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Title: “Transnational Perspectives on Religion and on Textbook Research“

Published in: Religion and Educational Research: National Traditions and Transnational Perspectives.
Münster: Waxmann
Volume: Religious Diversity and Education in Europe; 39
Year: 2019
Pages: 93 – 120
ISBN: 978-3-8309-3980-1
URL to the original publication: <http://waxmann.ciando.com/ebook/bid-2659125>

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Transnational Perspectives on Religion and on Textbook Research

1. Transnational discourses in education: Theoretical approaches to religion

For some decades now, we have been able to observe a global trend for international organisations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE) and UNESCO, to devote themselves to developing various concepts and tools relating to engagement with religion and religious plurality. Other organisations, such as Arigatou International and the Center for Spiritual and Ethical Education (CSEE), have created platforms for ethics education projects and corresponding educational materials.¹ International stakeholders have linked the ideas and concepts they have developed to social issues with relevance to education in the national, transnational and global context, primarily matters of social cohesion, security and diversity. This essay will focus on the activities of the CoE, the OSCE and UNESCO in this regard.

The closing decades of the twentieth and the initial years of the twenty-first century have seen, as identified by Münch (2009), a shift in actorhood relating to the formulation and implementation of education policy from the governments of nation states to, increasingly, international organisations (Martens & Wolf 2006), alongside the concomitant standardisation of local educational settings through the influence of global elites. The activities of transnational and international organisations such as UNESCO, the OSCE/ODIHR (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights), the EU and the CoE in the arena of education policy provide an excellent opportunity to observe these processes in action. We presuppose in this context the existence of a development of globalisation, particularly in the sense of the successive spread of knowledge through standardisation and fragmentation (Parreira do Amaral 2006), and, increasingly and incrementally, of a 'global educational discourse' (Beech 2011). In this context, we take note of the critical observation that, 'insofar as a worldwide spread of identical schemata of thinking, organisation and action is indeed observable, it is [...] not explainable by [the] functional effectiveness [of such schemata], but rather by their legitimation as the putting into practice of

1 cf. <http://iltt.info/moodle/and> <http://www.csee.org/?page=ProfessionalDev> [18.08.2016].

principles of world culture [accompanied by their] self-assertion of universal validity and the simultaneous delegitimation of particular national interests' (Münch 2009, p. 9).

Discussion around the issue of how to handle religion, specifically tendencies towards religious pluralisation and individualisation, has its theoretical home in, first, the 'world polity' approach and the expanded concept of 'transnational educational spaces', and, additionally, in the context of what we might call the securitisation of religion in education processes. The terms 'world polity' or 'world culture' denote a variant of the macrosociological, neo-institutionalist approach proposed by Meyer, Lechner, Boli and Ramirez; it represents both a comprehensive programmatic research approach in its own right and an overarching theoretical framework whose purpose is to explain worldwide developments in the educational field. This concept proceeds from the idea of 'a broad cultural order whose explicit origins lie in the Western world' (Meyer 1997 & 2005) and defines this order as resting on three key structural components: the nation state, the formal organisations that comprise the foundations of modern societies, and the community of rationally and autonomously acting individuals (Meyer, Boli, Thomas & Ramirez 1997, pp. 144–181). The close focus on these three 'pillars', in the view of Adick (1992), obscures the view of this approach on all the changes currently taking place in the field of education, meaning it fails in particular to grasp those relating to global political and economic change or transnational migration. This is the rationale for a proposed expansion of 'world polity' theory to encompass the concept of transnational educational spaces (Adick 2005; Nording & Sundberg 2014), a theoretical notion containing three interlinked facets: socialisation in transnational spaces; increasing transnational convergence in the education sector; and transnational education in the sense defined by UNESCO in relation to the tertiary sector, with imminent expansion to include general education expected (Hornberg 2009, p. 249). Of particular relevance to our considerations are those instances of transnational convergence leading to isomorphic developments in education, which are both the precondition and consequence of the emergence of transnational educational spaces by virtue of the fact that participation in such spaces is contingent upon the interwoven and translatable nature of educational processes and is dependent, in the final analysis, on specific learning experiences, curricula and textbook content (Hornberg 2009, p. 249).

The second context of debates around religion and education mentioned above proceeds from a 'global governance' approach with an emphasis on what is called the securitisation of education and, specifically, of religion as a topic within education. 'Securitisation' is a concept formulated by the Copenhagen School (Wæver 1995; Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde 1998). It may be understood as a continuation of the Enlightenment project of enclosing religion within a

limiting space in the name of civilisation, a purpose which became manifest as early as the UN Charter, issued in 1945, and emerged particularly clearly after the terror attacks of 11 September 2001 (Gearon 2012). This said, it is a relatively new phenomenon on the education scenes of liberal societies, a circumstance particularly relevant to the activities of the OSCE/ODIHR in relation to education and religion. These activities are widely regarded as ambivalent in their nature: On the one hand, the OSCE presents an image of itself as an organisation which enables dialogue between religions and other worldviews (Gearon 2012, p. 22); on the other hand, it has attracted claims of lacking knowledge behind its actions in relation to Islam in education (Seifert 2000) and deficits in its communication in the inter-faith context (Štimac 2010). This difficult state of affairs is an exemplary indicator of the fact that an approach to religion based in securitisation should encompass two key components: a complex matrix of knowledge about religion and dialogue with theologians (Tezcan 2007, p. 67).

Researchers who have studied the role of international organisations in connection with both religion and educational processes include Jackson (2008) and, in relation to the EU and the CoE, Lindner (2008) and particularly Schreiner (2012). Jackson's approach is descriptive in nature, providing information on the organisational steps undertaken by the UN, UNESCO, the CoE and the OSCE in recent years to the end of supporting the faith-related dimension of intercultural education (Jackson 2008, pp. 153–155). Lindner analyses the developments in education which have taken place in Europe and the objectives which have been set (Lindner 2008, p. 75) as well as the programmatic announcements made by these organisations on issues in education (Lindner 2008, p. 97), concluding that education for religious tolerance, the development of mutual understanding, and the promotion of a corresponding public awareness of these matters are among the CoE's central objectives (Lindner 2008, p. 113). Schreiner, by contrast, in his theologically-founded analysis of the educational work of the CoE in relation to religion, produces a number of striking findings. He asserts, first, that the institution of the CoE makes explicit reference to the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue; second, that it regards religious communities as partners of political institutions in that dialogue; third, that it conceives of religion as a 'cultural fact'; and fourth, that it views faith as a strictly personal matter (Schreiner 2012, pp. 46–48).

This handful of examples is indicative of the extent to which the educational field currently represents a flashpoint in international and transnational organisations' conceptualisation of religion and its significance and in its manner of dealing with tendencies towards pluralisation and individualisation. This notwithstanding, it also points to the likelihood of both securitisation and

ideas of religion as a ‘cultural fact’ and personal matters appearing in future textbooks as approaches to issues of faith.

2. Documents and concepts in global discourse on education: ‘teaching about religion’

The organisations discussed in this analysis work with a range of documents, resolutions and recommendations via which they state and clarify their positions on specific issues. The idea of religion held by the CoE is clearly manifested in documents such as the Faro Declaration on the Council of Europe’s Strategy for Developing Intercultural Dialogue (2005), the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue ‘Living Together as Equals in Dignity’ (2008), the recommendation and memorandum ‘Dimension of Religious and Non-religious Convictions within Intercultural Education’ (2009), and recommendations such as ‘On the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education’ (CM/Rec[2008]12). Furthermore, the educational materials designed for schools on this subject, by, for instance, Ellmeier & Raski (2006), Keast (2008), Titley & Lentin (2008) and Arnesen & Birzėa (2008) and Arnesen, Allan & Simonson (2010), generally evince an approach to education and an idea of religion which places strong emphasis on maintaining social cohesion. In terms of educational practice, specifically with relation to religious plurality, the CoE recommends ‘teaching about religion’ (or ‘religions’) (cf. Jackson 2004), an approach which gives priority to the communication of knowledge about religions in the context of religious diversity. The CoE’s most recent publication on this issue is “Signposts” (Jackson 2014), aimed primarily at teacher trainers, teachers and policymakers. Predicating its content on the concept of intercultural education (Jackson 2014, p. 22), this work discusses non-religious convictions alongside religious beliefs, which is the most significant innovation it shows in comparison with older publications. “Signposts” also discusses textbook research (Jackson 2014, pp. 65–67).

The OSCE/ODIHR is a political organisation dedicated primarily to securing peace. It issued the “Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions and Beliefs in Public Schools” in 2007. This document asserts that the ‘teaching about religions’ approach can facilitate both inter-faith dialogue and conflict prevention at a societal level (OSCE/ODIHR 2007, p. 66). The organisation emphasises the importance of linking religion to security policy (cf. OSCE 2002). The discourse pursued by the OSCE constructs a society or community characterised by a specific definition, an approach which also becomes evident in its use of a terminology of ‘religion’ frequently restricted only to Judaism, Christianity and Islam or to the so-called world religions (OSCE 2006). Man-

ifestations of this discourse appear in the publications referred to above, as well as in OSCE resolutions such as the ‘Decision on Combating Intolerance and Discrimination and Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding’, the document on ‘Addressing Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims: Youth and Education’ (2008) and the ‘Guidelines for Educators on Countering Intolerance and Discrimination against Muslims’ (2011).

The foci of UNESCO’s work lie in intercultural education in a globalised world and in the vision of a ‘world culture’ in which religion, alongside other socio-cultural factors, has a prominent role to play. This global concept of the institution’s work and its impact, together with its non-binding but frequently direction-setting recommendations, distinguish UNESCO from the other organisations discussed here. UNESCO’s focus on ‘world culture’ is discernible both in its older publications, such as the UNESCO Report on ‘Learning to live Together’ of 1996, and in its most recently issued guidelines and reports on intercultural competencies (UNESCO 2006; 2009). Documents including the Barcelona Declaration on the Role of Religions in the Promotion of a Culture of Peace (1994), the Tashkent Declaration on Interreligious Dialogue and a Culture for Peace (2000), the Guidelines on Intercultural Education (2006), “Christianity and Islam in the Context of Contemporary Culture” (2009) and “World Religions in the Context of the Contemporary Culture (2011) give an indication of what UNESCO defines as ‘world culture’ in this context and which possibilities for education open up through the application of this perspective to religion. One of the most recent developments is the recognition of various systems of meaning and interpretation of the world and the immaterial cultures of indigenous peoples as worthy of special protection (The Burra Charta 2013), a move which places emphasis not solely on the variety of religions, but on the variety of social forms of the expression of faith.

The approach that has been called ‘teaching about religion’ is shared by all organisations discussed above. It is recommended as an educational practice with regard to teaching about religious plurality from the perspective of the ‘study of religion’, whose primary interest is in the communication of knowledge about religion in the context of the diversity of faiths (Jackson 2008). The ‘interpretative approach’, formulated by Robert Jackson (2008, pp. 168–169) and well established in the English-speaking world, is the basis from which this manner of teaching proceeds. It encourages pupils to relate to a way of life that is different from their own by interacting with what real people from various religious traditions actually say and do (reflexivity) and helps them to connect insights from those traditions with their own personal knowledge and experience. Pupils think about what they do at Easter and hear how an Eastern Orthodox Christian family celebrates it. They then relate what they hear about this family to their own experience, including their feelings and attitudes. The

strength of this approach is that it provides opportunities for pupils to actively interpret religious meaning-making, not just passively receive information about a tradition, and raises awareness of the difficulty of generalising about religion and belief and about those who follow particular traditions.² Nevertheless, it is not easy to employ the anthropological methods of this approach where access to first-hand materials and contacts is unavailable. There is still a danger of generalising from the particular examples chosen for study and of by-passing the truth claims made by adherents to a specific faith. There can be a particular challenge to making a ‘bridge’ between the pupils in the classroom and the children and families being studied.

For the sake of completeness, we should mention at this point the approach called, in a self-explanatory fashion, ‘learning about and learning from’. It proceeds from the assumption that religions and beliefs usually respond to human longings in some way, and human longings are ultimately understandable in spiritual and religious ways. Therefore, this approach postulates that religions and beliefs should be studied not only in their own right but also with a view to what they can contribute to the personal development of the learner. The life-world of religious experience should be brought into focus alongside the life-world of the pupil. Practically, with reference as an example to the theme of worship, pupils discover the worship practices of a community and are then encouraged to consider what it is about these practices that they personally revere and respect most deeply, and how that makes them feel. This model has resolved some of the perceived tensions in phenomenology by introducing a personal element. Nevertheless, ‘learning about’ and ‘learning from’ do not always fit neatly together (Grimmitt 1987).

The OSCE describes ‘teaching about religions’ in the Toledo Guiding Principles, deeming its difference from conventional religious instruction and school-based religious education to reside in its not being ‘devotionally and denominationally oriented’ (OSCE/ODIHR 2007). At the same time, the document asserts that the imparting of ‘knowledge about religion’ is one of the important responsibilities of schools, while families and religious institutions are in charge of moral education. The Toledo Principles define the central objective of the OSCE in this regard as being ready to provide all its member states with assistance at whatever point they choose to introduce a subject teaching ‘knowledge about religions’ at state schools (OSCE/ODIHR 2007, p. 19). In other words, the document sets out ‘international principles’ regarding the ‘teaching about’ approach to religion in state-provided education, created by an international group of experts and issued by an international organisation (OSCE/ODIHR 2007).

2 See <http://www.reonline.org.uk/knowing/how-re/>[16.12.2018].

3. General considerations on textbook research and religion

Research into educational media, in concert with Thomas Höhne, assumes that we can add a fourth dimension to Stein's characterisation of the textbook as an *informatorium*, a *paedagogicum* and a *politicum* (Stein 1977) – the notion of an educational medium as a *constructorium* (Höhne 2003). This approach emphasises the specific socio-cultural, constructivist and discursive properties of textbooks, alongside the fact that textbooks do not represent mirror images of an 'objective' reality, but rather confluences of differing constructions of and references to that reality. In this light, researchers working on textbooks must seek to establish the origins and types of knowledge they transmit. Peter Beyer, in relation to religion, differentiates between an academic, a theological and an 'official' perspective (Beyer 2003). While the first two of these are relatively self-explanatory³, the 'official' perspective and its concomitant discourses point out that the institutional systems of the law, the political sphere, the mass media and education are loci of specific knowledge (Beyer 2003, here pp. 154–156). James Beckford (2015 pp. 21–23) chooses to approach the diversity of religion from a somewhat different perspective, tackling the topic through the empirical information, normative notions and political processes which regulate religions and in the context of social relationships. While this way of relating to the topic is emphatically focused on religious pluralism, it does point to a plethora of contexts of the construction of religions which can be regarded as overarching uniform themes in both textbooks and analyses thereof. A further approach with considerable potential for research into educational media is supplied by the 'theory of knowledge'⁴, which proceeds from the assumption that knowledge is categorisable into a 'shared' (TOK, pp. 17–18) and a 'personal' type (TOK, pp. 18–19) and that there are various different 'ways of knowing' (TOK, p. 23) and 'areas of knowledge' (TOK, p. 28), all of equal value. 'Ways of knowing' include language, the senses, emotions, the intellect, the imagination, faith, intuition and memory; areas of knowledge comprise such fields as the sciences, the arts, history and religion. One of the aims of the curriculum, as per this approach, is to raise young people's awareness of the construction (and constructedness) of knowledge in education and of the role of various different 'ways of knowing' in this construction. This way of thinking about education is applicable to textbooks and educational media, in terms of exploration of the

3 This is despite the blurring of boundaries between these two perspectives due to the increasingly academic nature of theology and to the providability of a research-based rationale for particular normative positions it proposes.

4 International Baccalaureate (n.d.). Theory of knowledge. Available at: <http://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/curriculum/theory-of-knowledge/> [16.12.2017], (henceforth TOK).

'ways of knowing' put to use in textbooks, as well as opening up a virtually inexhaustible analytical meta-level relating to educational media. This means we can perceive not only textbooks *per se*, but also textbook analysis (relating to religion) as a construct characterised by a specific approach to religion.

4. Transnational perspectives on religion in textbook and educational media research

As a general rule, the political determination, educational design and delivery of the content of education and educational media take place at a national level. It is therefore imperative to formulate at this point a definition of the concept of the transnational as it relates to educational media and research into them.⁵ In general, transnationalism refers to 'the movement of people, media, language, and goods between distinct nation states, particularly that which flows in both directions and is sustained over time' (Portes, Guarnizo & Landolt 1999).

This essay proceeds from the assumption, formulated in line with the tenets of cultural studies, that the production and reception of educational media are subject to transnational effects (Basch, Glick Schiller & Szanton Blanc 1995). The unfolding processes of globalisation, migration and transculturation mean that the authors and publishers of textbooks are exposed to a diverse range of transnational perspectives and points of view; these find reflection and representation in educational media, including, and indeed particularly, when their content relates to religions.⁶ Steiner-Khamsi's 'lending and borrowing' approach has demonstrated potential processes of the emergence of international relationships of transfer via reference to models from elsewhere (externalisation), modification of such models in the user's own setting (recontextualisation) and/or metamorphosis into a local model (internalisation, see Fuchs & Lüth 2008, p. 4).

5 For a historical perspective on transnational efforts in education, see Fuchs, Lüth & Heinemann 2008.

6 It is important at this point to at the least mention the concept of transcultural learning, which seeks to provide an education encompassing a global perspective. This approach postulates that individuals no longer identify straightforwardly with a single collective, but rather show more complex patterns of identification due to the diverse range of cultural systems of relationship and identification available (Welsch 1995, p. 43). A critique of the approach has pointed out that its complex nature, predicated on the existence of a 'world society', is in strong opposition to the concept of education progressing from the student's lifeworld (see Simojoki 2012, p. 226).

Textbook research, then, needs to consistently take account of specific national perspectives; however, the researcher's driving interest will frequently point him or her to tendencies and transformations taking place transnationally. It is for this reason that this essay makes use of examples which evince a transnational character either a) in their sustained effects (in the shape of follow-on or similarly focused projects, for instance) beyond national borders, b) in their comparative international or transnational analysis of a specific issue, or c) in their illumination of the diverse range of global perspectives in the context of religion and textbook research.

4.1 The first European textbook analysis on religion

The first exploration of religion in textbooks which had a properly transnational impact began with the curriculum analysis of Islam in German textbooks conducted by Herbert Schultze (1988), which established research on Islam in European educational media, a field which in Germany has covered curricula as well as textbooks for Protestant and Catholic religious education, history and geography. As a follow up, a team headed by Abdoldjavad Falaturi and Udo Tworuschka, and involving researchers from the Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, conducted a project (U. Tworuschka 1986) whose purpose was to identify and help to overcome prejudices, reservations and defensive attitudes between Christianity and Islam as manifest in educational media. This first systematic analysis on the topic proceeded from various aspects, categories and sub-categories of the Islamic faith and used spatial analysis to quantify the data collected, which it subsequently analysed on a qualitative basis. The geography books required the application of a different methodology due to the impossibility of analysis in relation to the content of Islamic faith and doctrine.

The findings attained by the authors led them to criticise the image of Islam in the textbooks analysed, which they viewed as being oversimplified and replete with factual errors, and formulate practical proposals for more appropriate information for students on the subject.⁷ The first analyses to be discussed use a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods, proceeding, on the basis of diverse clusters of questions designed to reveal organisational, structural, content-related and intent-related features of the textbooks. The methodology behind this procedure is now the subject of criticism due to the categories for analysis having been pre-set and pre-established, with little room for flexibility, in the context of a particular concept of religion, specifically Islam. This man-

7 For the findings and recommendations arising from the study (see Falaturi & Tworuschka 1992).

ner of proceeding allowed the researchers to analyse various facets of Islam, but denied them access to contextual information. The analysis of geography books that took place within this project used an entirely different approach, employing a specially designed framework composed of thematic fields and not drawn up with Islam specifically in mind, but rather created in order to enable the integration of individual statements about Islam into a wider context (Fischer 1987).

Some time later, similarly structured and focused textbook analyses were conducted in Sweden (Kjell Härenstam 1993) and France (Roger Foehrlé). The Swedish study analysed textbooks for history and religious education, which in Sweden at that time was taught with objective and non-discriminatory intent and encompassed various so-called world religions. This study also discovered a number of factual inaccuracies, while other content was simply rendered very differently from today's textbooks. For instance, the textbooks analysed in this study depicted women primarily as existing to serve their husbands (Härenstam 2009, p. 173). Furthermore, jihad received a portrayal that differed from that in current Swedish textbooks; it appeared as a spiritual practice and as a physical discipline, but not yet as a movement whose intent was to conquer the world (Härenstam 1993, pp. 202–203). According to the study, primary school history textbooks of the time contained relatively little information on Islam, while books for secondary level were much more expansive on the subject, yet depicted Islam as a religion in conflict with the West and as the cause of turbulence and disharmony in countries of which it was the main faith. Thus the study found that as early as the beginning of the 1990s, Islam was being referred to as a 'fanatical' religion in Sweden (*ibid.*, pp. 104–106).

The year 1990 saw the foundation, in response to the increasing need for information on religious diversity in education and specifically in curricula and textbooks, of the European Association for World Religions in Education (EAWRE) in Taunus by theoreticians and practitioners of religious education from various European countries (Schultze 2005). The organisation, whose director was Herbert Schultze, set itself the purpose of engaging closely with the changes that had taken place in the demographics and politics of religion and responding to the challenges presented by the contexts within which religion interacted with education policy, particularly as they related to European schools (Schultze 2005, p. 698). It focused its mission not solely on religious education, but saw it as encompassing all school subjects in which religion was a topic. The ultimate objective EAWRE set itself was to contribute to 'appropriate teaching about world religions' (Schultze 2005, p. 701). EAWRE conceived of the 'appropriate, precise, accurate and understanding-based teaching on world religions' which it sought to achieve as one that did justice to the ideas the relevant faith held of itself and to the state of the art in research theories and

methods. It is thus not surprising that many EAWRE members were at the time, and remain, involved in critical textbook research at national and international levels (Schultze 2005, p. 702). The organisation's first members, figures with considerable impact on education and educational media research, included Robert Jackson, Peter Antes, Udo Tworuschka, Reinhard Kirste, Johannes Lähnenmann, Nils Holm, Wolfgang Sonn, Wim Westerman, and Kjell Härenstam.⁸ Later, Smail Balić, Ravindra Dave, Brian Gates, Lajos Szabo, Cemal Tosun, and many others joined the association. In its quest to gain a perspective from other parts of the world on the issues, the organisation developed contacts with institutions such as the Royal Academy in Amman (Jordan). Herbert Schultze did not in his lifetime see a transnational conference which might have created connections between Europe and the Middle East. However, EAWRE did take up contact with the CoE and engage in discussion on its education policies. Subsequently, EAWRE was incorporated into CoGREE (the Coordination Group for Religious Education in Europe), an umbrella organisation encompassing a large number of individual European groupings on religion and education, which has come to cooperate closely with the CoE.⁹ EAWRE's conferences, attended by academics and education practitioners, focused on issues such as the contribution of the culture of religion to shaping Europe (Amsterdam 1992), the challenge of xenophobia and racism in multi-religious societies (regional conference in Goslar, Germany 1993), Cultures and Religions in a Changing Europe (Strasbourg 1997), From Private to Public (Strasbourg 2003) and Citizenship Education in Europe (2005). Various publications issued by the association contain discussions of these and other topics.¹⁰ EAWRE is of relevance to this essay because it was discussing research into education and educational media within a broad political context as early as the beginning of the 1990s, but also because it held, at a relatively early point in time, a position at the points of intersection between textbook research and policy and between national and transnational perspectives.

8 See minutes of the association's constitutive meeting of January 29, 1990. I extend my thanks to Wolfgang Sonn for providing me with the digital version of the minutes of EAWRE meetings.

9 See https://www.comenius.de/themen/Evangelische-Bildungsverantwortung-in-Europa/Statutes_of_Cogree_2007.php. [16.12.2017].

10 EAWRE Publications 2005: Challenges of Globalisation for World Religions and Education in Europe; EAWRE Publications 2002: Religious Education, Europe and Young People; EAWRE Publications (2008): Citizenship Education in Europe.

4.2 Transnationally comparative educational media research

In 1999, the so-called Nuremberg-Rostock Textbook Project, funded by the German Research Foundation (DFG) and headed by Johannes Lähnemann and Klaus Hock (Hock, Lähnemann & Reiss 2006), began analysing depictions of Christianity in textbooks from the largely Arab-influenced countries Turkey, Iran, Egypt and Palestine. Johannes Lähnemann refers to the work conducted in the analysis as ‘interreligious textbook research’, the rationale for which arose, in his view, from the significant areas of difficulty and above all of dialogue in existence between Islam and the Christian faith (Lähnemann 2012). The research focused on textbooks for all school subjects, from primary to academic secondary level, in which Christianity was discussed. The study emulated the Cologne Textbook Project in many ways, but its methodology was an exception to these; instead of following the Cologne methods, the researchers developed three categories of depiction: explicit, implicit and inclusive (Bartsch 2006). ‘All passages of text which [made] express reference to Christianity [were] classified as explicit.’ ‘Implicit’ meant that the passage in question, while not making explicit reference to Christianity, was relevant to the depiction of Christianity or had a context related to Christianity. The category termed ‘inclusive’ was applied to content relevant or significant to both Christianity and Islam, but depicted from an Islamic point of view (Bartsch 2006, p. 37). A critical note on the research was sounded from within the project itself: Viola Raheb has pointed out that ‘criticism of textbooks often leads to polemical statements in response and to defensive apologia and can therefore limit the possibilities of international, intercultural and interreligious dialogue and cooperation or make them more difficult’ (see Raheb 2018). By contrast, she has praised ‘the experience [of working] in a mixed commission’¹¹, which in this case was convened by the Arab League and UNESCO ‘to work on recommendations for the depiction of ‘Others’ in history textbooks [...]’ (Al-Ashmawi, Dougi, Idrissi, Reiss, Riley & Thurfjell 2011). She reports that the experience of this work showed that cooperation between Western and Eastern academics did not inevitably have to lead to a polarisation of positions. Furthermore, she welcomes the transnational perspective to which this work gave access in its enabling of the commission’s members to ‘focus the discussion on content and avoid falling into polemical debates between West and East or Christianity and Islam’ (Al-Ashmawi et al. 2011).

The Georg Eckert Institute was the academic base for a 2011 study examining the depiction of Islam in textbooks for history and politics/civic education

11 The commission was made up of one member each from Sweden, the UK, Germany, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt.

in Germany, Austria, Spain, France and the UK. The research explored the extent to which the textbooks contained one-dimensional and polarising attributions of characteristics to Islam and/or Muslims and the degree to which their presentation of such stereotypical or negative perceptions allowed the sense of a threat to arise. The study found that the textbooks tended towards an ahistoric depiction of Islam, with marked tendencies towards homogenisation and essentialisation.¹² Furthermore, in relation to the depiction of Islam in the twentieth century, a consistent connection was observable between Islam and violence, alongside presentations of the interconnections between Islamism and international politics.¹³ Structural analysis was performed on the textbooks in order to identify the wider context of the depiction of content about religion. Criteria for the selection of textbooks in this study were, among others, date of publication, with more recent works prioritised; publisher; amount of relevant content; and appropriate stage of education, with a focus on textbooks for secondary schools. The detailed analysis sought to establish whether the textbooks constructed 'Muslims' as a homogeneous group and to examine the extent to which they showed Islam as a diverse spectrum.¹⁴ The guideline developed for the analysis took into account specific curricular stipulations and current standards in history and political studies education. The analysis of each piece of text began with an examination of its graphic design and recording of the illustrations, photographs, diagrams or maps which accompanied it, before moving on to the tasks set for students.¹⁵ This relatively recent study revealed parallels between international perceptions, within global educational discourses, of religion as a problem for security and the depiction of a particular religion in textbooks as such a security issue.

12 See Kröhnert-Othman, Kamp & Wagner 2011, p. 72. The study analysed 27 secondary school textbooks published between 2005 and 2010.

13 *Ibid.*, p. 75. Alongside these negative findings, the study did identify isolated instances of attempts to depict shared religious histories and emphasise the importance of cultural transfer.

14 Specifically, the analysis investigated whether the text transmitted an essentialistic idea of Islam; whether the depiction of majority Muslim societies and their history tended to define them as static or whether their evolution over time and current developments found entry into the depiction; and further, whether Islam and Muslims were presented as being part of Europe or whether they were essentially located outside Europe, along with examining the extent to which this gave rise to a discourse of conflict or threat.

15 GEI study on the depiction of Islam, pp. 22–23.

4.3 A multiplicity of perspectives

One of the most recent works in textbook analysis is the edited volume *Textbook Gods*, edited by Bengt Ove Andreassen, a Norwegian expert on religion (Andreassen & Lewis 2014). The book supplies a transnational, albeit not explicitly comparative, perspective on textbook research as it relates to religion and religious studies, containing textbook analyses focusing on a specific religion, subject or methodology or a combination of these. The volume's individual chapters do not in and of themselves make a claim to a transnational approach; what they do, however, is allow us to draw transnational comparisons between approaches and perspectives taken by textbook research within study of religion. Furthermore, although it provides a diverse selection of interesting approaches, it remains a selection.

Among other things, the volume contains analysis, in the context of 'ethnic' religions (Andreassen & Lewis 2014, p. 120), of the religious ideas of indigenous peoples such as the Inuit, Maori, Aborigines, Native Americans and particular African religions.¹⁶ These analyses, as is observable in the exemplary case of the Aborigines, go beyond religious matters to encompass the conditions under which these specific groups live and their ideas and expectations of life, which differ from the life stories – to return to the Aborigine example – experienced by the remainder of Australia's population. The volume teaches us that inappropriate and inaccurate depictions in textbooks always reproduce social inequity, and politically attuned depictions of religious ideas could prevent this from happening, albeit with the danger of generating marginalisation where indigenous religious ideas, together with other religions, fall victim to what we might call the "world religions" paradigm' (Cusack 2014, p. 130). African religions often appear in textbooks in connection with negative stereotypes. The images used transmit the notion of 'hopeless savage[s]' and African religious practices are dismissed as 'ugly superstition[s]', in stark contrast to the activities of the Christian missionaries (Lewis 2014, p. 198). In this context, James Lewis reports a tendency to emphasise issues susceptible to sensationalist depiction, such as female genital mutilation, and bring them together to

16 See Cusack 2014, p. 121. These traditions, practised by few adherents spread over a wide geographical area, are frequently mentally categorised as essentially the same entity, in spite of their cultural, linguistic and other specificities. The principal factor these religions have in common is their nature as local, ethnically based, scriptureless and non-missionary groups, which sets them in contrast to most 'world religions'. It is frequently the case that these groupings are depicted as unable to adapt to the changing conditions of modern life, in contrast, for instance, to Christianity; such implications seek to suggest Christianity (in this case) is effectively advanced in its evolution compared to these religions.

create a specific image of 'African religion in general'. He further observes that textbooks treat different religions in different ways¹⁷ and create, seemingly unconsciously, a hierarchy of religions according to the perceived or assumed state of their evolution.¹⁸ The knowledge about African religions contained in textbooks, concludes Lewis, is a reflection of a neo-imperialist, pragmatic and instrumentalising perspective which seeks to comprehend the religious ideas of others no longer in the name of colonial, but instead, and analogously, in that of political and economic interests (Lewis 2014, p. 201).

Several of the analyses in the volume revolve around ethics textbooks from, to name some examples, Japan, Switzerland and Quebec. Satoko Fujiwara analyses the Japanese ethics textbooks for secondary school and she comes to the conclusion that they create a hierarchy of religions, with the 'world religions', such as Christianity and, in particular, Mahayana Buddhism, ranking above 'ethnic religions' such as Hinduism and Judaism. Furthermore, the books provide emphatic summary definitions of Christianity as a religion of love and Buddhism as an 'eco-friendly' faith, which contains the implication for learners, in contradiction to best practice for ethics textbooks, that they should follow the teachings of Buddha and Jesus. One might conclude that these depictions give preferential treatment to those religions that appear to contribute to world peace and the preservation of the environment.¹⁹ Katharina Frank's analysis of a textbook for the Swiss school subject of "Religion and Culture" finds that the book disseminates the same reductive images as those circulating in the media and in Swiss public discourse more generally (Frank 2014, p. 62). It depicts Switzerland in stereotypical religious terms and describes the five 'world religions' without giving reasons for their inclusion in this category (Frank 2014, pp. 66–68). Frank's methodology is innovative in its division, in accordance with Erving Goffman's communication theory, of the educational sequences in the book into 'objects' and 'frames'. The framing in each case reveals the objective pursued by the teacher in using particular

17 Lewis emphasises that the practices of sacrifice and black magic are primarily to be found in the context of African religions, but not, for instance, in relation to Hinduism.

18 For example, prehistoric faiths and the religions of traditional societies are almost always presented at the beginning of the textbooks, with Christianity at the end, implicitly as a form of perfected or maximally evolved religion. See Lewis 2014, pp. 200–204.

19 See Fujiwara 2014, p. 59. The Japanese indigenous Shinto faith is not to be found in the ethics textbooks (p. 53); we might regard this as a consequence of post-war education policy in Japan, with its ban on the myth of the divine origins of the Japanese imperial family.

textbook content, whether this be identification with the object or a distanced attitude towards it (Frank 2014, pp. 64–65).

Suzanne Anett Thobro is one of the authors who turn to the aesthetic dimension of religion, conducting a focused analysis of geographical maps in upper secondary religious studies textbooks of 1935 to 2010 by applying the principles of critical cartography²⁰ within the context of discourse theory (Thobro 2014). Her conclusion is that maps relating to religion or religious studies, despite their proximity to their context or co-text (i.e. related publications), generate their own discourse which takes the following manifestations: first, the appearance of the same maps in textbooks issued by different publishers, with changed text when they are reproduced in successive books from the same publisher; second, the failure to discuss in the related lessons some of the religions that appear on the maps; and third, the exclusion of the theoretical factors associated with the maps from the textbook units in which they appear (Thobro 2014, p. 171).

5. Theoretical approaches to religion in textbook research

The textbook analyses we have outlined above evince various theoretical approaches which, in the context of intercultural education, engage with and pick up on globalisation and the societal tendencies towards pluralisation and individualisation that are reflected within education. The initial developments in this regard proceeded from the waves of migration that took place in the 1970s and the theoretical concept of multiculturalism (Vertovec 1996), to be joined later by the ideas of interculturality (Yousefi & Braun 2011), transculturality (Welsch 2009) and super-diversity (Vertovec 2007).

Despite the progression of discourse beyond them, intercultural and interreligious approaches are currently the most numerous in this field. In the educational context, the purpose of intercultural and inter-faith education is to enable all citizens to live together with others, regardless of their culture or religious

20 In concrete terms, the analysis involved exploring textbooks using the following principles: a) critical cartography, which examines the ways in which maps organise the knowledge on which they are based and produce this knowledge; b) the premise that knowledge about the world is contingent upon the time and era in which it was generated; and c) the idea that knowledge exists within a specific framework of power relations, the maps, in this case, being produced by an 'array of social, economic and historical forces' (p. 158). 'A map does not give us a definition of religion, but the choices made in a map construct what counts as religion and, more accurately, what counts as important enough to be shown on a map visualizing the geographical spread of religions across the world' (p. 159).

affiliation, in peace and with mutual respect (Willems 2011, p. 113). In educational practice, religious education seeks to develop a range of competencies (Klafki 1997, p. 243), with ‘teaching from religion’ a key objective alongside ‘teaching in’ and ‘teaching about’ it, and interreligious education regarded as complementary to religious education (Schambeck 2013, p. 161). In accordance with these approaches, religious education pursues the aim of developing students’ interreligious competencies (Leimgruber 2012) while educational settings or disciplines concerned with transmitting facts about religions teach competencies related to specific religions (Kurth 2001; Koch 2006, pp. 11–13).

All research in this field is predicated upon the awareness of changes in Western societies and correspondingly makes use of theories of pluralisation, modernisation and secularisation, as well as theoretical approaches such as postcolonialism and orientalism. The religious pluralism which characterises Western societies is the oldest theoretical model underlying these analyses; it has over time worked with terminology including re-Islamisation and integration support (in the 1980s, see, *inter alia*, U. Tworuschka 1986, p. 1), identity, and terms which have remained current to this day such as self-perceptions and perceptions of others (Othman et al. 2011). For the purposes of this essay, the key discursive arenas in which the principal societal processes taking place in this regard are reflected are emphasis on specific religions, comparative analysis of a religion in a transnational context, and the investigation of phenomena often selected on the basis of a very broad definition of ‘religion’.

Debates around modernisation and related discussions proceeding from theories of secularisation may be helpful in supplying explanations for the general changes we are seeing in the education landscape. In addition to this, approaches drawn from theories of modernisation are of relevance to post-conflict and postcolonial contexts as well as to the aftermath of the processes of institutionalisation undertaken by various global stakeholders in the field of education. Postcolonial approaches are in evidence in the textbook analyses we have explored here, as a part and variant of accesses to the issues based on theories of globalisation and on the observation of transnational phenomena. These approaches have generally sought to illuminate the ways in which the images of non-European peoples presented in textbooks had evolved through the largely pre-formed assumptions of European researchers, most of whom had not consciously reflected on these assumptions, and how these images, reflecting back in their turn, had then helped to legitimise imperialist attitudes. Researchers point to the debate on orientalism in the context of constructions of *Fremdheit* or ‘otherness’, essentialisation and marginalisation in the text of textbooks. These various theoretical approaches also shed light on the fact that assumptions related to the concept of a ‘world society’ have yet to reach textbook research; this is a surprising finding in light of the fact that most of the

religions analysed in textbooks are, and confidently claim to be, transnational communities.

Discussions of methodology point to the primacy of discursive and constructivist approaches in educational media research. Other forms of analysis are not in evidence (cf. Frank 2014). We might specifically mention in this context the absence of procedures such as praxeology, which could illuminate a range of practices in relation to decisions, production and discourses around religious education as well as the contingency of textbook content upon societal conditions. Future research is highly likely to bring closer engagement with diverse aesthetically and emotionally based ways of accessing and assessing textbook content, which will complement and complete the currently dominant cognitively based approach. We might conclude here by inferring that, despite all theoretical differences between textbook research and global discourses on education, there is one key factor in common: a focus on religious diversity and, implicitly, on social cohesion.

6. An example of intersectionality between global educational discourses, religion and curricula/textbooks

An example of how the involvement of international stakeholders and educational organisations can bring practical, formative influence to bear on education and educational media, and of the textbooks and discourses that come into being during the process, is provided by Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and its school subject ‘Culture of Religions’ (Štimac 2018). For the first time in the history of the region, in the emergent pluralistic context of a multi-faith, post-Communist and post-conflict state, the relevant stakeholders came from both religious and secular settings: they included the Islamic community, the Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches and international organisations such as the OSCE and OHR. The international community became the central driver and supporter of the process of Europeanisation which took place in BiH and exerted a significant impact on education among other fields.

This new subject, which remains a topic of controversy in BiH to this day, is depicted in the OSCE/ODIHR²¹ publication “Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religion and Beliefs in Public Schools” as an example of good practice in the area of secular religious education (OSCE/ODIHR 2007, p. 66).

The school subject ‘Culture of Religions’ (*Kultura religija*) was designed, piloted and introduced to a degree in state schools by a collaboration of interna-

21 Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

tional organisations (OSCE, the Office of the High Representative, the Goethe Institute and the Institute for School and Further Education, Soest, Germany) together with representatives of various local organisations such as Abraham/Ibrahim. The Toledo Guiding Principles maintain that the subject 'Culture of Religions' invites all learners to discover the religions of the country via its history, culture and society, follows an 'inclusive' approach and encourages interreligious tolerance.²² Alongside background information on 'teaching about religion' and examples of 'best practice', the Principles also make suggestions for possible curricula and teacher training.

The example of 'Culture of Religions' shows that international stakeholders have been involved in a secular curriculum and subject with regard to religious education. A draft curriculum was produced in October 2002 as a result of the consultations held in 2001 involving local theologians, sociologists and international experts in curriculum development. The Curriculum 'Culture of Religions – The Preliminary Curriculum and Syllabus', published on 13 October 2002 (OSCE, Goethe-Institute 2002), which related to primary and middle schools, is 113 pages long and consists of the tasks and objectives of the subject, its educational and methodological orientation, the topic areas it was to include, and guidelines for marking and assessment. The objectives of the subject are manifold. They can be categorised in three broad groups of fundamental aims (OSCE, Goethe-Institute 2002, p. 6): 'religious literacy', 'promotion of dialogue' and 'values education'. The tasks and objectives of the curriculum clearly reveal that 'Culture of Religions' is not a subject that takes the religions of the country as its thematic focus, despite official claims to the contrary. Rather, the subject concentrates on personal perceptions, everyday experiences of religion, and the cultural, ethical, moral and political impact of religions in BiH and elsewhere. The educational guidelines for orientation as given in the document provide a structural basis for teaching, using four basic points of navigation: a) societal orientation, b) religious orientation, c) academic orientation and d) pupil orientation. All content taught in the classroom must be traceable back to these points of orientation. The curriculum includes diverse thematic areas: the relationship of humans with nature (i.e. with Creation); interpersonal relationships; and a person's relationship with him or herself and with God. The curriculum prescribes sixteen topics for each

22 Ibid. An analysis of the Toledo Guiding Principles or of the practical educational work of the OSCE would exceed the scope of this essay, but is currently being undertaken in the course of the project 'Between transnational education policy, pluralisation and individualisation of religion: Religion in Ethics Education in Germany and Switzerland' at the Georg Eckert Institute.

of eight thematic units covered over the course of an academic year;²³ each teaching unit comprises nine lessons, with 70 lessons scheduled per school year. This curriculum can be considered to be under the authorship of the OSCE and the Goethe Institute in Sarajevo. Between March 2007 and November 2008, the curriculum of 2002 (in local languages only) could be found on the Goethe Institute website under the heading ‘Culture of Religions’, and was declared the official curriculum for the subject.²⁴

By the year 2008, a manuscript for a textbook on ‘world religions’, commissioned by the Goethe Institute and the OSCE, had been completed. The first supplementary book/reader for ‘Culture of Religions’ was published following various processes of negotiation and edited by local scholars (Spahić-Šiljak & Abazović 2009). The manuscript was designed not as a textbook but rather as a handbook on three world religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) and their systems of ethics, peace as the paramount aim and desire of all faiths, the family and its significance to religions, the relationship between religion and the state, and the cultural attainments of religions in architecture, art and music. All chapters contain questions and tasks for pupils. The content shows only loose correlation with the curriculum for ‘Culture of Religions’. Although a handbook of this kind could barely have served as a textbook, it was a major step forward for the new school subject. Nevertheless, the Serbian Orthodox Church complained, inaccurately, that primarily Muslims had been involved in the book’s design, and that there were errors in its portrayal of Serbian Orthodoxy. The textbook *Culture of Religions* was published, like the handbook, in 2009 (edited by Katalinski, Forić & Dujković-Blagojević). The textbook retains the thematic units of the book outlined above, with age and stage-appropriate text and pupil tasks. Parallel to this, due to differing policies across the entities, another textbook entitled ‘Culture of Religions for Secondary Schools’ was written for use in the RS (Kuljić, Ristić & Avramović, 2008). The year

23 These include: 1. Cultural achievements of religion in the fields of architecture, the fine arts, literature and music; 2. The family and religions; 3. Ethics – good behaviour and religions; 4. Communality as a principle of religions; 5. Peace – A place for the Other; 6. People – the essence of each person; 7. Religion – Society – State; and 8. Life – its Meaning and Expectancy.

24 The curricula in the local languages were accessible on the website from 3 February 2007 until 6 March 2008 at <http://www.kultura-religija.ba/kdr/de/dow/lrp/de401.html>. This website no longer exists and can only be found at the URL <http://web.archive.org/web/20080203082628/www.kultura-religija.ba/kdr/dow/lrp/bs401.html> [27.03.2015]. The author is in possession of both the German and the English versions. Neither the official website of the OHR nor that of the OSCE provide the curricula or any information on the content.

2011 saw the finalisation of a handbook for teachers of the subject (Katalinski & Kalauzović, 2011).

Unfortunately, there was no legal framework for a trouble-free path to introducing the subject 'Culture of Religions' in schools. Of particular relevance in this context, and to religious education in general, was the fact that Article 9 of the Framework Law on primary and secondary schools granted all pupils the right to a denominational religious education (not to an education on the 'culture of religions') and that the churches and religious communities were charged with taking responsibility for the curricula and their implementation.

7. Concluding remarks and considerations

The approaches to religious education in a transnational context discussed here can serve as a basis for an exemplary outline, by way of conclusion, of various issues of shared concern to the global discourses on education produced by international stakeholders and educational media researchers working on matters relating to religion.

The textbook analyses we have described in this essay, and our exploration of the idea of religion within the international discourse on education, demonstrate that it is rare indeed for these processes and discourses to provide a true representation of the dynamic world of religion, with its interlacements, areas of overlap, variations and shifts. The textbook analyses were found to contain various terms defined inadequately or used as shorthand without having checked them; one example is the lack of appropriate exploration of the meaning of the terms 'religion' and indeed 'world religion'.²⁵ Global discourse on education, while it does not set a specific definition of 'religion', does focus on the largest religious groups in terms of numbers of adherents; implicitly, this is as striking a reduction of definition and meaning in this regard as is the hierarchisation of religions with inferable reference to their current level of or capacity for modernisation.

All this points firmly to the fact that religion, in textbooks as well as in global discourses on education, is subject to particular constructions. Individual religions are metaphorically confined to their separate boxes and appear to be devoid of interconnection or interlinking of any kind, be it historical, political or in terms of cultural policy (cf. Štimac 2016). Härenstam describes another form of construction of religion within educational media research, speaking, for instance, of 'textbook Islam' and emphasising the nature of textbook content as reflecting not the reality of Islam, but a construction thereof

25 For this discussion, see *inter alia*, Masuzawa 2005 and Hutter 2005.

(Andreassen & Lewis 2014, p. 3). As early as the 1990s, Islam has appeared in both educational media and global educational discourses as a ‘dangerous’ religion, associated with terrorism and conflict. As the tendency towards securitisation is a currently active paradigm in global discourses on education in relation to Islam, but also to other religions, it remains to be seen whether and when this paradigm will extend to encompass textbooks and emerge as an issue in educational media research.

The research done in the infancy of textbook analysis on religion tended to seek to ascertain whether a religion was depicted correctly or inaccurately, or to explore the prejudices and ideological attitudes associated with depictions of religion. Later work focused, among other things, on matters of social relevance connected to religious culture, diversity and social cohesion. These are issues correlating with policies held by international organisations, such as the UNESCO guidelines on responding to cultural diversity. In the 1980s and 1990s, such policies centred on the perception and recognition of individual cultures and cultural diversity; this emphasis has been shifting and expanding over time to encompass religion. A matter of considerable current relevance is the interest and work among international organisations, for instance in the UN context (resolution 61/295 2007), relating to the rights of indigenous peoples in such matters as their cultures and faiths; these issues have found entry into textbook research in a similarly recent timeframe, within the last decade or two. This relatively late engagement with indigenous peoples and their interests, both in global educational discourses and in textbook research, reflects remnants of colonialism in both fields and bears witness to the continued pervasiveness of a Eurocentric point of view. Both these discursive arenas, then, are called upon to expand their thematic coverage towards encompassing a broader definition of religion or a relational understanding of the term. They are also currently lacking fluidity in their definition of the boundaries between religion and non-religion, a fluidity which might emerge in the adoption of systems of interpretation which take account of this division’s contingency. The rigidity we note here might surprise us all the more if we consider the shared challenges, confronting religious and secular educational stakeholders alike, that arise in the wake of changes in the religious landscape and of contemporary young people’s shifting needs.²⁶

The types of discourses we have explored in this essay – global educational discourses and textbook research – use different theoretical approaches to the same issues; these issues are, fundamentally, the dynamics of societal

26 Research on young people and religion is one of the clearest indications of this; in the German context, see, for example, Feige & Gennerich 2008, Streib 2005 and Barz 1992.

pluralisation and secularisation, globalisation and individualisation, and the challenges to education which emerge in their wake. Both discourses locate these matters in the context of intercultural education, but perspectives on them differ significantly between these two discursive fields. The global discourse on education takes the view that social cohesion will increase in direct proportion to, and only through, the spread of 'teaching about religion', and alongside this discusses securitisation as a strategy for handling issues around religion and education. This could be regarded as implicitly critical of the 'religious' approach. Meanwhile, educational media research with a transnational emphasis, particularly the most recent work in this field, has pointed to the variety of ways of tackling the communication of intercultural knowledge about religion, within which it includes the religious, interreligious and 'study of religion' approach. It is to be hoped that this diversity of educational approaches will be sustained in the future; the extent to which textbooks and educational media will take up the discourse of securitisation remains to be seen. This essay has illuminated parallels among these partial discourses. The nature of their interrelations and intertwinements with one another is a matter for another piece of scholarly work.

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