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How can Research on Teaching and Teaching Religious Education Come Together? Experiences from England

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Abstract: Taking the situation in England as its context, this paper addresses the question of what is already known about making connections between research and teaching from debates as to the feasibility of promoting teachers as researchers. This paper builds on the work of the Teachers as Researchers (TasR) project, which found that RE teachers did not differ significantly from what was reported in the research literature about other teachers. However, for the RE teachers, orientative knowledge played an important role in the process of translating generic research into their practice in RE in the absence of opportunities to engage directly with subject specific research. One of the priorities for future research identified by the TasR participants was finding examples of ‘best processes’ for developing sustainable partnerships. To this end, a Delphi Seminar was organised and the implications of the outcomes, in particular a focus on subject didactics, for identifying viable models for bridging the gap between teaching and research are explored here. Although more work needs to be done on the specifics of aligning the focus of inquiry in curriculum development and subject didactics with research methods, there were strong indications of how the examples given of existing experience could be built upon.

Zusammenfassung: Ausgehend von der Situation in England geht dieser Beitrag der Frage nach, was bereits über die Herstellung von Verbindungen zwischen Forschung und Unterricht bekannt ist, ausgehend von Debatten über den Wunsch, dass Unterrichtende zur Forschenden werden sollen. Dieser Beitrag stützt sich auf die Arbeit des Projekts Teachers as Researchers (TasR), in dem festgestellt wurde, dass sich Religionslehrkräfte nicht wesentlich von dem unterscheiden, was in der Forschungsliteratur über andere Lehrkräfte berichtet wird. Für die Religionslehrer:innen spielte jedoch das Orientierungswissen eine wichtige Rolle bei der Umsetzung generischer Forschungsergebnisse in ihre Praxis im Religionsunterricht, auch angesichts des Fehlens von Gelegenheiten, sich direkt mit fachdidaktischer Forschung zu befassen. Eine der von den TasR-Teilnehmer:innen

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genannten Prioritäten für die künftige Forschung war die Suche nach Beispielen für „beste Vorgehensweisen“ zur Entwicklung nachhaltiger Partnerschaften. Zu diesem Zweck wurde ein Delphi-Seminar organisiert, und die Implikationen der Ergebnisse, insbesondere der Fokus auf die Fachdidaktik, auf die Ermittlung praktikabler Modelle zur Überbrückung der Kluft zwischen Unterricht und Forschung werden hier untersucht. Obwohl noch mehr getan werden muss, um den Schwerpunkt bei der Untersuchung von Lehrplanentwicklung und Fachdidaktik mit den Forschungsmethoden in Einklang zu bringen, gab es deutliche Hinweise darauf, wie auf den verfügbaren Beispielen und Erfahrungen aufgebaut werden könnte.

Keywords: subject didactics; teacher research partnerships; Delphi process.

Schlagworte: Fachdidaktik; forschungsbezogene Partnerschaft mit Lehrkräften; Delphi-Verfahren

Every Teacher must [...] by regarding every imperfection in the pupil's comprehension, not as a defect of the pupil, but as a defect of his [sic] own instruction, endeavour to develop in himself the ability of discovering new methods.

Tolstoy

The problem of establishing secure grounds for the relevance of empirical research in the practice of teaching is neither a recent phenomenon nor confined to Religious Education (RE). Taking the situation in England as its context, this paper addresses the question of what is already known about making connections between research and teaching from debates as to the feasibility of promoting teachers as researchers. Why there is perceived to be a gap between research and practice is considered and the experiences of RE practitioners explored with a view to proposing models that lend themselves to forging links.

1. Making connections between research and teaching: The discussion in England

Tolstoy's exhortation to teachers to discover new methods is mirrored by John Dewey in his advocacy of education founded on collaborative inquiry as fundamental to democracy. In the *Child and the Curriculum*¹ he describes the task of

1 J. Dewey, *The Child and the Curriculum*. Chicago/London (University of Chicago Press) 1902.

the teacher as building a bridge between the learner and the curriculum and in the *School and Society*² he stresses the need to negotiate the dynamic relationship between inculcating knowledge as currently valued by society and laying the foundations for future growth. Making connections between what is to be taught and what is learned is demanding as it requires proficiency in conducting inquiry in two knowledge domains; the psychology of learning and the structure of subject disciplines.³ For Dewey, this otherwise daunting task becomes possible when teaching is understood to be a collective endeavour undertaken in a spirit of experimentation. The biggest obstacle to effecting such a change is the lack of freedom for teachers to exercise professional judgment in determining how education should be conducted.⁴

In England, Lawrence Stenhouse is recognised as one of the foremost proponents of promoting teachers' professionalism by developing their capacity to connect teaching with research⁵ and, as with Dewey, the vehicle for this is curriculum development through a process of "systematic enquiry made public"⁶. However, when there is so often a gap between our ideas, our aspirations and our attempts to operationalise them, this is easier said than done.⁷ Efforts to close the gap need to take into account how two dimensions, education values and education effectiveness, frame the intersection of research with teaching creating tensions between intrinsically important fundamental values and measurement of outcomes⁸. Currently, the coming together of educational effectiveness with evidence-based practice and the impetus to identify "what works" in education has forged broad agreement in principle on making connections between research and teaching whilst leaving what this might actually entail open to dispute. One of the impediments to closing the gap is the lack of consensus on what constitutes knowledge in teaching; what do teachers need to know and what is the best way to acquire such knowledge? Attempts have been made to distinguish different forms, such as knowledge for, in

2 J. Dewey, J., *The School and Society*. Being three lectures by John Dewey. Chicago/London (University of Chicago Press) 1907.

3 C. Bereiter, C., *Education in a Knowledge Society*. In B. Smith (Ed.), *Liberal Education in a Knowledge Society*. Chicago (Open Court) 2002, 11–34.

4 J. Dewey, J. *Democracy in Education*. In: *The Elementary School Teacher* 4(4) (1903), 193–204.

5 L. Stenhouse, *An introduction to curriculum research and development*. London (Heinemann Educational) 1975.

6 L. Stenhouse, L., *What counts as research?* In: *British Journal of Educational Studies* 29(2) (1981), 103–114, 104.

7 Stenhouse, *An introduction*, 2 f.

8 D. Wyse/V. Baumfield/N., Mockler/M. Reardon (Eds.), *The BERA-SAGE Handbook of Research-Informed Education Practice and Policy*. London (Sage) 2025.

and of practice⁹ or the elements of professional knowledge¹⁰, but reaching agreement depends on defining what the work of a teacher can and should entail and here there is still a wide divergence of opinion.¹¹

Another unresolved debate is the extent to which teachers are consumers or producers of research. In England three approaches to teacher engagement with research have been identified: evidence-based practice, where teachers are consumers of externally generated research; evidence-informed practice, where externally produced research is corroborated by school level data; research-informed practice, where teachers engage both *in* and *with* research.¹² Finally, what counts as research, whoever is producing it, is constrained by interpretations of the nature of evidence. For example, the potential to create conditions for dialogue between teachers, researchers and the wider public as an informed deliberative community is diminished when evidence is construed as simply performance data and is coupled with a reluctance to see the importance of debating the purpose of education.¹³

Over fifty years ago a survey found that teachers do not doubt the value of research for teaching but have concerns about their capacity to understand research processes and lack of access to the reporting of outcomes in academic publications¹⁴. Stenhouse demonstrated how focusing on curriculum development as a process of collaborative inquiry can allay such concerns by opening up different ways of thinking about research; not as something external to teaching but as a fundamental aspect of teachers' professionalism. However, progress towards fulfilling his legacy in England is slow and whilst teachers and researchers are adept

9 M. Cochran-Smith, S. L. Lytle, *Inside/outside: teacher research and knowledge*. New York/London (Teachers College Press) 1993; M. Cochran-Smith/S. L. Lytle, Relationships of knowledge and practice: teacher learning in communities. In: *Review of Research in Education* 24(1) (1999), 249–305.

10 J. Baumert/M. Kunter, The COACTIV model of teachers' professional competence. In: W. Blum/U. Klusmann/S. Krauss/M. Neubrand (Eds.), *Cognitive Activation in the Mathematics Classroom and Professional Competence of Teachers*. New York (Springer) 2013, 25–48.

11 K. Zeichner, K./K. A. Payne/K. Brayko, Democratizing Teacher Education. In: *Journal of Teacher Education* 66(2) (2015), 122–135.

12 D. Godfrey, What is the proposed role of research evidence in England's 'self-improving'school system? In: *Oxford Review of Education* 43(4) (2017), 433–446.

13 G. Biesta, Good education in an age of measurement: On the need to reconnect with the question of purpose in education. In: *Educational Assessment, Evaluation and Accountability* (formerly: *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*) 21 (2009), 33–46.

14 B. Cane/C. Schroeder, *The Teacher and Research*. Slough (NFER) 1970.

at finding the “gaps in the hedges”¹⁵ to create hospitable spaces for dialogue¹⁶, for the promise of teachers as researchers to be realised sustainable arenas for communication and action are needed. Research on the characteristics of professional learning across different professions indicates that the intersection of people, place and time within institutions sets the learning climate by determining the availability of social support from close colleagues¹⁷. Attempting to close the gap between research and teaching challenges established boundaries and so to influence what is thought to be possible we need to understand how the policy context, at both a national and local level, and the phase of education configure roles such as “teacher” and “researcher” and the scope for collaboration.

2. The Case for Religious Education

In the four nations of the UK there is a divergence in approaches to the school curriculum with England increasingly an outlier in its focus on a centrally mandated product oriented National Curriculum as opposed to the trend in the devolved jurisdictions of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland towards process-driven approaches more aligned to Stenhouse’s model of curriculum development. The recent Government Schools White Paper “Opportunity for All”¹⁸ has shifted the focus even further away from teachers’ agency as curriculum makers towards “outsourcing” the curriculum to make it teacher proof. RE, unlike other subjects in the National Curriculum, is locally determined but this does not necessarily give immunity from the influence of the wider trend in curriculum policy in England. Examination of the provision for Religious and Moral Education across the UK revealed differences in the degree of critical professional reflection on the curriculum and the dimensions of their role beyond the classroom expected of teachers¹⁹. In the devolved jurisdictions curriculum was predicated on a holistic perspective

15 M. Waters/T. Brighouse, *About our schools: Improving on previous best*. Carmarthen (Crown House Publishing) 2022.

16 V. Baumfield/A. Behel/S. Brown/K. Walshe, *Teachers as Researchers: RE teachers’ engagement with research*. Exeter (Exeter University) 2021.

17 V. Baumfield/A. Bethel/A., Doweck/K. Walshe/K. Mattick, K., *Characteristics of research into professional learning across professions: A mapping review*. In: *Review of Education* 11(2) (2023), 33–95.

18 DfE, *Opportunity for All: strong schools with great teachers for your child*. London (HMSO) 2022.

19 V. Baumfield, *Curriculum Making in the (Dis) United Kingdom: The Impact of Global Trends, National Contexts and Local Circumstances on Religious and Moral Education in Schools*. In: B. Schröder/M. Emmelmann (Hg.), *Religions- und Ethikunterricht zwischen Konkurrenz und Kooperation*. Göttingen (V&R), 2018, 317–332. Moral Education is part of the National Curriculum in England.

on the purpose of education, teacher agency was also promoted and close association with universities in the provision of teachers' initial and continuing professional learning maintained²⁰. Recently, a review of research in RE to establish an evidence-based "conception of subject quality" was sponsored by the government agency responsible for school inspections in England²¹. The review identifies four areas of knowledge to be incorporated into the professional development of teachers of RE: policy; subject content knowledge; pedagogical content knowledge; foundations, aims and purposes. Emphasis is placed on the fourth aspect (which bears a close resemblance to the definition of "orientative" knowledge as how teachers decide what is worth teaching and how and why it should be taught²²) to address the need for teachers to engage with educational theory and research in order to consider the implications for their practice given the lack of consensus about the place of RE in the school curriculum. It is beyond the scope of this paper to interrogate the grounds for establishing these as areas of knowledge or to consider how they relate to existing forms of classification and their application to RE. What is of interest here is the attempt to redress the absence of any consideration of the relationship between research and teaching in previous government policy. Whilst the separation of knowledge of the curriculum and pedagogy from thinking about the purpose of education may seem artificial, there is some scope here for bridging the gap between research and teaching through curriculum making.

3. Results from the TasR Delphi Seminar

Previously, the outcomes of a project to investigate RE teachers' engagement with research (the TasR project²³) have been discussed in terms of whether their case differed from the evidence from existing research on teacher engagement with research and the extent to which it supported the importance of orientative knowledge,²⁴. In summary, the TasR project found that RE teachers did not differ signif-

20 V. Baumfield, Making a difference in the Religious Education classroom: integrating theory and practice in teachers' professional learning. In: *British Journal of Religious Education* 38(2) (2016), 141–151. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01416200.2016.1139889>

21 Ofsted., Religious Education. (2021), <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/research-review-series>

22 R. Freathy/S. G. Parker/F. Schweitzer/H. Simojoki, Conceptualising and researching the professionalisation of Religious Education teachers: historical and international perspectives. In: *British Journal of Religious Education* 38(2) (2016), 114–129.

23 <https://www.cstg.org.uk/grants/projects/case-studies/university-of-exeter/>

24 V. Baumfield/K. Walshe, Developing Religious Education teachers' orientative knowledge. In:

icantly from what was reported in the research literature about other teachers. They also value research that offers insight into students' learning and is shown to be applicable in practice. RE teachers also identify differences in the professional cultures of teachers and researchers and agree that these are not insurmountable provided attention is paid to their shared experience and mutual interests as participants in an interconnected eco-system of education²⁵. For the RE teachers interviewed, orientative knowledge played an important role in the process of translating generic research into their practice in RE in the absence of opportunities to engage directly with subject specific research. Within their schools, opportunities for engaging with research tended to be directed by government mandated generic training requirements. Exceptions to this were a teacher participating in a university initiated research project and another who was involved in developing a new Locally Agreed Syllabus for RE²⁶. Working from home during Covid19 was, for some, an opportunity to focus on research to develop more specific subject oriented knowledge. This paper focuses on the insights into the development of a model to forge links between research on teaching and teaching RE from the outcomes of a Delphi Seminar that followed the publication of the TasR project report²⁷.

The TasR Delphi Seminar invited delegates from a range of stakeholder groups (primary (5–11) and secondary (11–18) school RE teachers, university based RE teacher educators, Theology and Religious Studies faculty, local education authority RE advisers and a research funder) to form a deliberative community of experts to consider the recommendations in the project's final report. The Delphi method was devised by the Rand Corporation for the US Department of Defence to facilitate the input of a panel of experts on controversial issues by posing questions and collating the anonymous responses to be fed back for further refinement. The TasR Delphi Seminar built on the modified version of this process used by researchers tracking the trajectory of the enactment of RE in secondary schools in the Does RE Work? Project²⁸. The process in the "Does RE Work?" project was described as

F. Schweitzer/R. Freathy/S. G. Parker/H. Simojoki (Eds.), *Improving Religious Education Through Teacher Training: Experiences and Insights From European Countries*. Münster/New York (Waxmann) 2023, 185–200.

25 B. Goldacre, *Building Evidence in Education*. In: Researchgate (March) (2013). <https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.5101.8967>

26 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/re-and-collective-worship-in-academies-and-free-schools>

27 This account is based on the report of the outcomes of the Delphi Seminar prepared by the author for the Culham St Gabriel's Trust.

28 V. M. Baumfield/J. C. Conroy/R. A. Davis/D. C. Lundie, *The Delphi method: Gathering expert opinion in religious education*. In: *British Journal of Religious Education* 34(1) (2012), 5–19.

an episodic Delphi encounter²⁹ in which the loss of anonymity when experts met together, a departure from the “classic” Delphi process, led to the possibility that prior experience of working together influenced the discussion by affecting their willingness to take or switch position. Further modifications were made to the process for the TasR Delphi Seminar to mitigate the possible effect of this loss of anonymity. Prior to attending the seminar, delegates were invited to send a short statement (500 words) of their views on the issue of RE teachers’ engagement with research in response to the TasR report’s recommendations along with three questions that they would like to discuss. The statements gave participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences of engaging in and with research in RE and to set the agenda for the deliberative community by proposing questions. (In order to encourage frankness in the expression of opinions the statements were not shared between participants and the questions for the discussion were anonymised.) The questions were grouped into three broad areas (understanding research, relationships between researcher and teacher, procedure and process) and shared with all of the participants for discussion in a community of inquiry at the seminar. Introducing the principles of a community of inquiry was an important modification of the Delphi process designed to promote dialogue through the emphasis on the practical, pluralistic, participatory and provisional nature of inquiry as the means to removing doubt and gaining knowledge³⁰. The potential of the community of inquiry as a dialogic approach in education was identified first by John Dewey and developed by Matthew Lipman in his *Philosophy for Children* programme³¹. The pragmatic impetus for reasonableness through the formation of a community for the co-construction of knowledge reflected the aims of the TasR project and was consistent with the Delphi process. Many of the seminar participants were also already familiar with variations of the *Philosophy for Children* programme in use in schools.³²

The importance of engaging in curriculum development was a key theme in the pre-seminar statements of participants from across different professional contexts³³. Participants were able to draw upon specific experiences of collaborative

29 D. S. Scheele, Reality construction as a product of Delphi interaction. In: *Journal of Marketing Research* 18(3) (1975), 35–67.

30 D. H. Brendel, *Healing Psychiatry: Bridging the Science/Humanism Divide*. Cambridge (MIT Press) 2006.

31 A. M. Sharp, What is a ‘Community of Inquiry’? In: *Journal of Moral Education* 16(1) (1987), 37–45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724870160104>

32 For example, <https://www.philosophywithchildren.co.uk/>

33 Seven themes can be identified in the pre-seminar statements: the need for institutional support; the importance of finding spaces and time for community building; participation in curricu-

projects in which partnerships between teachers and researchers had been forged. What such experiences had in common was a focus on a problem of practice, a “felt difficulty”³⁴, that stimulated inquiry and facilitated the sharing of expertise. One of the challenges to realising reciprocity in a bi-directional relationship between research and practice can be seen in the theme of “relevance” in the statements from the teacher participants. Different interpretations of what is deemed to be research, who its intended audiences are, the appropriate channels for dissemination and the conventions to be followed in its presentation can result in people meaning different things when they discuss the feasibility and value of promoting teachers as researchers. The result often is that insufficient regard is given to the possibility of encompassing a spectrum of activity from small scale classroom inquiries to more extensive research projects.³⁵ Balancing the creation of welcoming, hospitable, spaces for collaboration with the role of research in unsettling assumptions and redefining roles, which can involve both positive and negative experiences, was touched upon in the statements. Disruption can be regarded as opening up new possibilities but is also a risk to established norms and ways of working that may not always be welcomed. The experimental nature of research, at whatever scale, can sit uncomfortably with institutional expectations of professionalism. How far the unsettling of the status quo can and should go is linked to confidence and institutional support as well as the question of determining what is relevant to the improvement of practice. During the day, as the deliberations of the community of inquiry progressed, the possibilities shifting attention away from generic research expertise to subject didactics may offer as the stimulus for curriculum making and so a bridge into RE teachers’ engagement both in and with research emerged. The basis of a persuasive case for building on connections with Theology and Religious Studies to deepen teachers’ knowledge of research in the disciplines whilst establishing reciprocity by teachers contributing knowledge of pedagogical research along with experience of working with local communities can be found in the discussion. Revisiting the work of scholars such as Denise Cush on the relationship between Theology, Religious Studies and RE to develop an understanding of the intersection of professional identity and subject expertise and chart pathways to collaborative research partnerships was proposed as a promising place to start³⁶. It was also noted that university-based teacher educators

lum development; relevance; accessibility; confidence; the positive and negative effects of disruption to existing roles and structures.

³⁴ Baumfield, *Making a difference*.

³⁵ C. Winch/A. Oancea/J. Orchard, The contribution of educational research to teachers’ professional learning: Philosophical understandings. In: *Oxford Review of Education* 41(2) (2015), 202–216.

³⁶ D. Cush, *Big Brother, Little Sister, and the Clerical Uncle: the relationship between Religious*

occupied a space between the academic faculties and school RE classrooms that could be developed provided the precarity of their situation due to current policies in England could be resolved.

The Executive Summary of the TasR project highlighted four key findings: community and hospitality are important for building a sense of belonging and trust; participatory research approaches and a focus on curriculum development can promote agency; access can be improved by raising awareness of what is available and providing the tools (especially time) to engage with research; a positive school culture depends on securing institutional support through closer alignment with leadership development. Four priorities for future research were identified: finding examples of “best processes” for developing sustainable partnerships; comparing conditions in different national contexts; analyse how access to and relevance of research for practitioners is approached in different professions; link evidence of professional learning through research engagement with research on school improvement.

One of the aims of the Delphi Seminar was to garner expert opinion from stakeholders to refine our understanding of these findings and evaluate the priorities: what did we learn? The importance of belonging to a supportive community and extending hospitality to promote partnerships between teachers and researchers was affirmed. The development of the focus on subject didactics included a wider range of professional relationships with academics from disciplines informing teaching and learning in RE enabling the reciprocity of academics as teachers and teachers as *classroom* subject experts to be recognised. The potential of community engagement beyond the school and the university as the means of demonstrating the integration of research and teaching and influence change was also raised. The potential of focusing on subject didactics as the means of integrating teachers and researchers in an area of shared interest and core strengths allayed much of the concern about agency and relevance. Although more work needs to be done on the specifics of aligning the focus of inquiry in curriculum development and subject didactics with research methods, there were strong indications of how the

studies, Religious education and Theology. In: British Journal of Religious Education, 21(3) (1999), 137–146. See also more recent work by Denise Cush on this issue: Developments in Religious Studies: Towards a Dialogue with Religious Education. In: British Journal of Religious Education 36 (2014), 4–17 (with Robinson, C.); Brian Bocking and the Defence of Study of Religions as an Academic Discipline in Universities and Schools. In: Journal of the Irish Society for the Academic Study of Religions Vol. 3 (Festschrift in honour of Professor Brian Bocking) (2016), 27–41 (with Robinson, C.) <https://jisasr.org/volume-3-2016/>; Religion and Worldviews in English schools, Study of Religions, and disciplinary knowledge. In: Journal of the British Association for the Study of Religions 24 (2022), 44–60.

examples given of existing experience could be built upon. In terms of access, the message was to connect rather than create new pathways to research and here again it was focusing on subject didactics that offered the most immediate benefits. Practical examples of what has made a difference for teachers highlighted the benefits of taking a subject leadership approach. University-based researchers also suggested a subject based approach through alliances with disciplines that inform RE as a way forward. Making better use of existing strengths in building community engagement as a means of leveraging institutional support by demonstrating impact was advocated by both teachers and university-based researchers.

In terms of the priorities set out in the conclusion to the TasR report, curriculum development has much to offer in identifying the best processes for future action but with an enhanced relationship between the disciplines, subject knowledge and pedagogy as expressed through the suggestion that we should focus on subject didactics. The different contexts for the initial and continuing professional education of RE teachers in the four devolved nations of the UK is an issue still to be explored. The TasR project involved teachers from England and Wales whilst the perspectives of experts from outside England were under-represented in the Delphi Seminar. Given the increasingly divergent policy trajectories for professional development and in curriculum reform across the four nations, this priority is increasingly pressing. Less pressing as a result of the Delphi Seminar may be the need to explore cross-professional approaches, such as with medical and allied health educators, to building bi-directional relationships between teachers and researchers. There was little appetite for this expressed by the participants but rather an *intra*-professional dimension, engaging RE, Theology and Religious Studies, was opened up by the impetus to widen the scope of the RE community of practice to include more actors. Linking evidence of professional learning to school improvement remains a thorny issue and takes us back to the tension between educational values and educational effectiveness. Establishing a secure pathway from teaching to learning to attainment is difficult and cannot be avoided but may be ameliorated by extending the framework of what is purposeful, or as Dewey might say, considering what is it that makes education educative?

4. Conclusion

Despite the slow progress in realising the legacy of Stenhouse in England to ally research on teaching with the practice of teaching through the exercise of curriculum making, his analysis stands the test of time and was endorsed by the participants in the TasR Delphi Seminar. Readers from outside the Anglo-American

education community may be bemused by the enthusiastic adoption of ‘subject didactics’ by the RE educators as the way forward and may question the understanding of what this may mean for both research and practice. In the context of RE in England, it seems to offer a way of contesting the tendency to position educational research as solely the concern of the social sciences and the psychology of learning and reclaim a place for philosophy and the humanities in understanding how research relates to practice. How sensible this is and what progress can be made in following through some of the ideas and continue to find the “gaps in the hedges” to build sustainable hospitable communities of researchers as teachers and teachers as researchers remains to be seen. One danger may be that this is not in fact an advance but a retreat into subject specialism that may simply open up old divisions between Theology and Religious Studies and it certainly poses questions as to where the trend towards “World Views” in the development of RE in England sits.

As with all exercises in knowledge transfer, promoting bi-directional research and teaching partnerships is a “contact sport” taking time and effort, needing practical support and working best when people meet to exchange ideas, sometimes serendipitously, as part of their daily activity³⁷. The TasR project suggests that RE, despite the constraints of policy and its often marginalised position in schools, is sufficiently agile to draw on an extended community of practice and be well-placed to provide such support.

37 <https://www.cam.ac.uk/research/news/what-is-knowledge-transfer>