates, there is a difference regarding which perspectives are more dominant (see chapter 3). The different national

³⁶⁰ Which I found support for in the REDCo research: Everington 2009, Lund Johansen 2009, see chapter 6.

histories provided different contexts for these issues. A concern about preserving the cultural heritage was a part of the debates around the 1988 reform in England, and is reflected in their law; on the Norwegian side this has been a central aspect in laws and National Curricula since 1997, alongside concerns about 'the new' plurality. Criticism of this has, however, been stronger in England, and this permeates through to the instructional level of curriculum. In other words, this may be one example of issues from the societal level bypassing the institutional level, influencing the instructional level directly (see diagram above).

At the experiential level we find a new twist to the question of *national styles*. On the one hand, the differences in styles from the other levels, and especially from the instructional level (the understanding of their teachers), were reflected in the pupils' answers. For example, the English pupils stressed how RE was all about learning to respect other people's views while the Norwegian pupils' answers clearly reflected the emphasis on the Norwegian Christian tradition. This reflected in a quite direct way how the plurality aspect was a central issue for the English teachers, while the cultural heritage perspective was more central to Norwegian teachers. I also found that RE was different in the two 'multicultural' schools (Norwegian school 3, English school 3), reflecting different *national styles*, as for instance the English pupils saw the immediate relevance of multifaith RE to their own life and school environment while this was not the case in the Norwegian school 3. Also, the finding that it was in the more plural of the English schools (English school 3) that being religious was most common or

acceptable; while it was in the rural school in Norway (Norwegian school 1) that being religious (in effect Christians) was most common/ acceptable, supports the point that practice was affected by different *national styles*.

However, the Norwegian pupils also expressed criticism of this emphasis on the Norwegian tradition, for instance noting how the other religions could be better represented from more of an insider's view, and that their textbooks should not distinguish 'us' from 'them' in the way they did. Also, English pupils were critical of some views being presented as more normative than others, although there was not an equally clear difference between 'us' English Christians and 'others' here (probably reflecting their teachers' views). Again we can identify a 'bypass' as this can be seen as pupils participating directly in the critical debate on the societal level of curriculum. Thus they can also be seen as participants in the negotiations of '*national styles*'.

Other elements which could be said to challenge the idea of *national styles* came from the subnational processes and the supranational processes which in some instances converged at the experiential level of curriculum. A cross national pattern which occurred was that:

- in the two 'multicultural' schools (English school 3, Norwegian school 3) the pupils said to be religious,
- in the city/ city outskirts schools (English school 2, Norwegian school 2) all (but one) said not to be religious,

- in the two rural schools (English school 1, Norwegian school 1) all said to be Christians (but not 'very' Christian).

I see this cross national pattern as demonstrating how the supranational process of pluralisation provides similar local settings within different countries - and also different settings within countries (which has of course always been the case but in new ways reflecting immigration since the 1950s and 1960s). This provides for different contexts for doing RE where defining contextual factors comes from supranational processes. This factor activates the question of contextuality in RE in a new way as global aspects can be seen as part of the local context also (see also Leganger-Krogstad 2007). This should also challenge the ideas of *national styles*.

Inclusive RE and construction of otherness

Alberts (2006) uses the term 'integrative RE' descriptively in approximately the same way that I use the term 'multifaith RE' (chapter 1). However, in chapter 6, I discuss whether the term 'integrative' could also be understood normatively as a desired function of multifaith RE.³⁶¹ Clearly the mere collection of pupils within the same space does not ensure inclusiveness on equal terms. This is true even when RE intendeds to be inclusive, as in England and Norway. Multifaith RE does create an arena where integration and social cohesion in a plural society could potentially be on the curriculum.

³⁶¹ Alberts does however set up very specific criteria for integrative RE, evaluating existing models in relation to those, which must be considered normative also. What she suggests is a study-of-religions approach.

However, it might equally create an arena for construction of otherness, counteracting the idea of its having an integrative function.³⁶²

I even found indications that the construction of otherness takes on different styles in the two countries, in a similar manner as Schiffauer *et al.* (2004) who consider that the integration of immigrants takes on different styles, reflecting different *national imaginaries*. Schiffauer *et al.* (2004: 60 ff) also discuss how the construction of otherness is different in different countries. How can this theme be traced through the levels of curriculum in my methodology? How do supranational impositions influence the way in which multifaith RE is an arena for integration or construction of otherness?

If first we look at the societal level, the question of how multifaith RE can be inclusive and relevant for pupils in a plural society is central to recent debates. In England and Norway it is generally agreed that attempts at inclusive multifaith RE are worthwhile, while some would still argue for separate RE. This is a similarity between England and Norway which becomes evident in a wider comparative context, as, for example, the Netherlands, Germany, Spain and Italy have mainly retained separate RE where the churches and religious communities have responsibility for the young's religious education (see Jackson *et al.* 2007). Also 'religious' RE can aim at being inclusive and integrative, but this would be on different terms from those cases where it is seen as an ordinary school subject with educational aims. The debates about what constitutes inclusive multifaith RE

³⁶² Which Alberts also notes (Alberts 2006: 303).

do take on different styles in England and Norway, in dialogue with the respective traditions but challenged by supranational processes (see chapter 3).

Because of the decentralised system for RE in England, the debate in England has a 'bottom up' character, since the move towards multifaith RE was first addressed locally and later sanctioned in law. I see an educationally focused research tradition connected to multifaith RE in England as important in developments in the societal level. This tradition (Loukes, Goldman, Smart, Hull, Jackson, Wright and others (Copley 1997, Grimmitt 2000, Jackson 2004, Alberts 2007) has emerged based on questions coming from the school context, the level of practice. The tradition for RE research in England can be described as an educational/ pedagogical tradition where a range of distinct *pedagogies* are suggested, some of which are more theologically based while others are more clearly based in a religious studies or social science tradition (see chapter 3). This is why, in my view, making a very clear distinction between theological and study-of-religions approaches, as Alberts (2006: 360) suggests, would be a step back in the English context. In the German, and perhaps also Norwegian context, this might still be useful. In Norway too however I would say the growing interest in RE research especially since 1997 has been increasingly educational in focus (see chapter 3).

In contrast to the English 'bottom up' style, the academic debates in Norway have had a 'top down' character. In Norway the field of RE went from concerning Christian RE (and an optional Life View subject) to being multifaith RE as a result of a political decision. At that time the professional field was dominated by theology.³⁶³ Scholars from a religious studies background were in some cases only reluctantly drawn into the field of RE, often primarily as a source of information about the 'other' religions, and not, for instance, as partners in developing pedagogy for the new multifaith RE. This resulted, among other things, in different qualities in textbooks (see chapter 6) between those parts which concerned the other religions (often phenomenological in their approach) and those parts which concerned Christianity (which continued in the tradition from the Christianity subject (see chapter 3).

In Norway, a battle at the societal level immediately broke loose over how the subject KRL³⁶⁴ should be understood and what it meant for practice, summed up in a particular way by Gravem (2004) (see chapter 3). Concerns that RE should be inclusive for those from 'other' religions (and for each as individuals) have been important in the academic debates in both countries, for example reflected in the ethnographic research done at the University of Warwick (including the Norwegian scholar Østberg 1996). The Shap Working Party has also throughout its history been inclusive of different religions and beliefs, well outside the 6 which are usually included (Hayward

³⁶³ And the tradition for Christian religious education which were more pedagogical but still based in theology, see chapter 3.

³⁶⁴ as presented in the 1997 National Curriculum.

2009). In Norway the question of how to deal with the new element of the 'other' religions was high on the agenda of the KRL network that emerged after the introduction of KRL, for example (see chapter 3).

Meanwhile concerns about how Christianity is represented in multifaith RE also exist in England for instance in the research of Trevor Cooling (2000), while in Norway I think there could be more debate about how the multifaith RE subject should also affect the way of presenting Christianity.³⁶⁵ Concerns that 'liberal' RE promotes certain values which are contrary to deep religious convictions have also been raised (Wright 1993:39, see Jackson 2004a: 78). Lately the discussion about 'whiteness' (see chapter 6) includes the criticism that white English pupils are turned into 'others' as everyone else is from somewhere, while they are 'from nowhere' (Rudge 1998). In Norway it seems it is still those from other religions who are 'others' faced with the strong tradition of presenting Christianity mainly as Norwegian cultural heritage. However it may be that this development in England is a preview of what could also happen in Norway if attention is not paid to the different qualities in the presentations and representations of Christianity and the other religions and worldviews.³⁶⁶ Members of the Secular Humanist Association in Norway still see themselves as 'others' despite all the changes which attempt to include them on a more equal basis (see chapter 4).

³⁶⁵ While there has been much attention to the symbolic affect that Christianity was mentioned specially in the name of the KRL subject, resulting in changing the name to RLE in 2008, there has been little attention to what the context of multifaith RE means for the way Christianity is represented in Norwegian RE.

³⁶⁶ As my sample is not representative, it may well be that I would have found examples of white mainstream Christian Norwegian feeling alienated as well.

All these examples of debates regarding RE listed above, however, seen from different perspectives, can be said to concern how or to what degree RE can be inclusive or integrative. In other words, the question of inclusiveness is central to debates about multifaith RE, but it is an issue which apparently is not easily solved in either national context.

At the institutional level, in both England and Norway, Christianity is specified as the main religion to be taught. Christianity is to be included at each key stage in England, whereas the inclusion of other religions varies (QCA 2004).³⁶⁷ Christianity is the main content of RE, according to the Norwegian National Curriculum (UD 2008). RE is expected to be given one third of the time devoted to the subject; leaving the 'other' religions and secular life views one third to share between them (the last third concerns ethics and philosophy). The dominating role of Christianity as subject content is justified by its central role in the country's history, and in being still the majority religion. This is in fact another similarity in English and Norwegian RE which probably contributes to making minorities and non-religious people 'others' in the English and Norwegian RE contexts.

Despite Christianity being the most represented religion in the societies and also in terms of curricular content, the teaching of this religion is in England

³⁶⁷ I have chosen this particular document to represent general developments in the Institutional level in England, but it needs to be noticed that the Local Agreed Syllabuses do not have to follow the national framework (al though most do): it is the 1988 law which is legally binding (see chapter 4), but there are also some new laws concerning community cohesion that Local Authorities have to follow.

and Norway to be non-confessional (and non-denominational).³⁶⁸ It is stressed in both countries that multifaith RE should be inclusive in its approach, and that its aims are to educate pupils about religion and not nurture them into any particular religious faith. In the case of Norway, it has been repeatedly stressed that the greater emphasis on the (Norwegian) Christian tradition should be a quantitative difference and not a qualitative difference. This ideal, which is expressed in all the Norwegian National curricula since 1997, was, however, challenged in the critique of KRL given by the UN's Human Rights Committee.³⁶⁹

In the two documents featured in chapter 4, inclusiveness is stressed but there is still ambivalence between wanting to open up and be inclusive on the one side, and, on the other, a wish that elements from the time the teaching mainly was about Christianity to continue, including the perspective that Christianity has a special importance in our societies as part of our cultural heritage. There are reasons to ask if this intended inclusive RE is still ethnocentric, (see chapter 7), as a sense that some are 'others' are retained. Skeie (2006b: 24) has, for example, suggested that 'Norwegian RE runs on two tracks: On the one hand there is an intention to counter relativism through promoting a certain set of values, to counter the (imagined) problems with 'modern plurality' (see also Skeie 1995, see chapter 3). On the other hand there is the countering of conflicts among religious and ethnic groups, to counter (imagined) problems with 'traditional

³⁶⁸ See chapter 1 for the different meaning of these concepts in the two countries.

³⁶⁹ <http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dokumentarkiv/Regjeringen-Bondevik-//ufd/233191/251920/Human-Rights-Committee-Communication-No-11552003.html?id=422478> (Accessed 27.01.09).

plurality'.³⁷⁰ The Non-Statutory National Framework for RE (QCA 2004) and the National Curriculum for KRL (UD 2005) reflect the ambivalence of 'wanting to maintain and update old links to the *national imaginaries*' (Schiffauer *et al.* 2004: 10; see also chapter 6) on the one hand, and wanting to address plurality on the other. This ambivalence is, as we have seen, also evident at the societal level, for instance in academic debates, so here there is cohesion between adjacent levels of curriculum (see diagram above).

At the instructional level (chapter 6), teachers' response to what they saw as the importance of RE revealed how similar aims at the institutional level of curriculum were understood differently. The English teachers emphasized the RE curriculum's relevance to the plural context and expressed the need to counter stereotypical ideas of Christians as 'white, middle class and British', for example. This was a clear contrast to the Norwegian teachers' emphasis on the importance of learning about religions and especially the Norwegian Christian tradition. The Norwegian teachers saw this as important to immigrants (in their wording)³⁷¹ as a means to be able to integrate into Norwegian society, or rather perhaps the Norwegian *national imaginary*. Thus it seems that, in the construction of 'Norwegianness', sameness was more dominating, while in the idea of 'Englishness' difference (plurality) was more central to teachers' thinking.

³⁷⁰ I added the term 'imagined' referring to a possibility that this is part of a national imaginary.

³⁷¹ This according to Oline (NS3-T), who had in her school and class a number of first generation immigrants, see chapter 6.

This emphasis relates interestingly to the more pluralistic religious history of England (relationship between state and religion), and its non-denominational RE in schools since 1870, and in Norway to the monocultural religious tradition, where up till 1845 not even other Christian faiths were allowed into the kingdom ('dissenterloven', see Haraldsø 1989), and confessional RE continued until 1969 while denominational RE continued until 1997. It seems that the traditional history of the relationship between religion, state and school still influences *national styles* of RE today, even after the shift to multifaith approaches (see chapter 3). Further, I think an important factor in the different *national imaginaries* which inform these different styles is the different character of the critique of colonialism in each country. England has had a need to deal with its past as a colonial power, while in Norway this would perhaps be less pressing. But the questions raised regarding modern day cultural imperialism, for example, are also of concern to Norway as part of modern western culture. However, Norway, as a small and 'new' nation (from 1814) has a different need to construct an idea of the national, justifying its nation building project, in which the unitary school tradition has been central (Engen 2005).

When it comes to RE's potential integrative function, this was pursued, in the case of England, with reference to an imaginary multicultural English culture, while, in the case of Norway, it was done more through a desire to integrate into 'our shared cultural heritage'. This was a rather surprising finding, as the spur to changes at the institutional level in Norway, as in England, has been the need to address plurality. Equally, or from a Norwegian perspective

perhaps, it could seem a bit strange that the English teacher in my (small and limited) sample did not emphasise the cultural heritage perspective at all, because this is an aspect of the institutional level in England too. In chapter 6 I asked if 'Norwegianness' (national imaginary) is difficult to be integrated into, if it includes sharing 'our cultural heritage'. A parallel question in the English case was whether the idea of 'Englishness' is so plural that indigenous English pupils are alienated or marginalised. From this a question emerged regarding what kind of imaginaries would aid multifaith RE's integrative function when integrative is meant normatively to mean inclusive on equal terms for all who participate.³⁷²

On the experiential level (chapter 7), the English pupils were clear that integration, or promotion of tolerance for *others*, was not only an aim, but the major aim of RE. However, and like their teachers, they were modest as to whether they thought RE actually had this effect. It was not equally clear to the Norwegian pupils that learning to respect *others* was the aim, but when I pointed out to them that it *was* an aim; they did see this as a potential function of learning about different religions. However, they were hesitant as to the degree to which RE would have this effect. It was rather consistent in the Norwegian pupils' language that 'others' meant other than Norwegian Christians: even though they were critical of this view. In the way English pupils spoke about 'others', the main impression was that they were referring to 'others than themselves'. In other words pupils' language use

³⁷² Even if I cannot conclude from my empirical research that these findings are representative, I can still raise the question, especially as I find resonance for it in the levels above (A-B) and a degree of support in the REDCo publication van der Want *et al.* (2009).

could be said to reflect different senses of otherness, referring to group plurality in the Norwegian case and a more individual idea of plurality in the English case.

This was to a certain degree contradicted in the way in which pupils related to the question of their religious affiliations. Regarding this there was a tendency in my sample for the English pupils to answer this question mainly by choosing a pre-existing 'label' (group plurality), while Norwegian pupils found themselves offering lengthy reflections about what they actually believe on a personal level (individual plurality/ 'Sheilaism'). Triangulated with the EC REDCo Project research, we see that similar types of individual responses are also found in English pupils' accounts of their relationship to religion.

I see this individual way of relating to religion as reflecting a certain brand of modernity, namely modern western modernity, whereas other kinds of modernities may be the reference point for some pupils (Taylor 2004, see chapter 7). For instance, it was an interesting similarity in my material, and that of the REDCo research concerning English and Norwegian pupils' relationship to religion (Ipgrave & McKenna 2008, van der Lippe 2008), that all the Muslims and some Christians outside the mainstream established churches (Norway, Charismatic Christians: England, African Christians) were less individual and more collectively oriented towards their 'groups' in the way in which they related to religion. This made me raise the question

whether those who may relate to different senses of modernity than the modern western (which is what is reflected in the institutional level of curriculum) are constructed as 'others'.

Summary and conclusion

There is always a relationship between religion and society, but what that relationship is will change over time and be different from place to place. In this study I have set out to examine and compare two 'places': or rather the *national imaginaries* of two 'places'/ countries in relation to the choice of attempting a multifaith approach to RE in their state schools. The timeframe has mainly been from the time multifaith approach to RE was sanctioned in law, in England in 1988 and in Norway in 1997 to the present. A complicating factor has been the evolving nature of the field where so many significant changes have occurred in this period in all levels of curriculum.

As it turned out, the suggested methodology (chapter 2) grew to be a key element of this thesis, even though the starting point was that I wanted to investigate RE in England in comparison with Norway, as both had developed multifaith approaches (see chapter 1). English RE research has often been referred to in the Norwegian context (see chapter 3), and vice versa, but, from my point of departure, an interest I had was to understand the context of English RE. This is, indeed, also one result of the work in this thesis, and the methodology, but equally important is the increased

understanding of the Norwegian context, which is a result of the comparative perspective and this methodology.

To sum up the thesis, in chapter 1 I set the scene by doing some initial points of comparison and by explaining the basic rationale of the thesis. This included the choice of structure which was based on exploring a suggested template for comparative studies in RE.

In chapter 2, I discussed literature on comparative studies, especially from the field of comparative education and comparative religious studies, but also some pioneering work within comparative religious education. This became the background for suggesting this template, which is a combination of two sets of ideas. The first idea is that three dimensions must be considered in comparative education: supranational, national and subnational processes (Dale 2006). A main perspective was that comparison in religious education is about the study of the impact of supranational processes on national processes. The second set of ideas regards levels of curriculum: that there are societal, institutional, instructional and experiential levels (Goodlad & Su 1992). Combined together, these ideas capture both the complexities of the national dimension while they also consider the impact of all the supranational formal and informal processes which influence the national processes (see chapter 2). The thesis chapters explore these levels, looking at how they are affected by supranational, national and subnational processes. The main emphasis in the thesis

chapters has been on the national dimension because I saw exploring the national context as important for the comparison to be valid, but supranational and sub national processes have also been considered in chapters 3-7.

The rationale for the way that the thesis was structured was to explore this suggested methodology, and thus, in chapter 3, I went on to explore *the societal level of curriculum*. This was done by focusing two main themes in academic debates:

- 1) The role of academic disciplines in the development of multifaith approaches to religious education in England and Norway; and
- 2) Analysis of two 'power texts' that I considered characteristic examples of academic debate in England and Norway.

Towards the end of chapter 3, I discussed briefly the supranational dimension in academic debates in RE in England and Norway today, by addressing some issues related to internationalisation of research.

In chapter 4 I proceeded to explore *the institutional level of curriculum*. This was done by comparing relevant legal texts and two representative curriculum documents, *the Non-statutory National Framework for Religious Education* (QCA 2004) and *The KRL book 2005: Knowledge of Christianity-religions- and philosophies of life: Curriculum for 1st – 10th grade: Curriculum-guidance and information* (UD 2005).

In chapter 5 I explained how empirical field data can fit into a comparative research design, thus setting the scene for exploring the two last levels of curriculum, the levels of practice in chapters 6 and 7. These chapters were mainly based on my own fieldwork in three English and three Norwegian schools. Here I designed questions to reflect aims at the institutional level and also to be as similar as possible in my approach to teachers and pupils in order to look at relationships between levels of curriculum on specific points. However, I also triangulated findings with other research, especially findings from the EC REDCo Project which included perspectives on both teacher and pupils in England and Norway (see chapters 6-7).

In chapter 6 I considered the *instructional level of curriculum* by exploring teachers' perspectives on aims and content of RE, including the *learning from* aspect, while in chapter 7, I discussed the *experiential level of curriculum* through exploring pupils' perspectives on aims and content of RE in parallel with the teachers' perspective.

In chapter 8 – this present chapter – I offered a diagrammatic representation of the methodology in a model (see beginning of this chapter), which helped me in some final reflections on it. Further, I reflected briefly on some aspects of the process of the study, and gave some examples of findings. I wanted to take the opportunity at this point briefly to explore one way in which this methodology could be developed further: through focusing on two selected themes which had emerged through the chapters. These were, firstly, the

question of *'different national styles'* in RE in England and Norway and, secondly, the question of *'inclusive RE and construction of otherness'* (see above). As the main focus in the chapters 3-7 was the national dimension, I wanted here to focus more on the supranational (and subnational) dimension(s).

Finding myself at the end of this journey - that has been the making of this thesis – I want to conclude that something was accomplished. It was not exactly what I set out to do, because the journey led me to places that I could not have foreseen or even imagined when I started the research. Some even claim the journey is the aim. However, I do consider the main task of doing a systematic comparison of RE in England and Norway, as accomplished. I hope also that the methodology that was developed in order to accomplish this will be of help to others who see the use of conducting comparative research in this increasingly globalised world.

Appendix 1: Interview schedules

English:

SCHEDULE FOR INTERVIEWS WITH RE TEACHERS

Introduce myself if necessary.

Are you familiar with my reasons for this school visit and this interview?

The main reason is to get first hand experience with RE in England, and to learn about and from teachers and students experiences with RE, to inform my comparative study of RE in Norway and England. It is the systems that is going to be compared, not the material from the schools. Examples from the material might be used to illustrate each system.

The schools and all participants will be anonymous in the study.

Do you have any additional questions you want to ask before we proceed?

Please feel free to ask me questions during the course of the interview if you want.

Questions

Backgrounds

Can you describe your school and its position within the English school system?

What characterises this school compared to other secondary schools? What are the students here like? Are they good achievers?

What background do the students come from?

What religions if any are the children connected to? Do they have different ethnic backgrounds? What are their ethnic backgrounds? What would the background teachers? Does the school have a policy regarding issues like anti racism, tolerance etc.?

What are your qualifications as a RE teacher?

What training did you have as a RE teacher?

Aims

In your opinion, what is the importance of RE in school?

Is it important to have RE? Why do you personally think RE in school is important? Do you think RE actually has an effect on students? Do you think RE is important to your students? Why? Why not? In what way?

Do you agree with the present legal requirements for RE?

Do you agree with the requirements of RE as formulated in the 1988 Education Act, in

1. It says you should teach Christianity and other principle religions in Britain?

2. That the teaching should be non denominational?

3. When it says to promote spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils?

4. With aims in the syllabus that RE should help students promoting a positive attitude towards other people? That they should learn both about and from religions?

What do you think of the system of agreed syllabuses?

Is it a good system? What are the benefits of the system? What are the downsides? Would you prefer a National Syllabus? Does your syllabus come with support materials? Do you use those? What sources do you use?

Can you describe what RE is like in this school?

How do you relate to the legal requirements for RE; the 1988 Education Act and the local syllabuses? How does it relate to that in your teaching? How does inspection influence what you do? How do public exams syllabuses influence what you do?

In what ways do you feel you yourself influence what you do in RE lessons?

To what degree can you influence the guidelines, through for instance the local agreed syllabus? To what degree are you free to choose method, content, or in what order things are done?

Contents

Could you give a description of what RE lessons usually are like?

What methods are frequently used? How would you work with central topics? Do you read in class? Write? Do you have a lot of discussions? Do

you go out on excursions, or have visitors in your class? Would you use art in any way?

When the topic is Christianity, would it typically be related to a British context?

Would it for instance be linked to British church history? The Church of England? Other denominations in Britain? Would the topic Christianity be linked to Christianity internationally? In what ways?

When the topic is one of the other principal religions, would it be primarily being linked to a British context?

Would it for instance be linked to colonial history? To recent history of immigration? To the religions in the near surroundings of this school. What local resources do you have? To what degree would you look at these religions in an international perspective?

Learning from and about

Do you think your students would know the difference between learning about and learning from religion?

Why not? Why?

Do you think your students are learning both about and from religions?

Why not? Why? In what ways? How can you know?

Respect

Do you think RE makes the student more respectful of people who are different from them?

Do you think RE in general would contribute to them having better understanding of different people with different faiths or different opinions about faith and religion? Why? Why not? In what way? Do you have examples? Do you think that RE has makes them more willing to accept people who are different from themselves? Do you think your own teaching promotes tolerance?

Personal growth

Do you think RE contributes to the students' personal growth?

Why? Why not? What is contributing to it? Does it make them reflect more on topics related to religion, like life and death, the meaning of live, how to behave with others, contribute to society? What do you think influence students' behaviour and say their sense of right and wrong etc.? Would you convey to them you personal views? Why? Why not? Do you think they know anyway? Do you think this influences them in any way? How?

Do you have any additional points you want to make before we finish?

Thanks so much for your time.

Norwegian:

SKJEMA FOR INTERVJU MED KRL LÆRERE

(Oversatt fra engelsk original)

Introdusere meg selv hvis nødvendig.

Vet du bakgrunnen for at jeg ønsker dette intervjuet?

Hovedgrunnene skolebesøkene mine er å få litt erfaring med KRL undervisningen i Norge, og å lære om og fra elever og lærere som erfaring med KRL undervisning. Informasjonen skal jeg bruke i et forskningsprosjekt hvor jeg skal sammenligne religionsundervisning i Norge og England. Jeg har allerede vært på skolebesøk i tre engelske skoler. Jeg skal ikke sammenligne skolene eller klassene, men systemene. Materialet fra skolene skal jeg bruke som en kilde til informasjon og ideer, og som eksempler for å illustrere hvert av systemene.

Skolene og alle som deltar vil bli anonymisert.

Er det noe du har lyst til å spørre om før vi begynner. Hvis du får lyst til å spørre om noe under veis kan du bare gjøre det.

Spørsmål

Bakgrunn

Kan du beskrive denne skolens egenart og særpreg i forhold til andre skoler?

Hva karakteriserer denne skolen sammenlignet med andre ungdomsskoler?

Hvordan er elevene her? Er de flinke på skolen? Får de gode resultater?

Hva slags bakgrunn har elevene?

Har de forskjellig etnisk bakgrunn? Hva slags etnisk bakgrunn har de?

Hvilke religioner, hvis noen, er elevene tilknyttet? Hva er lærernes

bakgrunn? Har skolen en bevisst strategi i forhold til å bekjempe rasisme, jobbe med toleranse og respekt for andre?

Hvilke kvalifikasjoner har du for å undervise i KRL?

Har du relevant formell utdanning eller kurs til å undervise i faget? Hva da?

Mål

Mener du KRL er et viktig skolefag?

Hvorfor er KRL et viktig skolefag? Hvorfor mener du det ikke er et viktig fag?

Er det viktig å ha KRL i skolen? Tror du eleven blir påvirket av det de lærer i KRL undervisningen? På hvilken måte blir de påvirket? Tror du KRL er viktig for elevene? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? På hvilken måte/ Hvordan da?

I hvilken grad er du enig i følgende formuleringer i gjeldende opplæringslov om KRL?

I hvilken grad er du enig i formuleringene i opplæringsloven § 2-4 som er gjengitt på side 3 i KRL planen fra 1992 når det sies at man i KRL skal:

1. Gi grundig kjennskap til bibelen og kristendommen som kulturarv og evangelisk-luthersk tro,
2. Gi kjennskap til andre kristne kirkesamfunn,
3. Gi kjennskap til andre verdensreligioner og livssyn, etiske og filosofiske emner,
4. fremme forståelse og respekt for kristne og humanistiske verdier, og

5. Fremme forståelse og respekt og evne til dialog mellom mennesker av ulike oppfatning i tros- og livssynsspørsmål?

6. Når det står at undervisningen ikke må være forkynnende, og at de samme pedagogiske prinsipper skal legges til grunn for undervisningen i de ulike emnene?

Hva synes du om ordningen med noe sentralt fastsatt lærestoff og noe lokalt tilvalg?

Er det et godt system? Hva er fordelene med systemet? Hva er ulempene?

Ville du foretrukket at det var mindre sentralt fastsatt stoff og mer mulighet for lokale valg, eller ville du foretrukket at mer var sentralt fastsatt?

Kan du gi en beskrivelse av KRL-undervisningen ved din skole?

Hvordan forholder undervisningen seg til opplæringsloven? Til læreplanen? Til lokal tilpassning? Opplever du at det er noen form for kontroll i forhold til hva som foregår i undervisningen? Burde det etter din mening vært en form for kontroll? Påvirkes undervisningen av at elevene skal ha eksamen?

I hvilken grad føler du at du selv påvirker innholdet i KRL undervisningen?

I hvilken grad har du mulighet til å påvirke utviklingen av nye læreplaner og retningslinjer? I hvilken grad påvirker du det lokale arbeidet med læreplanene? I hvilken grad føler du at du selv står fritt til å velge undervisningsmetoder, innhold og rekkefølgen ting gjøres i?

Innhold

Kan du beskrive en typisk KRL time?

Hvilke metoder brukes ofte? Hvordan arbeider du med sentrale tema? Leser dere i klassen? Skriver dere? Har dere mye diskusjon? Drar dere ut mye på ekskursjoner? Har dere ofte besøk i klassen? Bruker dere kunst i undervisningen? Arbeides det i tverrfaglige prosjekt? Hvilke andre aktiviteter er vanlig?

Når temaet er Kristendom, i hvilken grad tar dere utgangspunkt i norsk kontekst?

Er det for eksempel forbundet med norsk historie? Den Norske statskirken? Andre kristne kirkesamfunn i Norge? Eller ville det også undervises i et mer internasjonalt perspektiv, med vekt for eksempel på kristendommen som verdensreligion?

Når temaet er andre religioner og livssyn, i hvilken grad tar dere utgangspunkt i norsk kontekst?

Vil det f.eks. bli sett i sammenheng med norsk innvandringshistorie? Med hvilke religioner som finnes i nærmiljøet? Hvilke lokale resurser har dere? I hvilken grad blir de andre religionene og livssyn sett i et internasjonalt perspektiv?

Kunnskap og opplevelser i faget³⁷³

Tror du at elevene dine vil kunne skille mellom å få kunnskaper og opplevelser i faget?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke?

³⁷³ I den engelske: spørsmål om 'learning from and about', begrunnelse for oversettelse se kapittel 4 og 6.

Tror du at elevene dine får både kunnskaper og opplevelser i faget?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? På hvilken måte? Hvordan kan du vite det?

Respekt

Tror du KRL bidrar til at elevene utvikler mer respekt for mennesker som er forskjellig fra dem selv?

Tror du KRL generelt bidrar til bedre forståelse for mennesker med ulik religion og livssyn? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Hvordan? Har du noen eksempler? Tror du KRL gjør dem bedre i stand til å akseptere mennesker som er annerledes fra dem selv? Tror du at du i din egen undervisning fremmer respekt og toleranse?

Personlig vekst og utvikling

Tror du KRL bidrar til elevenes personlige vekst og utvikling?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Hva i KRL faget tror du bidrar til dette? Bidrar det til at de reflekterer mer rundt spørsmål knyttet til religion og livssyn, som for eksempel liv og død, meningen med livet, hvordan man bør oppføre seg mot andre, hvordan de kan bidra i samfunnet? Hva tror du påvirker elevene i forhold til holdninger om rett og galt? Foreteller du dem hva du selv mener og tror? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Tror du de vet det likevel? Tror du de blir påvirket av dette på noen måte? Hvordan?

Har du noe mer du ønsker å si eller kommentere før vi avslutter?

Tusen takk for at du var villig til å bidra i prosjektet mitt.

English:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR GROUP INTERVIEWS WITH STUDENTS

NB. Make sure the equipment work. Memo: 'could you expand on that'

Say thank you and the pupils name after answers to know them apart.

First I want to thank you for participating in my project.

My name is Oddrun. My job is training teachers in Trondheim in Norway.

Do you know anything about Norway?

Do you know the reason I want to interview you?

I am doing a study in which I want to compare RE in Norway and England.

The reason why I have come to your school is to see for my self what RE can be like here in England, and I would like to learn from you. When you answer it would be great if you could think not only about the RE that you have now, but also about RE in earlier years.

No one other than me will know your answers, so don't be afraid to say you opinions whatever they are.

Do you have any questions for me before we go on?

If you feel like asking me a question later please feel free, and you can also put questions to each other if you want.

First of all I would like you to say your first names, and just a few words about yourself so that I can get a picture of who you are.

Questions

Their aims

Why do you think you have to study RE in school?

Can you think of reasons to have RE in school? What are they? How is RE different to other subjects? How is it similar?

How do you feel about RE in school, do you like it?

Why? Why not? What's good about it? What's not so good?

Do you think RE in school is important?

Why? Why not? In your view should you have RE in school? Why? Why not? What do you think it should be like?

Contents

Could you tell me what you do you when you're having RE?

What methods are used? Do you read, write, do you have discussions, do you draw or paint? Do you visit temples or other religious places? What do you do?

Can you give me an example of something that you have experienced in RE that stands out, that you remember especially?

What makes that special, why do you remember that especially? What did you learn from that? Could you expand on that?

Learning from and about

The syllabus requires you to learn about Christianity in RE. What have you learnt about Christianity?

Can you give examples? Do you think any of the things you've learnt are important? Why? Why not? In what way? Have you learned anything about English history in RE? What have you learned about English history? Have you learnt about Christianity in other countries?

The syllabus requires you to learn about different religions in RE. What have you learnt about different religions?

Can you give examples? Do you think any of the things you've learnt are important? Why? Why not? In what way? Have you learned about other religions in Britain? Or in your own town or neighbourhood? Have you learned about religions in other countries?

The syllabus also requires you to learn *from* religion. What do you think it means to *learn from* the religions?

Respect

The syllabus says that RE should promote respect for different people. Do you think that RE has made you more willing to accept people who are different from you?

Do you think it is important that people are allowed to have different opinions? Has RE made you more tolerant of people who you disagree with? Why not? In what way? Do you think that things that you've learnt in RE have made you understand people with different religion more? Why? Why not? Do you think that RE in general contribute to making people more respectful? More tolerant?

Personal growth

What religion, if any, do you feel yourself connected to?

What makes you feel connected to this religion? Do you feel like you belong to this religion? Do you have an opinion about religion or philosophy of life?

What influences the way you live, or the way you behave? Who influences the way you live, or the way you behave? What do you consider important in life? Who do you learn important things from? How do you learn what is right and wrong?

Do you think RE relates to your own life in any way?

Is it relevant to your own life? Why? Why not? How does it relate to your own life? The syllabus says that RE should contribute to your own personal growth. In your experience, has it? Has RE helped you to form your own opinions on issues related to religion. Do you think it might have contributed to your fellow student's religion, spirituality or views about important issues? Why not? Why? In what ways?

Do you have any additional points you want to make before we finish?

Thanks so much for your time.

Norwegian:

INTERVJUGUIDE FOR GRUPPEINTERVJU MED STUDENTER

NB. Husk å sjekke at utstyret virker. Husk å be dem om å utdype og gi eksempler på hva de mener. Si takk og elevenes navn etter at de har sakt noe for å kunne skille dem etterpå.

Først vil jeg takke dere for at dere ville delta i prosjektet mitt!

Jeg heter Oddrun og jeg jobber på lærerutdanninga i Trondheim.

Vet dere hvorfor jeg ønsker å intervju dere?

Jeg holder på med en studie hvor jeg skal sammenligne religions og livssynsundervisning i Norge og England.

Vet dere noe om England?

Grunnen til at jeg har kommet hit til skolen er for å se eksempel på hvordan KRL timene kan være og for å lære fra dere.

Jeg vil at dere skal prøve å tenke ikke bare på den undervisningen dere har akkurat nå for tida, men også på ting dere har opplevd tidligere, på barneskolen for eksempel.

Det er bare meg som kommer til å få vite hva dere svarer. Når jeg skal skrive om det vil dere komme til å være anonyme. Vet dere hva det betyr? Så jeg håper dere ikke er redd for å si hva dere mener.

Er det noe dere ønsker å spørre meg om før vi fortsetter?

Hvis det er noe dere ønsker å spørre om underveis kan dere bare gjøre det.

Først kan dere si navnene deres og et par ord om dere selv, slik at jeg kan få et lite bilde av hvem dere er.

Spørsmål

Elevenes mål

Hvorfor tror dere at dere har KRL i skolen?

Hvilke grunner kan det være for at dere må ha KRL? Er KRL annerledes enn andre fag? hvorfor, hvorfor ikke, på hvilken måte?

Hva syns dere om KRL, liker dere faget?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Hva er bra med det? Hva er ikke så bra med det?

Synes dere KRL er et viktig fag?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Synes dere at man bør ha KRL i skolen, eller?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Hvis dere kunne endre på noe, hvordan ville dere at KRL skulle være?

Innhold

Hva gjør dere når dere har KRL?

Hvilke undervisningsmetoder bruker dere? Skriver dere? Leser dere?

Diskuterer dere? Tegner eller maler dere? Besøker dere kirker, templer eller lignende? Hva bruker dere å gjøre?

Har du et eksempel på noe spesielt som du har opplevd i en KRL time, noe du husker spesielt godt?

Hvorfor er dette et spesielt minne? Hva lærte du av dette? Kan du utdype?

Kan dere si litt om hva dere husker fra KRL i barneskolen?

Kunnskap og opplevelser i faget³⁷⁴

Læreplanen sier at dere skal lære om kristendom I KRL. Hva har der lært om Kristendommen?

Kan dere gi eksempler? Synes dere noe av det dere har lært er viktig?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Hvordan da? Har dere lært noe om norsk historie i forbindelse med undervisning om kristendommen? Hva da? Har dere lært noe om ulike typer kristendom eller om kristendommen i andre land?

Læreplanen sier at dere skal lære om andre religioner i KRL. Hva har dere lært om andre religioner?

Kan dere gi eksempler? Synes dere noe av det dere har lært er viktig?

Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Hvordan da? Har dere lært mest om andre religioner i Norge? I nærmiljøet der dere bor? Har dere lært mest om andre religioner i andre land?

Læreplanen sier at dere skal få både kunnskaper og opplevelser I KRL

faget? Hva tror dere menes med å ha opplevelser i faget? Hva er forskjellen

³⁷⁴ I den engelske: spørsmål om 'learning from and about', (begrunnelse for oversettelse se kapittel 4 og 6).

mellom å få kunnskap og opplevelse?

Respekt

Læreplanen sier at det er et mål i KRL at dere skal få mer respekt for andre mennesker. Har KRL etter deres mening ført til at dere har fått mer respekt for andre?

Synes du det er viktig at mennesker har lov til å ha forskjellige meninger?

Har KRL gjort at du har blitt mer tolerant ovenfor mennesker som er annerledes enn deg selv? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Hvordan? Synes du at du har lært ting i KRL som gjør det lettere å forstå mennesker med annet livssyn eller religion enn deg selv? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? Tror du KRL generelt fører til at folk får mer respekt for andre? Bli mer tolerant?

Personlig vekst og utvikling

Hvilken religion, hvis noen, føler du deg knyttet til selv?

Hva er det som gjør at du føler deg knyttet til denne religionen? Føler du at du tilhører denne religionen? Hva er din mening om religion og livssyn? Hva påvirker måten du er på? Måten dere oppfører dere på? Hvordan dere er i forhold til andre? Hva synes dere er viktig i livet? Hvem lærer dere viktige ting av? Hvem er det som lærer dere hva som er rett og galt?

Har KRL noe med deg selv og ditt liv å gjøre?

Har det dere lærer i KRL noen betydning for ditt liv? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke?
Hvilke forbindelser ser du til ditt eget liv? Har det hjulpet de til å utvikle deg som menneske, tror du? Eventuelt på hvilken måte? Har det for eksempel hjulpet deg med å få egne meninger om religioner? Tror du det har påvirket klassekamerater eller andre du kjenner? Hvorfor? Hvorfor ikke? På hvilken måte?

Har dere noen avsluttende bemerkninger før vi runder av?

Igjen takk for at dere tok dere tid til å være med i prosjektet mitt.

Appendix 2: Norwegian law texts

The law on KRL prior to the change in 2005

The first law that described Norwegian multifaith RE, the KRL subject, is from 1997. The law text from 1997 is quoted in Afdal *et al.* (1997: 109). In 2002 there was a revised National Curriculum for RE, but § 2-4 of the Norwegian Education Act as it was formulated in 1997 was unchanged except for the name of the subject but only in such a way that the abbreviation KRL could be kept. The exact text of the law is now quoted in the text of the curriculum (LS 2002: 11)

The law text in its 2002 version (my translation):

‘Teaching in the subject Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education³⁷⁵ shall:

- provide a thorough knowledge of the Bible and Christianity both as cultural heritage and Evangelical-Lutheran faith,
 - provide knowledge of other Christian denominations,
 - provide knowledge of other world religions and philosophies of life, ethical and philosophical topics,
 - promote understanding and respect for Christian and humanist values
- and

³⁷⁵ Here I use the name as it is translated in English versions of these documents, since it is a quote, but in my view translating it to ‘Knowledge of Christianity, Religions and Life’ is closer to the Norwegian name, and explains how the name was changed without it’s acronym changing, se chapter 1.

- promote understanding and respect and the ability to carry out a dialogue between people with different views concerning beliefs and philosophies of life.
- Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education is an ordinary school subject that shall normally be attended by all pupils. Teaching in the subject should not involve preaching.

Teachers of Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education shall present Christianity, other religions and philosophies of life on the basis of their distinctive characteristics. Teaching of the different topics shall be founded in the same educational principles'

(Quoted in Afdal *et al.* 1997: 109, LS 2002: 11).

Christian object/ purpose clause – the school law preamble before 2008:

This act related to the Primary and Secondary Education (Education Act), Chapter 1, Section 1-2. The object of education: As translated to English on the Norwegian government's official website:

[http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Opplaeringsloven__engelsk_\(sist_endret_2005-06-17\).pdf](http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/KD/Vedlegg/Grunnskole/Opplaeringsloven__engelsk_(sist_endret_2005-06-17).pdf) , (Accessed 29.01.09).

Section 1-2 of the Norwegian Education Act is the school law preamble, called 'formålsparagrafen': ('Christian object/ purpose clause').

The object of primary and lower secondary education shall be, in agreement and cooperation with the home, to help to give pupils a Christian and moral upbringing, to develop their mental and physical abilities, and to give them good general knowledge so that they may become useful and independent human beings at home and in society

Upper secondary education shall aim to develop the skills, understanding and responsibility that prepare pupils for life at work and in society, and assist the pupils, apprentices and trainees in their personal development.

Upper secondary education shall contribute to increased awareness and understanding of fundamental Christian and humanist values, our national cultural heritage, democratic ideals and scientific thought and method.

The primary, lower secondary and upper secondary schools shall further the equal status and equal rights of all human beings, intellectual freedom and tolerance, ecological understanding and international co-responsibility.

Teaching shall provide a foundation for further education and for lifelong learning and provide support for a common foundation of knowledge, culture and basic values, and a high general level of education in the population.

Teaching shall be adapted to the abilities and aptitudes of individual pupils, apprentices and trainees. Emphasis shall be placed on creating satisfactory forms of cooperation between teachers and pupils, between apprentices, trainees and training establishments, between the school and the home, and

between the school and the workplace. All persons associated with the school or with training establishments shall make efforts to ensure that pupils, apprentices and trainees are not injured or exposed to offensive words or actions.

Kirke-, utdannings- og forskningsdepartementet (Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs) (2000)

The Bolstad committee's suggestion for new school law preamble:

In NOU 2007: 6 Formål for framtida: Formål for barnehagen og opplæringen (Purpose/ object for the future: purpose/ object of kindergarten and education) reviews the preamble of the school law (see above) and suggests it should be replaced by (my translation)³⁷⁶:

Education in school and enterprises³⁷⁷ which takes trainees shall open doors to the world and the future and give the pupils historic and cultural insights. It should be grounded on respect for human dignity, on intellectual freedom,

³⁷⁶ **Original Norwegian text:**

Opplæringa i skole og lærebedrift skal opne dører mot verda og framtida og gi elevane historisk og kulturell innsikt. Ho skal byggje på respekt for menneskeverdet, på åndsfridom, nestekjærleik, likeverd og solidaritet, slik desse grunnleggjande verdiane kjem til uttrykk i kristen og humanistisk tradisjon, i ulike religionar og livssyn, og slik dei er forankra i menneskerettane. Opplæringa skal fremje demokrati, likestilling og vitskapleg tenkjemåte. Elevane skal utvikle kunnskap, dugleik og holdningar for å kunne meistre liva sine og for å kunne delta i arbeid og fellesskap i samfunnet. Dei skal få utfalde skaparglede, engasjement og utforskartrøng. Elevane skal lære å tenkje kritisk, handle etisk og ta økologisk ansvar. Dei skal ha medansvar og høve til medverknad. Skolen og lærebedrifta skal møte elevane med tillit og krav, og gi dei utfordringar som fremjar danning og lærelyst. Alle former for diskriminering skal motarbeidast. Skolen skal samarbeide med heimen.

³⁷⁷ Norwegian: 'bedrift': according to Kirkeby (1988): this translates to 'works; factory; (=foretagende) industrial undertaking; enterprise.

love of one's neighbour, equality and solidarity, in the manner that these values are expressed in Christian and Humanistic tradition, in different religions and life views, and the way that they are anchored in Human Rights. The education should promote democracy, gender equality and scientific rationality.

The pupils shall develop knowledge, ability, and attitudes so that they can manage in their lives and participate in work and fellowship in society. They shall be given opportunity to have scope for their joy of creating, engagement and their desire to explore. The pupils shall learn critical thinking, act ethically and take economic responsibility. They should be given responsibilities and opportunity to co-operate.

The school and enterprises which takes trainees shall meet the pupils with trust and demands, and give them challenges which promote generic formation and a desire to learn. All forms of discrimination should be counteracted.

The school shall co-operate with pupils' homes.

The question of the school law preamble have been much debated in Norway, and was also criticised by the UN Human Rights Committee and the Human rights court in Strasbourg (see chapter 4). The suggestion from the Bolstad committee also caused debate in the 'Stortinget', and was

altered before it was passed and put into legal effect in 2008 (see chapter 4).

The new school law preamble as it was passed:

My translation, from the original text posted on the official website of the Norwegian government:

<http://www.regjeringen.no/nb/dep/kd/tema/Grunnopplaring/formalsparagrafer-.html?id=542401> (Accessed 29.01.09)

The purpose of education:

Education in school and enterprises which take trainees shall, in cooperation and understanding with the home, opens doors to the world and the future and give the pupils and trainees historic and cultural insights and rooting.

Education shall be founded on fundamental values in Christian and Humanistic heritage and tradition, such as respect for human dignity and nature, intellectual freedom, love of one's neighbours, forgiveness, equality and solidarity, values which are expressed through different religions and life views and which are anchored in Human Rights.

Education shall contribute to expanded knowledge and understanding of the national cultural heritage and our common international cultural tradition.

Education shall provide insights into cultural plurality and show respect for the individual's convictions. It should promote democracy, gender equality and scientific rationality.

The pupils shall develop knowledge, ability, and attitudes so that they can manage in their lives and participate in work and fellowship in society. They shall be given opportunity to have scope for their joy of creating, engagement and their desire to explore. The pupils shall learn critical thinking, act ethically and take economic responsibility. They should be given responsibilities and opportunity to co-operate.

The school and enterprise which takes trainees shall meet the pupils with trust and demands, and give them challenges which promote generic formation and a desire to learn. All forms of discrimination should be counteracted.

Appendix 3: The teachers' educational backgrounds

The teachers' educational backgrounds reflect (changing) educational options for teachers in England and Norway. The difference in number of universities (90 vs. 6) and number of teacher training institutions (58 vs. 30) reminds us of the difference in the size of populations.³⁷⁸ Norway has more teacher training colleges than it has universities, as teacher training colleges are often part of University Colleges ('Høyskoler'), but there is a policy to turn more of the University Colleges into Universities. The Universities in Stavanger and Agder have for example recently changed their status from University Colleges to Universities (Stavanger from 2005, Agder from 2008). In England what used to be teacher training colleges are now part of Universities, so on this point the educational systems as such are converging, as a result of general (and not specific RE) educational policy in the *formal supranational processes* (see chapter 2, 3).³⁷⁹

One year university courses in 'Educational Science' exist in both countries. In England they are called Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), in Norway an equivalent to this was until 2003 called 'pedagogical seminar' (Ped.Sem.), and has since 2003 been called 'Praktisk Pedagogisk Utdanning' (PPU). In recent translation to English in the statistical

³⁷⁸ <http://www.axcis.co.uk/html/universities.html> (Accessed 24.03.09.)

³⁷⁹ This is a result of general international educational policy, for example (and especially) the Bologna process which explicit aim is that the systems of Higher Education should converge, see <http://www.ond.vlaanderen.be/hogeronderwijs/bologna/>. The Bologna process is an international juridical framework setting certain standards with regard to length of studies, degrees and quality control. In Norway a main strategy to implement this is the so called Quality reform ('Kvalitetsreformen'). See <http://www.regjeringen.no/en/dep/kd/Selected-topics/Higher-Education/Degree-structure-and-grading-system.html?id=491287> (Accessed 03.09.09).

documentation³⁸⁰, the English term 'Educational Science' is used. In both countries these courses build on degrees in different subjects, and some would have an *RE* PGCE course in Educational Science, while others would have done the equivalent to *RE* in combination with another subject such as language, maths or science.

Some things regarding the sample teachers' educational backgrounds were unclear from their comments on this in the interviews, but I did not go back to investigate this in more detail, as I did not see it as very central to my purpose (see chapter 6). However, here is what I know:

| Teacher training college | Lower university degrees | Higher university degree | PhD (subject) | PGCE/ Educational Science ³⁸¹ | PhD in RE |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|--|------------------------|
| 'Ingunn Duesund' (NS2-T) | 'Ruth Lakes' (ES3-T) | | Vicky Haley' (ES2-T) ? | 'Ruth Lakes' (ES3-T) | Vicky Haley' (ES2-T) ? |
| | 'Sally Fields' (ES1-T) | | | 'Sally Fields' (ES1-T) | |
| | 'Oline Gammelseter' (NS3-T) | | | 'Oline Gammelseter' (NS3-T) | |
| | Ingunn Duesund' (NS2-T) | | | 'Jon Martin Sivertsen' (NS1-T) | |
| | 'Jon Martin | | | | |

³⁸⁰ http://udir.no/upload/Rapporter/Utdanningsspeilet_2007/The_Education_Mirror_2007_2mb.pdf (Accessed 05.05.09.)

³⁸¹ One year courses in Educational Science in England called (PGCE), in Norway called 'Ped. Sem.: meaning 'pedagogical seminar'.

| | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | Sivertsen' (NS1-T) | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|

'Jon' (NS1-T) had a Cand.Mag. which is a lower university degree consisting of two to three subjects. His degree included courses in History, Norwegian language and sociology of religion. 'Jon's' (NS1-T) Ped.Sem. could theoretically have been in RE.

'Ingunn' (NS2-T) had done some of her training in a teacher training college, including the compulsory RE course (before 1997 it was mainly Christianity), and teacher training in Educational Science, equivalent to the university Ped.Sem. 'Ingunn' (NS2-T) had taken additional university courses to complete her degree, but not in religious studies. Her main subject was Norwegian language.

'Oline' (NS3-T) had a Cand. Mag. degree and her initial subjects were in English, History and Norwegian language. Recently she has done further education and taken a course in religious studies. 'Oline's' (NS3-T) 'Ped.Sem.' would be a half year's course³⁸² based on one of her initial subjects.

'Sally' (ES1-T) said she had a degree in theology and religious studies, and her PGCE was in religious education.

³⁸² In the mid 1990s it changed from a half year course to a full year.

'Vicky' said she has a degree in theology and a PhD; it was not clear whether this is an RE PhD or a PhD in another subject. Quote from her answer: 'I did a degree in theology. At the end of the three years I really didn't know what I wanted to do. I knew I wanted to stay within my field, because I loved RE and I wanted to stay with doing something with RE. So, I thought I'd try a PhD for a year and see if I liked it, so I did my PhD'. Of course, she must have stayed for at least two years longer to complete the PhD.

'Ruth' (ES3-T) also said she has 'a degree in theology and religious studies' Her PGCE is in religious studies.

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