

## Research articles

# A matrix for assessing mutual impacts of human rights education and religious education

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## Abstract

To address the societal challenges of global solidarity and sustainable societies there is clearly a need for human rights education (HRE). The question arises as to which school subject is capable of contributing to HRE in which way – and how different disciplines may ideally collaborate. The situation is particularly challenging for religious education in public schools. Here there is an inherent potential for HRE, but there are specific didactic issues related to civil rights and liberties. This article presents a ‘matrix for human rights awareness’ that is based on a systematic and multi-perspective analysis. The matrix can be used to categorise current HRE approaches. It can also serve the self-assessment of the various reference disciplines for HRE, while promoting and supporting mutual communication and collaboration among them. Furthermore, it may serve as a reference framework to map the field of different models of public religious education, establishing their specific potentials for HRE.

## Keywords

Human rights awareness, public religious education, interdisciplinary human rights education, interdisciplinary thinking, complex social challenges, Switzerland

## Introduction

At the beginning of the third millennium, we are faced with complex socio-political challenges: conflicts over justice and distribution, ecological crises, cultural struggles, and migration are mutually intertwined, in turn igniting other socio-political problems. Globalisation and digitalisation lead to an explosive plurality of values, magnifying these issues even further. Not only have these challenges grown exponentially in the past decades, they also tend to become increasingly complex to understand and to tackle. In these contexts, human dignity and human rights as global orientation marks for peaceful coexistence are as necessary as they are endangered. Based on this premise, we argue that interdisciplinary human rights education (HRE) is a normative necessity. This is the first societal departure point of this article.

The other societal departure point is the current virulent debate on the role of religion in the public realm of democratic states and, consequently, the relevance of religious education in public schools. Actors in the field of public religious education are tasked with examining, justifying, and communicating the relevance of religious education from various perspectives. Some countries address this question more urgently than others. As an example, we will be discussing the case of Switzerland, where recent developments may be deemed paradigmatic for developments in Europe as a whole.

This article starts with the insight that there is a need for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary HRE and identifies the disadvantages of unrelated monodisciplinary approaches, both in research and in practice (1). The current need for HRE is intertwined with the debate on the future profile of public religious education. This article marks the mutual learning potential (*Germ. Erkenntnis-Potenzial*) pertaining to questions of public religious education on the one hand and the necessity of interdisciplinary categories of HRE on the other (2). A recent research project was dedicated to this complex issue and the mutually enlightening potential arising from it. For this purpose, a 'matrix for human rights awareness' was developed. This can be understood as a theoretical framework for reflection, one that takes up the didactic questions of public religious education. Its different dimensions allow for a nuanced comparison of different public religious education profiles and this will enable us to outline and articulate them. On this basis, examples from the current Swiss debate on public religious education are offered. Furthermore, the explanations reveal basic reciprocal impulses and outcomes in the didactics of religion and human rights, and this may serve to illuminate the educational context in other countries as well (3). The article concludes by arguing for increased interdisciplinarity, both in HRE (research) and in public religious education (research) (4).

## **Human rights education as an interdisciplinary endeavour - potential and challenges**

‘As a simple fact, interdisciplinarity responds to the failure of expertise to live up to its own hype.’

(Frodeman, 2017, p.3)

Today’s societies face complex socio-political challenges. Issues related to the environment, migration and justice are intertwined, intricate and ambivalent. Dynamics such as globalisation and digitalisation have led to increasingly diverse societies in terms of culture, religion and values, further complicating these issues. Socio-political tensions between religions and cultures are, in turn, politically instrumentalised and staged by the media. Complexity, particularity and a plurality of values lead public bodies to search for unifying and binding fundamental values. In the complex fabric of the global discourse on norms and values, the principles and language of human rights have a central place (Mihr, 2009; Bahr, Reichmann & Schowalter, 2018): they are both a condition and a consequence of the differentiation and pluralisation of cultures and of the global interlinking of the different public spheres. ‘Human rights are the most presentable piece of ideology we have to deal with global justice. We are much inclined, if only initially, to take an argument based on human rights seriously’ (Pogge, 2013, p. 28).

Whether we look at historic or postmodern social orders, human rights are neither obvious nor permanent features. They always depend on the commitment of the responsible social groups and the support of individuals. However, within the context of modernisation and its inherent growth of freedom of choice and action, the skills and intrinsic motivation for moral orientation and ethical appraisal do not increase automatically as well. It follows that the question of universal and binding norms is not just a matter for the law, politics and economics, but also education: ‘Human rights cannot be defended and promoted by legal instruments alone. Human rights education – learning about, learning through and learning for human rights – is essential to make sure that they are understood, upheld and promoted by everyone’ (Council of Europe, 2020, p.10). Beyond specific HRE initiatives, this need is also underlined by key European and global education initiatives. For example, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2015) are comprehensively based on human rights and therefore on corresponding education (Pogge & Segupta, 2016).

Given the complex challenges to human rights, as well as their legal, political and moral character, they are regularly invoked from the perspective of different academic disciplines: ‘The study of human rights is an inherently multidisciplinary enterprise’ (Donnelly, 2013, p. 2;

Bendel, Bielefeldt, Frewer & Pirner, 2016). It is therefore only natural that HRE is an important endeavour in a variety of educational fields of activity, one which cannot be delegated to one single discipline in a monopolistic fashion but must, on the contrary, 'redefine the basic orientation of the educational system' (Krappmann, 2016, p. 145).

When we look at the players involved, this multidisciplinary character also stands out. We see this in the Plan of Action for the United Nations (UN) Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), which highlights the particular importance of various professions: police and law enforcement officials; the military and members of UN peace-keeping missions; medical personnel; jurists; teachers; development workers; scientists; media workers; and parliamentarians. Interestingly, there is no mention of theologians or other actors in the field of religion (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights [OHCHR], n.d.). As a prominent example from the German-speaking context, Lenhart classifies HRE primarily as international and intercultural comparative education and, in a broader sense, refers to a number of other fields: law, political science, economics, philosophy, sociology, psychology, history, and cultural anthropology or ethnology. Again, both theology and religious studies are missing from the list (Lenhart, 2006, p. 235). This leads us to two pragmatic questions. How can we teach and understand human rights in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary fashion (Mihr, 2016, p. 106; Klein, 2018)? And where and how do theology and religious studies relate to this question?

HRE clearly requires ties with many professional disciplines and school subjects if it is to present a basic challenge to educational theory. Bearing this in mind, we can find numerous research projects involving countless educational approaches and many different teaching materials on various subjects. The didactics of history, for instance, naturally tend to focus on the historic development of human rights, while the didactics of philosophy address philosophical patterns of justification and the didactics of politics concentrate on the appropriate tools of enforcement, etc. Special school events such as transdisciplinary project days on human rights may well embrace the different perspectives in the short term, but they do not fundamentally alter the overall context outlined above, and we are left with an 'unproductive tension'. HRE clearly appears to be an inter-disciplinary topic yet, at the same time, this very fact leads to the unrelated and parallel existence of monodisciplinary research and didactic concepts in various settings.

Inter-disciplinary connections and collaborations are made even more difficult because the core meaning of human rights remains ambiguous. A great variety of disciplines and actors regularly invoke human rights, but due to differences between language systems and perspectives this often leads to divergent appraisals and conclusions. As a consequence, the terminology and content of human rights and of HRE is discussed from various—and

sometimes even contradictory—perspectives at different levels (Suhner, 2021, pp. 338-339).

This means that we do not only put at risk the potentials inherent in inter-disciplinary knowledge transfer and collaboration, but also the possibilities for self-reflection and accountability and, generally speaking, the targeted and continued development of HRE. Not least because of this, HRE is less capable of dealing with current complex human rights challenges than it could and should be.

If we do aim for targeted connections and interdisciplinary collaboration, each HRE reference discipline (e.g., history education, citizenship education, religious education) primarily needs to reflect on its very own potential for HRE. This self-reflection on how and to what extent individual disciplines and educational concepts may contribute to HRE can only be communicated on the basis of common categories. These categories must be both differentiated and abstract, and applicable to different didactics.

### **The tasks of public religious education: self-limitation, self-articulation, self-transcendence**

The question of what particular contribution a subject didactics may offer to HRE is particularly challenging for public religious education, which has a great potential for HRE. However, at the same time there are specific didactic issues related to civil rights and liberties (Richardson 2015; Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE] & Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [ODIHR], 2007). This challenge is even more pronounced in the light of current debates on different profiles of public religious education and their specific contribution to general education: ‘Of all the subjects in the school curriculum, religion is surely the most contested’ (Jackson, 2018, p. vii). This brings us to the second societal departure point of this article: the current—and in many countries virulent—debate on the role of religion in the public realm of democratic nations. And this leads us to the debate on the relevance of religious education in public schools (Berglund, Shanneik & Bocking 2016; Davis & Miroshnikova, 2017; Jackson, 2018; Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, & Willaime, 2007; Rothgangel, Jäggle, & Schlag, 2013).

Against the backdrop of an increasingly interconnected world and the rise in religious diversity, religion occupies a prominent place in the public sphere. Today, no state, no company, no educational institution can think of tackling problems related to migration, international relations, intercultural cooperation—to name just a few—without taking religion into account (cf. Haynes, 2021). This is one of the key reasons why the connection between religion, the public sphere and education has become increasingly complex in recent years. There clearly is a need to work on ways of developing appropriate, plural public religious education: ‘Children need to be given the tools to understand the role of religion in their

society and in the world, but they must be protected from indoctrination by their teachers or school officials' (Evans, 2008, p. 449). The task is not only to foster knowledge about religions, but also to foster the abilities of students to 'recognize, understand, and appreciate the perspectives and world views of others', as well as to 'communicate ideas effectively with diverse audiences by engaging in open, appropriate, and effective interactions across cultures' (OECD & Asia Society, 2018, p. 5).

Therefore, the question is not so much if, but rather how public schools in Europe (and, indeed, in liberal democracies in general) should introduce religion into the classroom.

This article seeks to shed light on this debate, by focussing on the situation in Switzerland, where recent developments may be deemed paradigmatic for developments in Europe. In Switzerland, the basic premises and general orientation of public religious education have been revisited and developed in recent years. The framework for this evolution in the German-speaking part of the country is 'Curriculum 21', the product of a largely secular educational policy (Bietenhard, Helbling, & Schmid, 2015). Hence, religion, together with other related disciplines, is part of a subject called 'Ethics, religions, community' (*ERG*). This subject provides a distinct perspective among courses dedicated to natural and social sciences and the humanities (Helbling, 2015). In *ERG*, religion is understood as publicly relevant. This approach is further accentuated 'by the fact, that contrary to other models of religious competence, it does not intend to foster personal religiosity' (Helbling, & Kilchsperger, 2013, p. 58). In *ERG*, religion is routinely included and implemented in the Swiss educational context for the first time. This has a number of consequences: an apparent acceptance of the public importance of religion; the need to consider the public didactics of religion; and a need for the basic and continued training of teachers of religion (the religious-ideological heterogeneity of *ERG* teachers has rapidly increased due to the plural ideological orientation of *ERG*). As a crucial consequence, affective, performative, instrumental approaches must be carefully applied in the classroom. In terms of religious freedom, cognitive and religious studies approaches are considered 'safest'. In this framework, a number of important questions on public religious education remain unanswered: the question of trusteeship and responsibility in contributing and creating didactic materials; the question of teacher training; the question of concrete didactic possibilities and limitations; and the question of reference disciplines for public religious education.

These very questions now arise within the framework of a secular policy towards public religious education. There is a comparable situation in many countries, related to various fields: academic theology(s), religious studies, theories of religious education, educational policy-making. This is not only a matter of justifying the contribution of public religious education to public education as a whole, nor merely a question of financial and substantial

responsibility. It also involves the question of successful communication between the various stakeholders of public religious education. In Switzerland, a rather small country, these dynamics can be observed as if in a laboratory setting. For theologians and theological faculties in the rest of the world, the following facts may also be of particular interest.

In Switzerland, the debate on the didactics of religion takes on a slightly different form than in other German-speaking countries like Austria or Germany. Here, the discipline of religious studies plays a significant role in shaping the debate of public RE. Theology tends to be seen as primarily responsible for denominational RE and is marginalised in the public RE discourse. This is why, in recent times and in Switzerland especially, the task and self-understanding of theology with regard to public RE requires a fundamental self-reflection and self-positioning (Suhner, 2021, pp. 185-221 and pp. 260-268).

### **Aspects of public religious education: self-limitation, self-articulation, self-transcendence**

To communicate and substantiate the public relevance of the (partial) subject discipline of religion, we shall use the concept and term ‘Public religious education’, in keeping with the notion of ‘Public theology’ (Pirner, Lähnemann, Hausmann, & Schwarz, 2018, 2019; Smit, 2013). The focus on the public aspect of religious education leads to different conditions and provisions for public religious education. This calls for ‘a change in the line of thought of religious education: it no longer develops its theological and educational arguments primarily in the interest of the reference religions, but in light of their plausibility for the public and its constituent members’ (Schröder, 2013, p. 130). The main criteria for public religious education can be simplified to include the following three aspects (Pirner, 2018; Suhner, 2021, pp. 168-183).

**Self-limitation:** Any public religious education must accept the limitations of its own sphere of influence. In principle, it must affirm religious and ideological plurality—though not without completely foregoing its critical relationship with this. In other words, public religious education must evolve within the framework of human rights, upholding the principles of equality, liberty, rationality, and universality. The task of public religious education is not least demanded by human rights and the other side of the coin—human duties (Interaction Council, 1997, Art. 15). This holds true for the theoretical debate, as well as for the practice of teaching and corresponding educational contents, didactic concepts, and methods.

**Self-articulation:** To be public is to communicate (Schröder, 2013, p. 128; Suhner, 2021, pp. 32-52). This second aspect refers to the necessity of open dialogue and critical confrontation with different religious as well as non-religious language systems. It is a matter of opening up to criticism and reacting in a thoughtful manner. This brings the challenge that any evaluation

of or reflection on our own or another religion or ideology must never be solely based on our own logic. We must, on the contrary, confront other publicly relevant ideologies of educational theory, while referring to a third point of reference we hold in common (Suhner, 2021). Here too the semantics, pragmatics, and hermeneutics of human rights—a ‘common language of humanity’, in the words of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (UN, 1998)—are obvious (Roux, 2010). Hence, public religious education can neither be conceived formally (corresponding to the first aspect) nor substantively and therefore linguistically without its human rights dimension.

Self-transcendence: Lastly, public religious education must contribute to the debate on education itself, adding a specific perspective in a productive yet critical, comforting, cautionary, transformative and hopeful way. In short, it must bring to the fore its specific contribution to the common good. Again, this can be formulated and exemplified with reference to human rights (education) (Jäger & Lohmann, 2019).

### **Two interrelated questions**

All things considered, the debate between public religious education and HRE gives the clear possibility of expressing and legitimising religious education in all its public relevance in a unique way. Indeed, thanks to its wide semantic rootedness in philosophical, educational, and theological traditions, HRE may serve as a focal point for public religious education, thus becoming the basis and *tertium comparationis* (‘the third [part] of a comparison’ which is the quality that two things which are being compared have in common) for public religious education and related issues. This does not automatically imply instrumentalisation or functionalisation; on the contrary, religious education can and must be legitimised in the secular and plural public sphere only within the framework of human rights. This is even more essential, as human rights violations are often committed in the name of religion (Bielefeldt, 2017).

There is however a challenge: the fact that public religious education can contribute to HRE is hardly questioned in (educational) policy. But, there has been little study of the way in which this might be done, or with which model of public religious education this might be achieved, even though this could be of significant interest to educational policy and to stakeholders in the field of HRE and public religious education. It is thus a matter of illustrating that public religious education evolves within the framework established by human rights; how it structurally and implicitly promotes human rights; and to what extent it can contribute to HRE. Once again, it is clear that such a differentiated frame of reference for HRE calls for concrete and specific categorisation.

## **A ‘matrix of human rights awareness’: human rights education and religious education - connecting lines**

The majority of public debates and frequently quoted HRE publications cite religious elements and ways of thinking as influencing factors, whilst only mentioning potential links between religious education and HRE in passing, if at all.

Though the UN World Programme for Human Rights Education (United Nations Economic, Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 2006) rates religion as a potential educational content, religious education—let alone its potential for HRE—is not referred to at all. The potential relevance of religious education for HRE does not appear in fundamental HRE works in English-speaking and German-speaking contexts either (Lenhart, 2006; Fritzsche, 2009; Fritzsche, Kirchschräger, & Kirchschräger, 2017, pp. 92,123-126, 141). This lacking awareness of correspondences between HRE and RE should not be judged as factually wrong, but it is insufficient in view of understanding the links between religion, ethics and the public sphere:

- With regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), there are many ‘tasks and challenges that now, as then, are posed by the interpretation and realization of human rights in the diverse cultures, social structures, conflict situations and topic areas’ (Pirner, Lähnemann, & Bielefeldt, 2016, p. 3).
- At the level of politics and education policy, numerous official documents do refer to the contribution of religious education to HRE. The OSCE, for instance, has been leading fundamental discussions on the relevance of public religious education from the 1970s onwards. The ‘Toledo Guiding Principles’ explicitly call for the integration of religious education in democracy education and HRE (OSCE & ODIHR, 2007; Jackson, 2010; Richardson, 2015). Comparable recommendations can also be seen on the part of the Council of Europe, such as: ‘Recommendation on religious tolerance’ (1993), ‘Religion and democracy’ (1999), ‘Education and religion’ (2005), and ‘State, religion, secularity and human rights’ (2007) (Schreiner, 2016; Jackson, 2010).
- Central teaching material for HRE: The extended edition of ‘Compass’—one of the most prominent international manuals for people involved in HRE—explicitly mentions the need to offer more space to the subject of religion, referring to the possibilities of religious education (Council of Europe, 2020).
- The necessity to connect religious education with HRE is also reflected in empirical findings on the relationship between religion and human rights. These point out that though there are not direct correlations between formal religious affiliation and individual value orientation, personal religious convictions may turn out to be quite significant (Ziebertz & Sterkens, 2017; Arweck, 2018; Roux & Becker, 2019).
- Last, but not least, the distinction between a supposedly neutral HRE and religious education is problematic insofar as it promotes the view that religious education must

maintain a low profile with regard to issues pertaining to the public realm, civil society or politics. This must be questioned from a theological point of view. The perception of human rights topics and the promotion of human rights awareness in public religious education thus align with the more recent debate in religious education, which focusses on its political dimension (Skeie, 2006; Grümme, 2009; Engebretson, de Souza, Durka & Gearon, 2010).

- At the level of teaching practice, the issue of human rights in religious education has received special attention in the German-speaking context for many years and, more often than not, individual human rights topics are given special consideration (Altmeyer et al., 2017; Suhner, 2021, pp. 463-471).

The ‘comprehensive issue of what HRE means for religious education and teaching and vice versa, must be put in a larger context’ (Schweitzer, 2017, p. 122). We must embark on a fundamental examination linked to didactic clarification and figure out ‘in which way religious teaching may deal with human rights issues in practice, while avoiding simply repeating and stating seemingly evident propositions such as the idea that all human beings are endowed with the same rights. What exactly does HRE worthy of its name look like? And what could be the essence of a specific approach in religious teaching?’ (Altmeyer et al., 2017, p. 10).

From the perspective of public religious education, this starting position can be likened to an invitation to face these fundamental questions for oneself, but it can also be a basis for discussion with other HRE-related disciplines. In doing so, one must be cautious about making connections too quickly; neither a hurried linking nor an artificial separation is appropriate. What is appropriate is a differentiated view, rather than instrumentalisations or one-way deductions. Moreover, this mutual reference is only viable since HRE is not a supplement to religious education. An intrinsic connection between religious education and HRE emerges from theological and religious studies approaches to religious education (Suhner, 2021, pp. 429-478).

### **A matrix for assessing the mutual impact of human rights education and religious education**

To make HRE tangible to related reference fields, its manifold aspects must be systematically presented. For this purpose, I would like to introduce the term ‘human rights awareness’ —by this I mean the comprehensive awareness of individual and public societal reality in its human rights-related dimensions. The matrix is based on fundamental differentiations in HRE. These can be found in numerous international and national documents (for details see Suhner, 2021, pp. 411-416), and can be considered in a number of ways:

- In terms of the tri-dimensionality inherent in almost any values education, namely the

cognitive, affective and instrumental dimensions (Flowers, 2004);

- With regard to their contents, which can be divided into legal, political and moral aspects;
- With respect to their explicit and implicit educational possibilities;
- With respect to the understanding that any educational system has to remain within the framework of a legal space which is defined by the boundaries of human rights. In this sense, human rights-related education must be understood in the dual sense of education in accordance with human rights and HRE (Lenhart, 2006, p. 171).

Through a systematic and multi-perspective analysis these different dimensions have been concretised, assigned to respective education policies, and differentiated according to the type of education involved.

The reason for adopting this systematic (rather than empirical) approach is that the question of whether and to what extent religious education can contribute to HRE cannot only be related to the concrete school context—what is actually taught in school is only a momentary ‘snapshot’. Another inductive approach (e.g., a systematic review of curricula and curricular materials) does not allow for a differentiated understanding of educational policy and theological, religious education and HRE debates, let alone correlate these with each other. But it is precisely these theoretical and justificatory foundations that are significant for educational policy actors and religious education. The guiding interest of the research was therefore to explore the potential of public religious education for HRE. This must be discussed on the basis of systematic investigation (Suhner, 2021, p. 8).

These differentiations are simply explained in the following diagram (table 1). On the x-axis, we find the fundamental differentiation between the implicit and explicit possibilities of HRE. The y-axis presents the three-way split resulting from the different aspects of human rights (legal, political, moral), as well as the differentiation of HRE into cognitive, affective and instrumental dimensions, the two latter aspects not being shown in relation to each other.

The disadvantage of this systematisation, as with any systematisation, is that it simplifies the various aspects of HRE. A further disadvantage, which in my opinion can be ignored here, is that in this two-dimensional systematisation the linkages between cognitive-affective-instrumental on the one hand and legal-political-moral on the other cannot be shown. These linkages exist in every possible combination, and concrete examples will be found in teaching practice (Suhner, 2021, p. 414).

**Table 1:** Matrix for human rights awareness

Matrix for Human Rights Awareness		material aspects of HRE			
		implicit	explicit		
			eclectic inclusions	selective references	didactic-conceptual referencing
dimensions of human rights	legal aspects				
	political aspects				
	moral aspects				
approaches of values education	cognitive approach				
	affective approach				
	instrumental approach				

Of course, the formal aspect of HRE must firstly be answered positively—the didactic challenge consists in actively advancing HRE in a way which respects the very framework of human rights, thus keeping educational processes in formal accordance with human rights.

Applying this matrix means shifting through curricula or through school subject materials, as well as through other HRE documents or projects. Hence, one realises that the material aspects of HRE may be further divided into eclectic inclusions, selective references, and conceptual-didactic referencing (cf. Suhner, 2021, pp. 453-478):

- eclectic inclusions: These are ‘inclusions’ rather than references. They result from the simple naming of human rights topics in different disciplines, as well as in corresponding teaching materials.
- selective references: These are also frequently seen. They are more detailed references, rather than just passing mentions of topics. They often intend to protect human rights and HRE from one-dimensionality, and thus productively question their usual perceptions and generate constructive impulses. Such references can mostly be assigned one of three key concepts: ‘human dignity’; ‘freedom’ or ‘equality’. They may also refer to human rights history.
- conceptual-didactic referencing: The purpose of this aspect is to appreciate the insights and potentials of HRE in general, and to make them categorically and hermeneutically relevant. This leads to more comprehensive didactic-conceptual considerations and enables concrete pedagogical orientations (e.g., culture of remembrance or compassion).

### **Analysis and insights - an example**

We now come to the point where the discussion between public religious education and HRE may commence. We propose the following two approaches: a) Impulses from HRE for religious education; b) Impulses from religious education for the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary debate on HRE.

#### ***Impulses from human rights education for public religious education***

Within this matrix for human rights awareness, approaches to public religious education as well as concrete teaching materials have a differentiated framework, and this allows them to better define themselves against the horizon of the public realm. The different categories of human rights awareness are heuristic in nature and serve to coordinate and collect the concrete and practical possibilities religious education may offer HRE. The matrix goes beyond individual practices and provides a shared framework for the hermeneutics of religious education.

As such, the matrix primarily serves the level of theory in religious education, which, in turn, reflects on the practical level. Here—at the macro-level—human rights awareness shows a potential for analysis, communication, and further development in specialist debates on religious education, in educational policy discussions on public religious education, and in didactic debates with other human rights-related reference disciplines. Naturally, it is not in the interest of public religious education to explicitly promote human rights awareness in all respects. But it is certainly in the interest of public religious education and every other discipline close to human rights to be aware of what the respective potential may be and to be able to communicate it in a differentiated manner. Furthermore, the matrix of human rights awareness could be useful on the meso-level—the level of the teaching materials, the selection of the respective contents, etc.—as a didactic visualisation of religion-related discourses. Finally, on the micro-level, human rights awareness could serve as a guide for students in terms of which category of HRE their own (learning) perspective supports (Suhner, 2021, pp. 497-498). The matrix may now be applied to the German-speaking context. Here we may discern implicit and explicit fields of reference in different concepts of religious education. In terms of concrete content, we distinguish the moral, political, and legal foci. And finally, in terms of content, didactics and methodology, we distinguish the cognitive, affective, and instrumental dimensions.

Below we find the matrix illustrating the Swiss school subject ERG and relevant material, either curriculum competences or teaching suggestions, from the official ERG website (Association ethics-religions-community (n.d) (Table 2). The different approaches are left blank here: the framework for ERG allows (at least) the cognitive and the affective approach; this distinction must result from concrete examples in teaching practice.

**Table 2:** Matrix for human rights awareness, applied to the Swiss school subject ERG

Matrix for Human Rights Awareness with examples from the Swiss school subject ERG		material aspects of HRE			
		implicit	explicit		
			eclectic inclusions	selective references	didactic-conceptual referencing
dimensions of human rights	legal aspects		competence <i>ERG.5.2.b</i> ( <a href="https://v-ef.lehrplan.ch/index.php?code=a 6 5 5 0 2">https://v-ef.lehrplan.ch/index.php?code=a 6 5 5 0 2</a> )	'Das Mädchen aus dem Swat-Tal', <a href="http://www.erg.ch">www.erg.ch</a>	
	political aspects		competence <i>ERG.2.2.b/d</i> ( <a href="https://v-ef.lehrplan.ch/index.php?code=a 6 5 2 0 2">https://v-ef.lehrplan.ch/index.php?code=a 6 5 2 0 2</a> )	freedom of religion: discussion on the vote on the veiling ban, March 2021	
	moral aspects	addressing issues relevant to human rights such as gender equality: '36 Beiträge zur Genderkompetenz', <a href="http://www.erg.ch">www.erg.ch</a>	competence <i>ERG.2.1.b</i> ( <a href="https://v-ef.lehrplan.ch/index.php?code=a 6 5 2 0 1">https://v-ef.lehrplan.ch/index.php?code=a 6 5 2 0 1</a> )	freedom of religion: discussion of wearing a hijab at school: 'Hijab in der Schule?', <a href="http://www.erg.ch">www.erg.ch</a>	implementing a culture of remembrance or compassion, within the competence <i>ERG.1.1</i>
approaches of values education	cognitive approach	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )
	affective approach	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )	(possible in <i>ERG</i> )
	instrumental approach				

Overall, this matrix allows us to support the leading thesis in a differentiated way, illustrating the manner in which public religious education may specifically support HRE. (Due to space limitations, the entire range of approaches to the didactics of religion cannot be shown in this reference framework. However, the matrix now exists and the contents or potentials of specific projects, teaching materials, and didactic approaches may be entered. Thus, a kind of heat map is generated, which shows specific HRE potentials, makes them comparable, and clarifies gaps, etc.)

From such detailed analysis, consequences may be found that are relevant to questions of religious didactics in public schools. These concern which categories of this matrix there can and should be found room for, and the profile of public religious education. If we place religious teaching materials and public religious education approaches from the German-speaking area in the matrix, we see a clear focus on affective approaches and moral aspects (this includes the point about 'selective references' explained on page 101) in particular (cf. Suhner, 2021, pp. 453-478). Compared to other public school subjects, religious education holds a specific potential regarding these moral and affective dimensions. Thus, from a HRE

perspective, the moral and affective dimensions should not only be allowed in public religious education but space should be given for their emergence and articulation. The public school must encourage reflection on the existential dimensions and consequences of religious and secular world views. Pedagogically, this calls for a balancing act. The 'cheap way' would be to offer denominational existential education outside of the public school and/or culturally-oriented public religious education in public school. The 'costly way' requires theological, political and pedagogical knowledge and skills from all stakeholders:

Although there is no lack of creativity in the different ways in which scholars have tried to articulate how religion might be studied - hermeneutically, anthropologically, conceptually, and so on – what is easily lost in this 'turn', as already mentioned, is religion itself, that is, the 'lived experience' of religion, of being religious and existing religiously. (Biesta, & Hannam, 2019)

It is precisely the interlinking of HRE and public religious education that shows the added value of permanently striving for this balance.

### ***Impulses from public religious education for human rights education***

Conversely, we may also expose in a differentiated fashion how HRE which is sensitive towards religion not only makes sense, but also seems quite appropriate. There are systematic reasons for this.

For one thing, the moral dimension of human rights is not a given from the start. Omitting the religious aspect from HRE would therefore only be possible if we only gave it scant moral, cultural and political significance. This would accord with the thesis of secularisation. However, such an attitude would mean it would be robbed from the start of the possibility to acknowledge and, possibly, make an indirect contribution to the intrinsic potentials of religion for the realisation of dignity and freedom. Not to mention that this kind of mindset would be contrary to religious freedom. If HRE were to consider itself areligious, this would be a contradiction in terms.

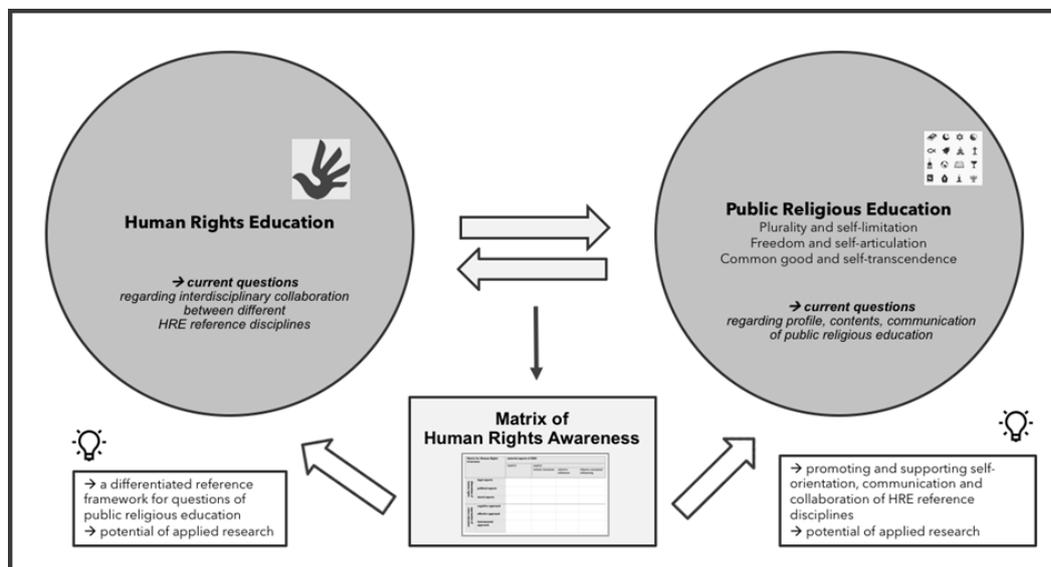
Furthermore, public religious education illustrates the fact that the context of public education is also always the primary public context in which the sense, the traditional references and reasonings of these values are subjected to scrutiny. In this respect, it is not only the motivational impetus for human rights that is strengthened. Also heightened is the confrontation between individual and public value systems and the consequent debate. Public religious education thus specifically clarifies the need for HRE which is aware of different perspectives.

Last but not least, reflecting on the relationship between religious education and HRE reminds us that HRE must also wonder how humans and humanity may manage and want to create a world and an environment which is good and what this might imply—from an absolutely self-critical point of view—for the further development of an education worthy of human beings. In other words, HRE without public religious education is possible, but it is far from complete.

## Conclusion

The relationship between HRE and public religious education is a complex topic, but a necessary one in both HRE and religious education discourses. This article presents a matrix for clarifying categories of HRE. As an example, it can be used to explore the relationship between HRE and public religious education.

**Figure 1:** Visualisation of this article



On the whole, the matrix for human rights awareness may serve, among other possibilities, for the self-orientation and articulation of public religious education and didactics. Moreover, it may allow other disciplines related to HRE to situate themselves, thus encouraging communication and cooperation between them. In this way, the complexity-oriented, interconnected thinking that is necessary can also be more adequately facilitated. Particularly in view of increasing interdisciplinary cooperation and research—e.g., the International Research Network (IRN) on HRE and the World Educational Research Network (WERA) (Osler, Starkey, Stokke & Flatås, 2021)—such basic categories are crucial. They must and can be further developed through interdisciplinary exchange. Not least in the light of increasing digital cooperation and research options as well as ever more numerous digital teaching formats, specific (inter-/transdisciplinary) options arise for applied research. Distinct categories are essential, especially for digital research formats and for collecting and

classifying large amounts of data. The combination of various perspectives bodes well for bottom-up answers to interesting (meta-) theological questions related to both human rights and religion, such as that on the relationship between postcolonial approaches and universal human rights.

This article therefore concludes by arguing for increased interdisciplinarity, both in HRE (research) and in public religious education (research).

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