



SIGNPOSTS TEACHER TRAINING MODULE

Teaching about religions and
non-religious world views
in intercultural education

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Foreword

The publication of this teacher training module, related to the book *Signposts: policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education*, is a milestone in the development of the Council of Europe's collaborative work with the European Wergeland Centre on religious and world view diversity and education in European schools.

The relatively long history behind the publication of this module dates back to the final decision to include studies of religions in the Council of Europe's educational programme which was made in September 2002 (Council of Europe 2003). A project on incorporating religious diversity and dialogue into intercultural education was established, with a team of contributors from different European states plus a representative from Canada. The project, entitled *The Challenge of Intercultural Education Today: Religious Diversity and Dialogue in Europe*, was formally launched by the Committee of Ministers the following year.

One of the first activities of the project was a meeting in Paris in mid-2003, bringing together a working group of specialists in religious education and intercultural education to discuss how the dimension of religion could enhance intercultural education. The group recommended that school students should have education about religions as an integral element of their intercultural education, which should include, for example, strategies for understanding different religious positions; encouraging tolerance for (not agreement with) different religious and secular points of view; education in human rights, citizenship and conflict management; and strategies to counter racism and religious discrimination in a diverse world. The next major event of the project was a high-level conference on *The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Education*, held in Oslo in June 2004. A book of papers from the conference was published (Council of Europe 2004). The group then worked together to produce material mainly for teachers and policy makers across Europe and a reference book for schools across Europe was published in 2007 (Keast 2007).

Utilising the material produced by the group, the Committee of Ministers – the foreign ministers of all 47 member states – agreed, in 2008, a policy recommendation on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education. The recommendation (Council of Europe 2008) was circulated to all member states.

It provides guidance on education about religions and “non-religious convictions” in the context of intercultural education. The recommendation acknowledges diversity at local, regional and international levels, and encourages connections to be made between “local” and “global”, the exploration of issues concerning religion and identity, and the development of positive relations with parents and religious communities, as well as organisations related to non-religious philosophies such as secular humanism. The intention is to introduce young people to a variety of positions in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance, within the “safe space” of the classroom.

At around the same time, the Council of Europe was exploring the possibility of establishing a European resource and teacher training centre which would provide materials and courses for educators across Europe. A feasibility study, conducted by Robert Jackson, recommended the establishment of such a centre, and thus Norway and the Council of Europe established the European Wergeland Centre (EWC), named after the 19th-century poet and human rights activist Henrik Wergeland in Oslo in 2008. Robert Jackson was appointed Senior Adviser at the centre with a brief to assist the staff in establishing studies of religious and world view diversity as part of the EWC's remit. The team at the European Wergeland Centre was concerned to ensure that the Council of Europe's 2008 recommendation was being considered in member states. An international joint working group with membership from the Council of Europe and the European Wergeland Centre was established to address this issue. The group designed a questionnaire which was sent to the ministries of education of the 47 member states. Respondents were invited to identify difficulties they felt they would have in adapting the Council of Europe recommendation to their own national settings.

An analysis of the questionnaire responses identified issues which were common to many member states. These included:

- ▶ ambiguity and lack of clarity in terminology associated with teaching about religions and beliefs;
- ▶ a need to understand the component elements of “competence” for understanding religions;
- ▶ how to make the classroom a “safe space” for discussion and dialogue by students;
- ▶ how to help students to analyse representations of religions in the media;
- ▶ how to integrate a study of non-religious convictions and world views with the study of religions;
- ▶ how to tackle human rights issues in relation to religion and belief in schools and classrooms;
- ▶ and how to link schools to wider communities and organisations, with the goal of increasing students’ knowledge about and understanding of religions and non-religious philosophies, such as secular humanism.

After much deliberation by the joint committee, and after consulting colleagues in France, Québec, Norway and the Russian Federation, it was decided to produce a book, written primarily for policy makers and practitioners, which would explore aspects of the recommendation in relation to the issues identified above. Robert Jackson was given the task of writing the book on behalf of the committee, taking account of its deliberations, and drawing on relevant European and other international research, as well as giving concrete examples of experience of dealing with some of the issues in various education systems. The book, *Signposts: policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education*, was published late in 2014 (Jackson 2014). The main body of the text addresses directly the key issues raised by respondents to the questionnaire. In 2018 *Signposts* was translated into 13 languages and it is used many higher education institutions when preparing future teachers.

In 2017, EWC decided to follow the idea of Angelos Vallianatos (a teacher trainer who collaborates closely with the EWC) to develop a teacher training module based on *Signposts*, aiming to turn the theory in the publication into a more practice-oriented tool for teachers. In partnership with the Council of Europe, EWC established a small group of experts for this task.

The project team included colleagues from Albania, Greece, Norway, Sweden and the UK, with the secretariat placed at the EWC. The module is intended for use across the Council of Europe member states and beyond, and it has been written with adaptability to different national and local contexts in mind. Once the materials for this module were developed, they were piloted with teachers in Albania and Greece, with their feedback incorporated in the final text.

You are now holding the result of this work in your hands. The training module targets teachers who work on religious education and/or intercultural education. It aims to improve the intercultural competence of teachers, through introducing intercultural education as a whole-school approach, with particular attention to the religious dimension. It links the issue of religion and world views with competence for democratic culture, as outlined in the Council of Europe *Reference framework of competences for democratic culture*. The training module also links with the EU-Council of Europe manuals on teaching controversial issues (Kerr and Huddleston 2015) using the example of religion.

The training module has been created for the education professions, helping adult professionals to deepen their knowledge, skills and attitudes towards the world of religion and non-religious beliefs; to develop the competences needed to further understand their own identity; and to present themselves in ways that promote dialogue and coexistence. The module aims to present the elements needed to address relevant issues in the classroom, creating a safe learning environment, respecting diversity, combating xenophobia and radicalisation, and contributing to a whole-school approach that helps students become active democratic citizens in a diverse world.

We congratulate the authors of the module on their fine efforts, and we are delighted that the module is now available for use by practitioners across Europe.

Robert Jackson

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Ana Perona-Fjeldstad

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Guidance notes

Dear colleague,

In 2002, the Council of Europe decided to include the religious dimension of intercultural education in its work. Six years later, the Committee of Ministers issued Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12. Another six years later, the book *Signposts* was published (this story is presented in the book's Foreword). What you have to hand now is another step forward. It is the transformation of *Signposts* into a training module.

The fundamental aim of this training module is to offer a safe way to address issues connected to religion and non-religious world views in the framework of intercultural education. This training module has been created for education professionals themselves. It is to be used in teacher training, rather than classroom teaching. It is oriented towards helping adult professionals to deepen their knowledge and skills in relation to the world of religion, to develop positive attitudes and necessary competences. These include reflecting on their own identity; presenting religions and world views in ways that promote dialogue and coexistence; and preparing in other ways to address the relevant issues in an educational context, by creating a safe learning environment, respecting diversity and combating xenophobia and radicalisation. The training module aims to contribute to a whole-school approach that helps different stakeholders to cooperate and students to become active democratic citizens in a diverse society.

In order to use this training module in the most effective way, you need to use *Signposts* as its theoretical manual, also making use of the references in *Signposts* to Recommendation CM/ Rec(2008)12 itself (see *Signposts*, Appendix 1). In that way, as is recommended in *Signposts* on page 100, you can either use the whole document or focus on individual chapters and specific topics. Thus, each module chapter is linked to a *Signposts* chapter, and its activities have initial links to the same chapter.

Each chapter has two parts. Firstly, there is a fact sheet that contains ways to approach and decode the relevant *Signposts* chapter. More information follows below.

Fact sheets

The fact sheets are structured in a way that gives trainers the opportunity to approach the *Signposts* chapters according to their training time and needs. The chapters are summarised and reconstructed following a training logic. This means that in training, you can either follow the order of *Signposts* chapters or adapt it to your needs. You can use the fact sheets to find the content and examples that suit your training needs.

Each fact sheet contains:

Key points: here you can find the main issues that are analysed in the relevant *Signposts* chapter. Bullet-point text gives you an overview of the chapter, underlining the significant elements that can be used in training.

Competences for democratic culture: this part links each *Signposts* chapter and its training module to the Competences for Democratic Culture (CDC) model of the Council of Europe, giving you the opportunity of connecting the *Signposts* training module to the CDC model. By using the CDC reference you can enrich your CDC work through the inclusion of issues of religion and non-religious world views. Similarly, you can broaden your *Signposts* training through reference to CDC.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider: here you have a list of "difficult" issues that arise in each chapter. These controversial issues are associated with the experience of dealing with religion and non-religious world views in education, including the experiences and questions of education professionals.

Four fundamental questions are then addressed. The content of those questions helps trainers to approach the spirit of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12, as analysed in *Signposts*, but also it connects teacher trainers and training to CDC and especially to the work and educational material of the Council of Europe on controversial issues.

1. **How does this affect me?** These points link teaching about religions and non-religious world views to the teacher personally. They form a collection of matters to consider as a person, when dealing with religious or non-religious world view content or examples during training or teaching.
2. **How does this affect my teaching?** These points address what has to be taken into consideration in training or teaching, when dealing with religions and non-religious world views in the framework of intercultural education.
3. **What can I do?** These are practical propositions that help to deal with the issues that are analysed in the previous questions. They refer both to personal and professional needs and actions.
4. **What do I need to develop?** While the previous question is connected to immediate ways to react, the content of this question refers to a future process. These are longer-term professional development points, for developing the competences needed to deal with religion and non-religious world-view issues.

Activities

Every activity is the starting point of a process regarding a particular part of *Signposts*. Thus, the activities for the training module are positioned per *Signposts* chapter. This is because at a first level they are linked to a specific chapter and are to be used when the training deals with its issues. Nevertheless, the activities can be used in relation to multiple issues and at different levels, as explained below.

You will notice that the activities are not necessarily time limited. This is because each activity is part of a learning process. At a first level, each activity can be used as it is, since time may be limited, or confidence is still being built. However, you will find in practice that the outcome of each activity is not absolutely predictable. Each activity should, over time, develop to a second level, where participants can engage in extended discussion in order to connect with its issues and their personal experiences in their own educational environment and everyday work.

Any activity is enhanced by a long and rich debriefing. Through discussion, participants can consider which issues are more or less difficult to address, which

need further investigation, how they might begin to apply what they have learned, and so on. Participants themselves need a safe space to express and discuss their own questions arising from the activities, from *Signposts* or from Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12. Those questions are the sources for follow-up on different levels. At any point, if opportunities present themselves or if such questions are left out and are not covered in the activities, the trainer should address them in discussion.

In general, the activities are time flexible. They can be implemented in short or extended ways: during a session, or in multiple face-to-face and/or online sessions; combined with research, role-playing or experimenting in real situations; one after the other, or with gaps for implementation activities in school.

It is essential at every step to connect the activities to the *Signposts* text, and through *Signposts* to Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12. This is because the activities have been designed in order to offer a deeper study and a better understanding of *Signposts*. The *Signposts* text often provides direct source material for the activities.

The fundamental basis of Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12, *Signposts* and the training module is concern for human rights and democracy. This is the connective tissue between teaching about religion and non-religious world views, teaching methodology and teacher training needs.

Regarding teacher training needs, the following remarks show how certain types of activity can be used at different times, in different ways and in relation to different issues additional to their positioning in a certain chapter.

Mind maps

(Chapter 1, Activity 1; Chapter 6, Activity 2)

The mind map has many applications. It could be used to analyse extracts from *Signposts*, the development of participants' knowledge and experience, or situations presented in the media, for example. Mind maps can be built up over a certain time: in one session, or gradually, over a few weeks, or they may follow a longer training process throughout a school year. The process can be set according to the training schedule, the time available and the needs of the trainees, always leaving space for additions and changes.

Writing a letter

(Chapter 1, Activity 2; Chapter 5, Activity 1; Chapter 7, Activity 1; Chapter 9, Activities 1 and 2)

Writing a letter is a technique that can be used in multiple ways. It can be used as a means to deepen

and improve understanding of the concepts in a text, but also to raise awareness of diversity of viewpoints. The roles and viewpoints of both the sender and the receiver have to be taken into consideration and respected. There are several possible uses in different cases and environments. The basic questions that may be considered in letter composition are the following: which points or arguments should be included? How should the language, expression and terminology be chosen and modified? How should the letter begin and conclude? How are knowledge and respect for diversity expressed? Discussion should continue until a first letter draft is agreed (letter drafting is a very effective group activity). Other questions may arise. So, it will be worth drafting the letter several times, trying to take into consideration the position and likely reaction of the recipients.

Using religious elements

(Chapter 2, Activity 1)

Using concrete or abstract elements of a religion – like figures in this case, but also audiovisual material of places, buildings, scenes, articles, symbols, rituals, objects, etc. – offers the opportunity to deal with the knowledge, perception and understanding of a religion from the viewpoint and experience of both insiders and outsiders. Often missing is the need to understand and respect the meaning and value that such religious elements can have for the believers themselves. Without this, prejudice, stereotypes and radicalisation can be left unchallenged.

It is necessary to use clear criteria in order to select suitable educational material. Materials have to be connected to the reality of a religion or a non-religious world view, as seen from an insider perspective. By providing time for this process in teacher training, opportunities for knowledge exchange and research are offered.

Trainers have to consider the question of the level of knowledge participants need as a precondition to teach about a religion or world view. The trainer needs to be confident about the expected learning outcomes and aware of the levels of knowledge and need among participants.

Situation analysis

(Chapter 2, Activity 2; Chapter 6, Activity 1; Chapter 8, Activity 2)

Preventing problems is better than reacting to them. In any case, a situation analysis is a good technique for both. Different resources can be used in order to recreate a situation that needs to be analysed: a story, a picture, a musical or textual excerpt, a quotation or different combinations of these. In this training

module, situations are either constructed or taken from different written sources, the internet or the media. They could be presented all at once or revealed in steps. In this training module, you can find different techniques to work on situation analysis.

It is recommended to use situations that can be linked to issues faced by the participants, but not directly referring to incidents or persons close or closely linked to them. The learning process is aimed at developing differentiated arguments and knowledge and not at inviting one-way solutions to problems. A connection of such analysis with the mind-map technique offers deeper and broader possibilities.

Starting from a religion

(Chapter 2, Activity 3)

A “religious understanding” activity can be used as a starting point for “understanding religion”. In this model, one can start from the terminology and content of a single religion and move to testing the level and the criteria that form an “understanding religion” process. The use of this technique with different religious examples facilitates respect of religious diversity both from the insider’s and the outsider’s point of view. Furthermore, this kind of activity, when tried in different educational environments, can help in defining the main aims and scope of different models of religious education and lead to the comprehension of the basic preconditions for understanding religion in the context of intercultural education.

Working with terminology

(Chapter 3)

The activities of this chapter work on raising awareness of the different meanings that the same terms have in different environments. By these activities, awareness is raised about how careful one must be on the use of terminology. It is essential for the trainers to be sure that the participants are aware of the problem and to work on the importance of using the same meanings for the same terms.

It is important, no matter how time-consuming, to collect the participants’ experiences on this matter and to base the training work on it. Their everyday issues need to be addressed as a major part of their training: the closer to participants’ reality, the better. The clarification of the terminology that will be used in the activities can either form a task before training or a process during it.

Working with different didactic approaches

(Chapter 2, Activities 1 and 2; Chapter 4, Activity 1; Chapter 5, Activity 2; Chapter 7, Activity 2; Chapter 8, Activities 1 and 2; Chapter 9, Activity 1)

Signposts presents two didactic approaches: the interpretive and the dialogical. In this training module, both of them are explained. In Chapter 4, there is a step-by-step approach via a text. In other activities, pictures, objects or music are used. Understanding interpretive and dialogical approaches facilitates the use of relevant learning techniques and enables the possibilities of using them on different issues and at different levels.

In Chapter 4, Activity 1, the learners, after reading a text, highlight it using interpretive approach criteria. These principles are the starting point for feedback, also dealing with how the principles can be put into practice. Some comments follow below on how similar processes can be used at various other points.

Different examples of working with the interpretive approach are given in Chapter 2 (using figures) and Chapter 8 (working on rights and duties), underlining the many different ways that a didactical approach can be used.

Regarding the dialogical approach, a story (Chapter 4), a song (Chapter 7), a *Signposts* excerpt or human rights articles (Chapter 8) and a case study (Chapter 9) are used for a role-play. The discussion that follows while the learners are still in their roles includes their arguments, the path that they followed for their decisions as well as the negotiation leading to the choices made.

The debriefing can offer material and arguments on how and where didactic approaches such as these could be used with regard to the educational needs

and level of learners. Both didactical approaches are useful in order to approach religions and non-religious world views in the safe learning environment that intercultural education needs.

Creating a safe space using discussion rules and techniques

(Chapter 5, Activity 2; Chapter 9, Activity 2)

Rules for discussion need to be the right ones: safeguarding the creation of a safe learning space, enabling more possibilities for trainers and teachers to include discussions on controversial issues, enhancing teaching about religions and non-religious world views, and enabling rather than discouraging creativity and participation. Rules need to be clear, respectful of different opinions and aimed at meeting educational needs.

Thus, the agreement of rules is in itself a learning process. The creation of a safe space includes a thorough discussion of the ground rules that are needed so that every member of the learning community feels equally safe and respected.

In this training module, different discussion techniques are illustrated: rotating the role of chairperson (Chapter 1); using set questions (Chapters 3, 5 and 6); using statement cards (Chapter 4); using checklists (Chapter 5); making use of personal opinions and notes (Chapter 5); analysing positive and negative statements (Chapter 9).

I hope you find this training module to be of practical use in helping to prepare participants to fulfil the vital role of teaching in Europe's religiously and culturally diverse societies.

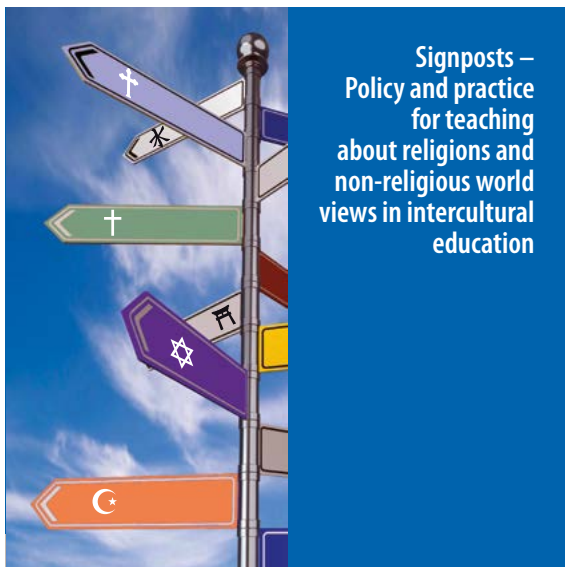
Angelos Vallianatos

Team Leader, The European Wergeland Centre

Chapter 1

The recommendation: background, issues and challenges

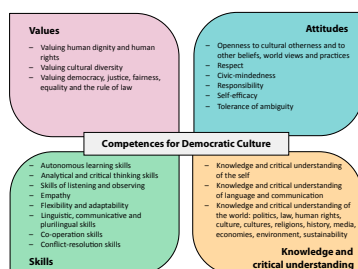
Key points



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- ▶ Before 2002 the Council of Europe had no educational projects focusing on religion and non-religious world views. However, there is increasing awareness of religion's public significance. Since 2002, the Council of Europe has increasingly recognised the importance of the religious and non-religious dimensions of intercultural education.
- ▶ All states are culturally and religiously plural, although their approaches to religion in education may differ.
- ▶ In the Council of Europe's approach, education concerning religious and non-religious convictions is closely linked to education for democratic citizenship and human rights. The form of education advocated is distinct from faith nurture, and concerned with the understanding of plurality, although it can be complementary with faith nurture.
- ▶ Attitudes and competences are also involved: challenging racism and bigotry, and fostering tolerance. Research, teacher education and resources will have to be developed to these ends.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness.
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of religions and non-religious world views.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ Should education about religion and non-religious world views be faith nurture or should it be open and critical?
- ▶ Some people associate religion with extremism; how should teachers manage this association?
- ▶ Is religion a private or public matter?

How does this affect me?



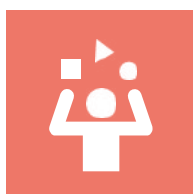
- ▶ I should assess my own attitude to cultural plurality, religious plurality and my readiness to teach.
- ▶ I should accept the responsibility to deal positively with cultural plurality and religious plurality, and be ready to stand up for democratic values and human rights.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ Human rights and democracy should be the basis of my methodology.
- ▶ In my classroom, different religious and non-religious traditions should be presented and discussed fairly and without prejudice, in ways that their members would accept.
- ▶ The young people in my classroom should be enabled to exchange and explore their own ideas in a safe, mutually respectful atmosphere.

What can I do?



- ▶ Commit myself to teaching in a way that supports these values.
- ▶ Set a good example to my students, colleagues and the public.
- ▶ Promote intercultural education and intercultural dialogue including their religious and non-religious dimensions.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ Awareness of the public significance of religion, locally, nationally and globally.
- ▶ Readiness to challenge racism, religious prejudice, discrimination and bigotry.
- ▶ Understanding of religious plurality and the nature of religion and religions.

ACTIVITY 1 – ANALYSIS OF YOUR OWN CONTEXT

Focus

The focus for this activity is on knowledge and understanding of cultural and religious diversity within the participants' own national and local contexts. The activity involves building up a set of notes or a mind map about how cultural and religious diversity are experienced in the participants' own country and, if appropriate, own region or locality.

Tips

As you will see below, the activity can begin during a session in the university or school, but will need to be extended beyond it: for example, the participants may need to carry out some library or internet-based research and will need to talk with senior staff in their schools. The detail in the notes or mind map will be developed gradually, perhaps over a few weeks, and you will need to plan an opportunity for the participants to feed back their findings to the group at a future date.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To develop knowledge and understanding of the established cultural and religious majorities and minorities in your country and region.
- ▶ To develop knowledge and understanding of the main patterns of migration in and out of your country and region.
- ▶ To evaluate issues including: how do the above factors impact on life in your school and its community? What are the implications for teaching? What policies does your school have in place to address these factors, how often are they reviewed, and do they need to be updated or strengthened?

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness.
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of religions and non-religious world views.

Procedures/steps

1. Introduce the task to the participants, giving them copies of the Handout included below. They are asked to build up a set of notes or a mind map about how cultural and religious diversity are experienced in their own country and, if appropriate, in their own region or locality. They should consider questions such as:
 - ▶ What are the established cultural and religious majorities and minorities in your country, and region?
 - ▶ What have been the main patterns of migration in and out of your country, and region?
 - ▶ How do these factors impact on life in your school and its community? What are the implications for teaching? What policies does your school have in place to address these factors, how often are they reviewed, and do they need to be updated or strengthened?

5 minutes

2. Ask the participants to form pairs or small groups and begin to share their existing knowledge of these questions.
3. Ask each pair or small group to feed back what they already know to the whole group, before you give follow-up instructions.

35 minutes

15 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

Ask the participants to follow up this initial session by carrying out some background research on the internet or in the library. They may also need to speak with teachers and leaders in their schools or teaching practice schools. In these ways, the detail in their notes or mind maps can be increased gradually.

You should agree a date for a reporting back session in a few weeks' time.

Handout – Chapter 1, Activity 1

■ Cultural and religious diversity are experienced in every country. No state is homogeneous culturally. Some countries have well-established ethnic and religious minorities, often with very long histories, sometimes preceding the formation of the state. Many states have such minorities as a result of migration from other countries within Europe and beyond, mainly during the 20th and current centuries. Diversity within states is complex and connects with global as well as regional, national and local issues. All of these factors are associated with an increasing view that religion and belief are not purely private issues and should be part of discussion and dialogue within the public sphere. (*Signposts*, pp. 14-15)

■ Build up a set of notes or a mind map about how cultural and religious diversity are experienced in your own country and, if appropriate, in your own region or locality. Consider questions such as:



- ▶ What are the established cultural and religious majorities and minorities in your country, and region?
- ▶ What have been the main patterns of migration in and out of your country, and region?
- ▶ How do these factors impact on life in your school and its community? What are the implications for teaching? What policies does your school have in place to address these factors, how often are they reviewed, and do they need to be updated or strengthened?

ACTIVITY 2 – SCENARIO: CLARIFICATION OF YOUR OWN VALUES AND READINESS TO CHALLENGE PREJUDICE

Focus

This activity focuses on challenging prejudice. The participants are asked to imagine that a group of parents has written a letter to their school requesting withdrawal of their children from lessons about Islam on the grounds that Islam is “a terrorist religion”. They have to consider and compose a response that communicates the positive values of the school.

Tips

There is no doubt that these issues are complicated and difficult, but the participants must still make sure that they communicate very clearly indeed. You should ask them to draft the letter several times, trying to put themselves in the positions of concerned parents when reading each draft.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To identify your own values concerning religious prejudice.
- ▶ To develop skills and confidence in communicating positive values and challenging prejudice.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness.
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of religions and non-religious world views.

Procedures/steps

1. Give out copies of the Handout provided below to the participants. Talk the participants through the letter-writing task, point by point, taking and discussing any questions that they might raise.
15 minutes
2. You are going to compose the letter as a group. Elect one person to write the letter as your discussion progresses, and another person to chair the discussion.
 - ▶ Discuss: which of the points given in the Handout should be included? Does the language need to be modified in any way? How should the letter begin and conclude? Are there any points not given in the Handout that should be included in the letter? The discussion should continue until the group has a first draft of the letter.

45 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

The letter can now be read aloud by the writer. Group members can take the positions of parents – perhaps, of parents from different backgrounds or communities – and try to imagine how the parents might feel or react on receiving and reading the letter. The possible parental reactions might give a basis for redrafting the letter, until the group is confident that the positive values of the school have been communicated clearly and effectively. In these ways, the aim is to reassure all of the parents of the school’s best intentions while at the same time challenging the prejudices that have been expressed by some of the parents.

15 minutes

Handout – Chapter 1, Activity 2

— A group of parents has written to you requesting the withdrawal of their children from any lessons about Islam. The reason given is that they do not want their children to learn about “a terrorist religion”.

— Your response will be to invite the parents into school to discuss the matter, but you think it best to write to them formally first, explaining the school’s position fully and clearly. Note that the school will need to have an agreed, consistent response to remarks such as these and that all of its staff will need to understand and apply it in the same way. Therefore, draft the letter together as a group – with your colleagues if you are based in school, with your lecturer and other trainee teachers if you are based in a university. Note also that your response must be based on concerns for human rights and democracy.

— As you draft the letter, you may find it helpful to discuss and consider the following points, one at a time:



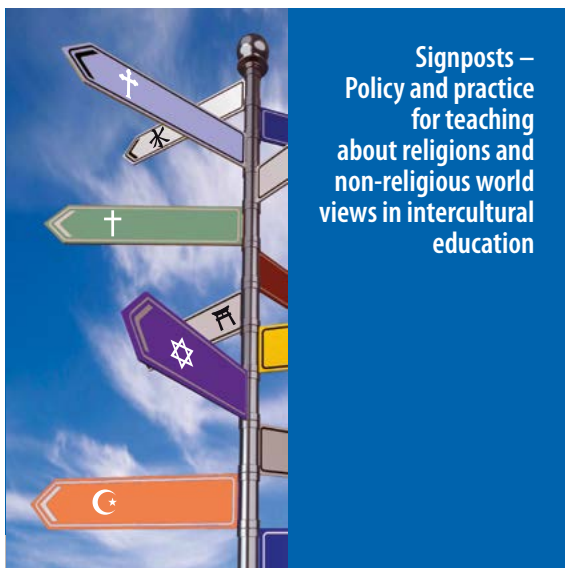
- ▶ The school does not accept the association between Islam and terrorism. The vast majority of Muslim people are peaceful and law-abiding.
- ▶ At the same time, responsible education cannot ignore the fact that some extremist groups claim that Islam is the basis for their actions. This results in complexity and controversy, which you would like the school’s pupils to discuss in the safe space of your classroom.
- ▶ The school’s community includes Muslim families. Muslim children have the right to express their own beliefs in the classroom.
- ▶ A key purpose of including education about Islam in the curriculum is the positive human example it provides: searching for ultimate meaning, showing respect for human life, solidarity with the poor and other central Islamic values.
- ▶ Another key purpose of including education about Islam is to promote understanding and good relationships between different young people within school and within wider society. Within this, all young people are entitled to respond to content and to express their own opinions, sensitively and respectfully. There is no way in which religion or religions are taught about in order to promote religion or religions among the school’s students.
- ▶ In any case, no pupil will be allowed to advocate extremism or violence of any kind in school. All pupils have the right to protection from extremist or violent speech or actions, and the school will involve the police if necessary.

— There may be other points that you wish to discuss and perhaps include. There is no doubt that these issues are complicated and difficult, but you must still make sure that you communicate very clearly indeed, so it will be worth drafting the letter several times and trying to put yourself in the position of a concerned parent when reading each draft.

Chapter 2

Introducing *Signposts* and its key issues

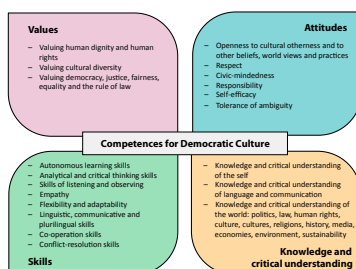
Key points



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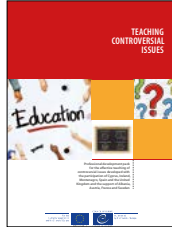
- ▶ The recommendation is relevant to the whole-school ethos, and not just to curriculum subjects.
- ▶ The aim of presenting religions and non-religious world views as a branch of intercultural education is to promote understanding of the language and practices of those who hold them.
- ▶ It is necessary to understand the meaning of religious language as used by religious believers, including expressions of their beliefs, values and emotions, as well as the history of religions, their practices, artefacts and buildings.
- ▶ “Religious understanding” usually stands for religious nurture or instruction. “Understanding religions” involves developing understanding of a variety of religious and non-religious world views.
- ▶ The recommendation includes understanding of non-religious convictions as well – Chapter 7 deals specifically with issues of integrating studies of non-religious convictions with studies of religion.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity.
- ▶ Autonomous learning skills.
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing.
- ▶ Empathy.
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability.
- ▶ Co-operation skills.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self and the world (culture, cultures, history, sustainability).

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ Teaching about religions and non-religious world views within intercultural education is distinct from initiation or nurture into a particular religious perspective.
- ▶ Developing an understanding of a different religious position may raise religious or theological questions. Thus, it may develop “religious understanding”.
- ▶ What is the relationship between religious education seen as a means of deepening young people’s understanding of religion(s), and “religious understanding” understood as initiating young people into a particular religious way of life?
- ▶ How are we to define, integrate or address non-religious convictions alongside religions?
- ▶ What are the appropriate principles for knowledge selection? What should be the balance of material for study, in relation to one’s own particular context and the ages and aptitudes of the pupils?



How does this affect me?



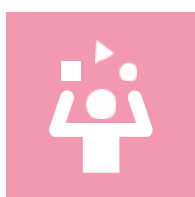
- ▶ I should be clear about the different aims of nurturing a particular religious perspective and teaching about religions, and accept the principles of intercultural education.
- ▶ I should develop an understanding of different religious positions and gain the relevant knowledge, skills and attitudes to present the religious and theological questions raised.
- ▶ I should understand the issues involved in addressing non-religious convictions alongside religions.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I will have to enable students to understand the language, beliefs and claims of those holding religious positions or non-religious stances within society.
- ▶ I will have to utilise methods which enable learners to understand religious language from the insider's perspective, but also to develop awareness of their own current assumptions and values.
- ▶ I will have to strengthen and develop the learner's competence to understand the religious and non-religious perspectives of other people.

What can I do?



- ▶ I can facilitate encounters and interactions with religious believers and/or their texts, stories, practices, doctrines, etc.
- ▶ I can use teaching methods that allow students to investigate the world of religion, regardless of their family's religious or non-religious choices.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ Imagination and empathy in order to enable the learner to understand religious language from the insider's perspective.
- ▶ Knowledge, but also certain attitudes and skills that raise self-awareness and understanding of the beliefs and values of others, as well as values affirming human dignity.
- ▶ Knowledge and understanding about religions and non-religious convictions which are different to my own.

ACTIVITY 1 – THE DIMENSIONS OF TEACHING RELIGIONS AND NON-RELIGIOUS CONCEPTS

Focus

The focus of this activity is to investigate the personal knowledge and skills needed in order to deal with religion as a cultural phenomenon, without portraying it as only a human cultural expression, or reducing it to human culture. Finally, this activity tries to investigate the limits to understanding the meaning of religious beliefs, values, emotions and language from the insider's perspective.

Tips

The activity can be done on more than one level, with respect to the time available and the knowledge of participants about several religions. It uses silhouettes representing prayer in different religions. The trainer can use all the figures, without mentioning certain religions, or select figures from one or more religions, or ask trainees to search for information about praying in different religions. The figures can be used in two ways: as a single sheet, where the trainer can adapt the positioning of the figures, or as individual cards to be used accordingly.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To find, organise and develop suitable data (connected to, for example, the history, the texts, the art, the practice and the culture of religions) in order to work on interreligious skill.
- ▶ To understand, analyse and evaluate educational methods and teaching strategies needed to deal with personal and teaching aspects of religion.
- ▶ To develop empathy, and to consider the limits of empathy, in understanding.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity.
- ▶ Empathy.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self and the world (culture, cultures).

Procedures/steps

1. Form groups of four or five persons each.
2. Introduce Handout 1 to the participants, giving them one copy per person.
3. In a given time, they must make a group choice of four common figures.
4. Debriefing, possibly using the following questions:
 - ▶ How did you feel about the figures?
 - ▶ Did you have questions about them?
 - ▶ Did any of these questions involve controversy?
 - ▶ How did you individually choose your four figures?
 - ▶ How did the group make the final choice? What criteria did you form (for example, were the criteria based on the religion portrayed by the figure, or your knowledge or lack of knowledge about it)?
5. Introduce Handout 2 to the participants, giving them one copy per group.
6. In a given time, introduce Materials 1 and 2: "Scope and definitions" and "Educational pre-conditions". Allow time to read and discuss these in the groups. According to time availability and group needs, decide whether to give out one or both Material pages.
7. Introduce Handout 3 to the participants, giving them one copy per group.

8. Present each group's lesson description poster in "Agora": stick the posters on the walls, at a distance from one another. Give a number to each member of each group. Make new groups of those with the same number, then place every new group in front of a poster. Ask the member of the group who participated in the group that created the poster to explain the poster. The groups move clockwise every 2 minutes, until every group has visited every poster.
9. Debrief the activity, possibly using the following questions:
 - ▶ How did you feel about the procedure?
 - ▶ What did you enjoy or experience as difficult in planning your lesson?
 - ▶ What is the minimum information needed in order to teach the subject?
 - ▶ How do different levels of information change the lesson's scope?
 - ▶ Is this a useful teacher training activity? What would you keep or change?
 - ▶ How can discussion of prayer be used to raise and develop self-awareness and awareness and understanding of the beliefs and values of others, respecting their dignity?

ALTERNATIVE

Replace steps 7 and 8 as follows (you will not need Handout 3 for this alternative):

10. Ask the groups to create a story, using the four figures that they have selected, trying to include the main ideas of "Scope and definitions" (Material 1) and/or "Educational preconditions" (Material 2).
11. Each group has 5 minutes to present its story. Any chosen form of presentation may be used (written, or through a drawing, still image, role-play, etc.). The other groups try to guess what the story was about.
12. Debriefing as above.



Handout 1 – Chapter 2, Activity 1



Write down three things that you see.

What similarities do you see in the figures?

What differences do you see in the figures?

Write down three things that the figures make you think.

Write three questions on what the figures make you wonder about.

After answering the questions, please discuss your answers in the group, and then negotiate in order to choose the figure that is most familiar and the one that is least familiar to the group.

Handout 2 – Chapter 2, Activity 1

Approaching a believer

In your group, choose one figure, the most or least familiar.

You are invisible, so you can approach the figure without being noticed.

— Where is the figure?

— What do you see around him/her?

— What do you hear there?

— What is the figure doing?

— What does the person see?

— What does the person say?

— What is the meaning of the action, for the person doing it?

Handout 3 – Chapter 2, Activity 1

Preparing a lesson

You are invisible, so you can approach the figures one by one, without being noticed.

The subject of your lesson is prayer in religion.

What is the important information you need in order to prepare your lesson?
If you plan to refer to prayer in religion in general:

If you plan to refer to prayer in one or more religions:

What personal attitudes or skills do you need in order to teach “prayer in religion”?

What teaching methods do you plan to follow in your teaching?

How far and how deeply can you help your students to know, understand and respect ideas and actions that may be different from their own?

Create a poster, presenting your lesson preparation on prayer in religion, bearing in mind the two passages selected from *Signposts* (see Material 1 and 2 below).

(Use a poster form of your choice: words, drawings, grids, mind maps, templates, etc.)

Material 1 – Chapter 2, Activity 1

Scope and definitions

from *Signposts*, p. 118:

1. The recommendation's aim is to ensure taking into account the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education as a contribution to strengthen human rights, democratic citizenship and participation, and to the development of competences for intercultural dialogue, at the following levels:
 - ▶ education policies, in the form of clear-cut education principles and objectives;
 - ▶ institutions, especially through open learning settings and inclusive policies;
 - ▶ professional development of teaching staff, through adequate training.
2. For the purpose of this recommendation "religions" and "non-religious convictions" are considered as cultural facts within the larger field of social diversity.
3. Religious and non-religious convictions are diverse and complex phenomena; they are not monolithic. In addition, people hold religious and non-religious convictions to varying degrees, and for different reasons; for some such convictions are central and may be a matter of choice, for others they are subsidiary and may be a matter of historical circumstances. The dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education should therefore reflect such diversity and complexity at a local, regional and international level.

Material 2 – Chapter 2, Activity 1

Educational preconditions

from *Signposts*, pp.120-121:

Teaching aspects of an intercultural approach to religions and non-religious convictions in education

4. In order to encourage consideration of the diversity of religions and non-religious convictions in the educational context, and to promote intercultural dialogue, the following educational preconditions and learning methods can be seen as highly appropriate examples:
 - 4.1. Educational preconditions
 - ▶ sensitivity to the equal dignity of every individual;
 - ▶ recognition of human rights as values to be applied, beyond religious and cultural diversity;
 - ▶ communication between individuals and the capacity to put oneself in the place of others in order to establish an environment where mutual trust and understanding is fostered;
 - ▶ co-operative learning in which peoples of all traditions can be included and participate;
 - ▶ provision of a safe learning space to encourage expression without fear of being judged or held to ridicule;
 - 4.2. Various learning methods
 - ▶ use of "simulations" to create teaching situations involving dialogue, dilemmas, and reflection;
 - ▶ encouraging pupils to reflect objectively on their own and others' existence and views;
 - ▶ role-playing in an attempt to reproduce and understand the point of view and emotions of others;
 - ▶ use of "living libraries";
 - ▶ co-operation rather than competition in order to construct a positive self-image;
 - ▶ the development of appropriate pedagogical approaches such as:
 - a phenomenological approach aimed at cultivating a knowledge and understanding of religions and non-religious convictions as well as respect for other persons irrespectively of their religious and non-religious convictions;
 - an interpretative approach which encourages a flexible understanding of religions and non-religious convictions and avoids placing them in a rigid pre-defined framework;
 - an approach enabling pupils to respect and engage in dialogue with other persons possessing other values and ideas;
 - a contextual approach taking account of local and global learning conditions.

ACTIVITY 2 – LINKING THE RECOMMENDATION TO THE WHOLE-SCHOOL ETHOS

Focus

The activity focuses on interreligious competence as a whole-school policy. As mentioned in *Signposts* (p. 24), “the recommendation should be seen not only as having relevance to the classroom, but also to whole-school policies on diversity (contributing to intercultural education)”.

Tips

This activity is actually an introduction to and preparation for dealing with issues connected to the religious identity of the school community members (principals, teachers, students, staff, parents). Depending on the time available, but also the particular needs of each social environment, there are different ways of working with case studies like this, as mentioned below in the procedures/steps section. This case study can be replaced by others, taken from the media. Be aware that it is safer and more effective to use cases that are not directly linked and do not refer to places, cases and persons of the school or the local community.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To analyse the religious dimension of intercultural education, as an important element of whole-school policy on diversity, and to present conclusions.
- ▶ To investigate ways in which the teaching of religions and non-religious convictions is not just a curriculum subject, but is relevant to the ethos of schools.
- ▶ To develop teachers’ intercultural competences regarding religions and non-religious world views.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity.
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self and the world (culture, cultures, history, sustainability).

Procedures/steps

If you do not have much time, use only Material 1 and work on it by Handout 1 and/or Handout 2. If you do have time, then also use Material 2. You may give Material 2 with Material 1, or as an added issue, after Handout 1, asking participants whether the extra information changes anything. You can also discuss the influence of media and social media, as well as issues of cultural diversity.

1. Form groups of four or five persons each.
2. Introduce Material 1 and Material 2, giving one copy to each group.
3. After the groups have read the article, give them time to discuss the story.
4. Introduce Handout 1 to the teachers, giving one copy to each group.
5. Provide the groups with enough time to analyse each issue and answer all six questions.
6. Each group creates a poster, presenting their proposals.
7. Debriefing, possibly using the following questions:
 - ▶ How did you feel about the procedure?
 - ▶ What did you enjoy or experience as difficult in the activity?
 - ▶ What are the possible obstacles in implementing your proposals?
 - ▶ In this activity, what would you keep and what would you rather change?

ALTERNATIVE

1. Divide participants into two groups, preferably working in different rooms.
2. Give each group a role card (Handout 2) and ask them to carry out what is stated on their role card.
3. After giving them some time to discuss their role, ask the teachers if they have decided to meet the students.
4. If this is the case, bring the two groups together. Each group selects three representatives to talk.
5. In any event, bring the two groups together once they have had time to discuss their decisions.
6. In plenary, debrief the activity, possibly using the following questions:
 - ▶ What was the result of your meeting?
 - ▶ How did you feel?
 - ▶ Why do you think that this incident happened?
 - ▶ Is there a way out?



Material 1 – Chapter 2, Activity 2

Case study – Ahmed Mohamed creates a clock

When Ahmed Mohamed went to his high school in Irving, Texas, Monday, he was so excited. A teenager with dreams of becoming an engineer, he wanted to show his teacher the digital clock he had made from a pencil case.

The 14-year-old's day ended not with praise, but punishment, after the school called the police and he was arrested.

"I built a clock to impress my teacher but when I showed it to her, she thought it was a threat to her," Ahmed told reporters Wednesday. "It was really sad that she got the wrong impression of it."

Ahmed talked to the media gathered on his front yard and appeared to wear the same NASA T-shirt he had on in a picture taken as he was being arrested. In the image, he looks confused and upset as he is being led out of school in handcuffs.

"They arrested me and they told me that I committed the crime of a hoax bomb, a fake bomb," the freshman later explained to WFAA after authorities released him.

Irving Police spokesman Officer James McLellan told the station, "We attempted to question the juvenile about what it was and he would simply only tell us that it was a clock."

The teenager did that because, well, it was a clock, he said.

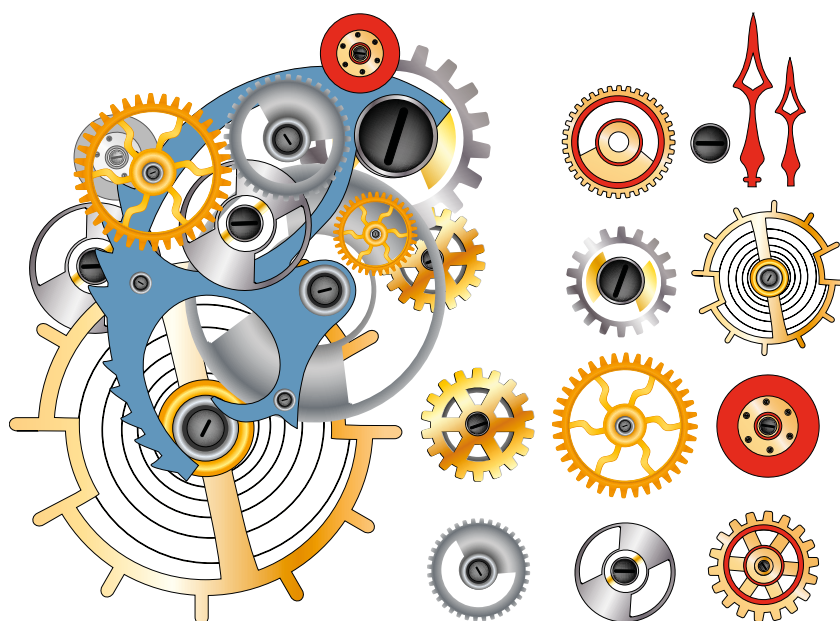
On Wednesday, police announced the teen will not be charged.

Chief Larry Boyd said Ahmed should have been "forthcoming" by going beyond the description that what he made was a clock. But Boyd said authorities determined that the teenager did not intend to alarm anyone and the device, which the chief called "a homemade experiment", was innocuous.

Ahmed, who aspires to go to MIT, said he was pleased the charges were dropped and was not bothered that police did not apologise for arresting him. After he said he was interrogated by the police without an attorney present, his lawyer, Linda Moreno, told reporters they wouldn't answer any more questions about the legal process.

Ahmed is suspended until Thursday, he said, but is thinking about transferring to another high school.

Source for Material 1 and 2: Ashley Fantz, Steve Almsy and Anne Claire Stapleton, "Muslim teen Ahmed Mohamed creates clock, shows teacher, gets arrested", article available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/16/us/texas-student-ahmed-muslim-clock-bomb/index.html>, accessed 9 May 2019.



Material 2 – Chapter 2, Activity 2

Social media reacts

Outrage over the incident -- with many saying the student was profiled because he is Muslim -- spread on social media as #IStandWithAhmed started trending worldwide on Twitter with more than 100 000 tweets Tuesday morning. The school's Facebook page is roiling with sharp criticism of the way the teen was treated, and the hashtag #engineersforahmed is gaining popularity.

Teen's father saw son surrounded by police

Ahmed's father, Mohamed Elhassan Mohamed, who immigrated from Sudan and has twice run for that country's presidency, told CNN Wednesday that he was upset the school did not contact him immediately to tell him about the situation.

The first he heard of it was when he received a call from police, who said his son was being charged with having a hoax bomb, Mohamed said. He rushed to the police station, where he saw his son "surrounded by five police and he was handcuffed," the father said. Ahmed told his father he had asked if he could phone him but the police told him he could not because he was under arrest, Mohamed said.

When Ahmed was called out of class, he said he was brought into a room with four police officers, one of whom said, "Yup. That's who I thought it was."

A reporter at a news conference Wednesday asked Chief Boyd if the teen's religious or ethnic identity played a role in how he was treated. The chief said it did not, and he praised the department's relationship with Irving's Muslim community. However, he said, "We live in an age where you can't take things like that to school."

At the Wednesday news conference, a spokeswoman for the Irving Independent School District told reporters that the way the teen's experience has been described in media reports is "unbalanced".

She declined to explain why, citing the need to protect a student's privacy.

The statement she made was posted on the district's site Wednesday. When the family gives written permission to discuss the incident, the school will offer more information, she said.

It was an English teacher who got spooked and reported Ahmed to the principal, the police said.

"We always ask our students and staff to immediately report if they observe any suspicious items and/or suspicious behaviour," the school's statement reads. "If something is out of the ordinary, the information should be reported immediately to a school administrator and/or the police so it can be addressed right away. We will always take necessary precautions to protect our students and keep our school community as safe as possible."

Source for Material 1 and 2: Ashley Fantz, Steve Almasy and Anne Claire Stapleton, "Muslim teen Ahmed Mohamed creates clock, shows teacher, gets arrested", article available at <https://edition.cnn.com/2015/09/16/us/texas-student-ahmed-muslim-clock-bomb/index.html>, accessed 9 May 2019.

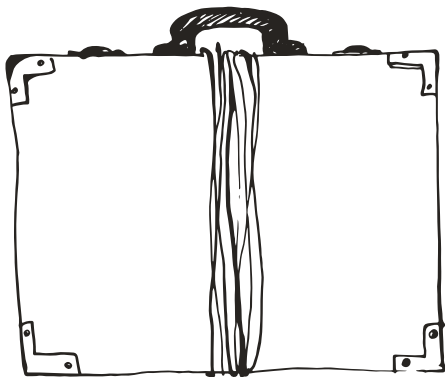
Handout 1 – Chapter 2, Activity 2

5Ws and 1H – Problem analysis tool

Questions	Answers
<p>WHEN</p> <p>When did the issue arise? When was action needed?</p> <p>By when must the issue be resolved?</p>	
<p>WHO</p> <p>Is it true that the whole-school ethos is at fault? Who is affected?</p> <p>Who needs to be informed?</p>	
<p>WHERE</p> <p>Where did the issue arise? Where does it impact?</p> <p>Where is it important?</p>	
<p>WHAT</p> <p>What are the facts?</p> <p>What exactly do I want to achieve?</p> <p>What does the school need to change in order to make sure that this doesn't happen again?</p>	
<p>WHY</p> <p>Why did the problem arise?</p> <p>Why did different people behave how they did? Why might my behaviour be different?</p>	
<p>HOW</p> <p>How could similar situations be made different?</p> <p>How can relevant people be involved in this?</p> <p>If in a similar situation, how would I evaluate the actions I took? What kinds of attitudes, skills, etc. are needed for actions to be taken appropriately?</p>	

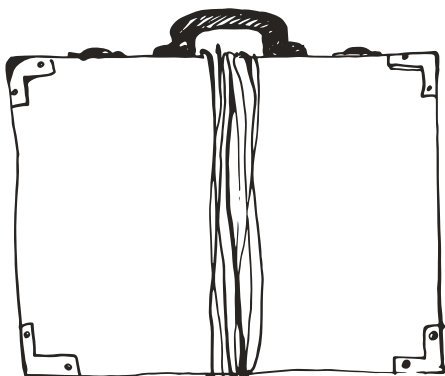
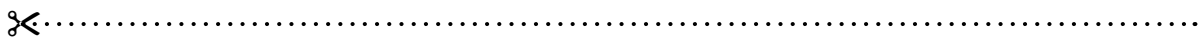
Now create a poster illustrating three actions that a school could take to improve its climate, in order to face such issues.

Handout 2 – Chapter 2, Activity 2



Role card A

It is break. You are in the staff room, with the other teachers. A teacher enters the room, very concerned. "May I have your attention?", you hear. "Passing a classroom on my way here, I saw a group of students gathered around a desk. Ahmed Mohamed was showing the other Somali students a box. I noticed that inside there was something clockwork, full of cables and things. It seemed handmade. What shall we do?" Discuss together how you should respond. The students will still be in the classroom.



Role card B

It is break. You are in the classroom, the usual five friends are all together. Ahmed Mohamed is showing you a digital clock he has made. You know that he dreams of becoming an engineer and he wants to show you his work, before he shows it to his teacher. You have discussed it with him before and you know all about it. He asks for your opinions on how to present it to the teacher: before, during or after the class, as a surprise, or how? He asks you for support and advice. You are his close friends. Discuss how he should present his work and what your possible role could be.

ACTIVITY 3 – IDENTIFYING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN “UNDERSTANDING RELIGIONS” AND “RELIGIOUS UNDERSTANDING”

Focus

This activity focuses on the difference in expected learning outcomes between lessons aiming to promote understanding of religions and others aiming to promote religious understanding. The different approaches create different kinds of lessons: it is necessary to be clear about this, in order to understand the link between “understanding religions” and intercultural education.

Tips

The presented lesson plan is designed using a version of “understanding religions”. The idea is to help teachers identify the elements that characterise such a lesson, and at the same time to give them religious material which they can enrich in order to create a “religious understanding” type of lesson. The bonus idea offered is that a lesson based on religious nurture, if enriched by certain material and methods, can be transformed into an “understanding religions” one, without losing its religious value.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To describe and justify the distinction between an “understanding religions” lesson and a “religious understanding” one.
- ▶ To create a lesson plan for teaching about religion and non-religious world views in intercultural education.
- ▶ To build awareness and sensitivity of the educational needs of students with different religious and non-religious backgrounds.

Competences linked to activities

- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity.
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability.
- ▶ Co-operation skills.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the self and the world (culture, cultures, history, sustainability).

Procedures/steps

1. Create groups of four to five participants.
2. TPS (Think-Pair-Share) – Participants are asked to narrate a story of salvation that impressed them (from personal experience or of someone they know).
3. Introduce Handout 1, giving one copy to each group. Give the groups time to read the story and discuss the questions, thinking of these as a possible lesson.
4. Debriefing:
 - ▶ How did you feel about this lesson?
 - ▶ What would you keep and what would you change?
5. In your groups, discuss the possibility of teaching this lesson in your educational system or in different ones. Questions to consider:
 - ▶ What are the possible expected learning outcomes of your lesson?
 - ▶ What knowledge, skills and attitudes are involved?
 - ▶ What are the main teaching methods required to achieve these?

6. In your groups, discuss the positive and negative issues that may arise through the possible different religious or non-religious identities of the students and their families. Try to give at least three different examples.

Alternatively, give to each group a certain student character from a different background (e.g. depending on the country and the lesson, a Christian, a Muslim, an agnostic, etc.). Questions to consider:

- ▶ What would your student find interesting in this lesson?
 - ▶ Why? What might your student find difficult?
7. What are the positive points of the lesson? Are any important points missing?
 8. In your groups, now read the paragraph "Understanding religions and religious understanding" (*Signposts*, p. 22 – see Material below).
 9. In your groups, now classify your lesson plan as an "understanding religion" or "religious understanding" plan.

10. Identify the specific criteria through which you made your decision.

11. Report your criteria in the plenary.

12. In plenary, put your criteria in order of importance, referring back to the *Signposts* passage.

13. Now reread, in your groups, the following passages from the recommendation: "Scope and definitions" (*Signposts*, p. 118), "Educational preconditions" and "Various learning methods" (*Signposts*, pp. 120-121). Take some time to discuss these.

14. Introduce Handout 2, giving one copy to each group. They should add to their lesson plans possible missing elements (resources, methods, material) in order to create lessons that teach about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education.



Handout 1 – Chapter 2, Activity 3

The following text is based on the Christian Orthodox conception of salvation. Read the story, talk about it and then answer the questions.

An onion

Once upon a time there was a peasant woman and a very wicked woman she was. And she died and did not leave a single good deed behind. The devil caught her and plunged her into the lake of fire. So her guardian angel stood and wondered what good deed of hers he could remember to tell to God; "She once pulled up an onion in her garden," said he, "and gave it to a beggar woman." And God answered: "You take that onion then, hold it out to her in the lake, and let her take hold of it and be pulled out. And if you can pull her out of the lake, let her come to Paradise, but if the onion breaks, then the woman must stay where she is." The angel ran to the woman and held out the onion to her. "Come," said he, "catch hold and I'll pull you out." he began cautiously pulling her out. He had just pulled her right out, when the other sinners in the lake, seeing how she was being drawn out, began catching hold of her so as to be pulled out with her. But she was a very wicked woman and she began kicking them. "I'm to be pulled out, not you. It's my onion, not yours." As soon as she said that, the onion broke. And the woman fell into the lake and she is burning there to this day. So the angel wept and went away.

The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoyevsky

Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky (Фёдор Миха́йлович Достоевский), 1821-1881, was a Russian novelist, short story writer, essayist, journalist and philosopher. Dostoyevsky's literary works explore human psychology in the troubled political, social and spiritual atmosphere of 19th-century Russia, and engage with a variety of philosophical and religious themes.

Describe the picture of life after death, as presented in the story.

Is there a connection of life to life after death according to the writer?

What helped and what destroyed the main character of the story?

What are the story's criteria for separation of people?

Handout 2: Lesson plan – Chapter 2, Activity 3

Content	
Subject:	
Level/Class:	
Lesson title:	
Expected learning outcomes	
Values:	
Knowledge and critical understanding:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.
Skills:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.
Attitudes:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2.

Methods (how I will teach)				
	Time	Activity description	What I will do	What the students will do
1				
2				
3				
4				

Material – Chapter 2, Activity 3

from *Signposts*, p. 22:

Understanding religions and religious understanding

Some writers have made a distinction between “understanding religion(s)” and “religious understanding” (for example, Cox 1983). Some religious insiders claim that understanding can only be acquired through initiation into a religious way of life. From this perspective, “understanding” can only be achieved through religious nurture, involving direct engagement in religious practice and instruction. This form of religious education (we might call it the development of “religious understanding”, a distinctively religious way of understanding) would be appropriate for young people from families who are believers within a particular religious tradition. However, it would not be appropriate as part of a public education available to all students coming from a wide diversity of backgrounds, including different religious and non-religious perspectives.

The academic field of study of religions takes the view that some degree of understanding (understanding religions) is available to all, regardless of religious commitment, arguing that there are tools from a variety of different academic disciplines that can enable students to develop an understanding of religions and the perspectives of religious people. Such fields include, for example, history, art, drama, literary and textual studies, ethnography, psychology and (inter)cultural studies. The techniques required involve not only the acquisition of knowledge, but also the development of skills and the cultivation of various appropriate attitudes. Such techniques are not only used in attempting to understand the language and experience of others, but also in developing self-awareness on the part of students in relation to their own current assumptions and values.

It is important, from the point of view of method, not to drive too sharp a distinction between techniques used by religious believers/practitioners in developing “religious understanding” and religious “outsiders” in attempting to “understand religions”. For example, both the fields of theology and religious studies draw on similar techniques and dispositions, such as attitudes, skills and knowledge associated with the process of “dialogue”.

Also, the development of an understanding of a religious perspective requires encounter and interaction with religious believers and/or their texts, stories, practices, doctrines, etc. Moreover, pluralistic classes in publicly funded schools are likely to include young people from both religious and non-religious backgrounds. For some, developing an understanding of a different religious position may raise religious or theological questions. Thus, for some learners, the development of an understanding of religions may, to some extent, develop “religious understanding”.

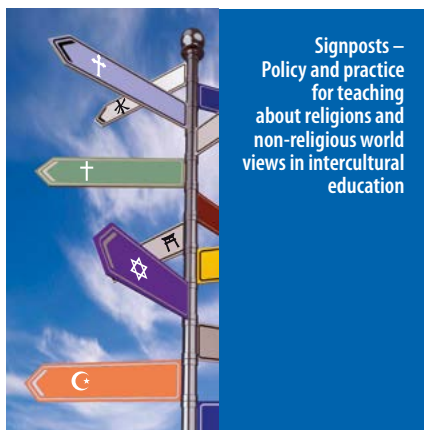
Reference

Cox E. (1983), “Understanding religion and religious understanding”, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 6(1), pp. 3-13.

Chapter 3

Terminology associated with teaching about religions and beliefs

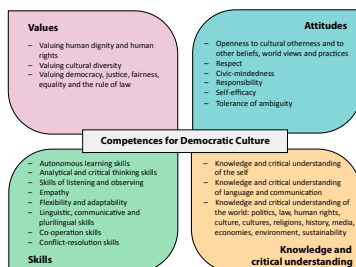
Key points



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- ▶ Teaching about religions and beliefs is of great importance.
- ▶ Policy, implementation and sharing depend on the way concepts are understood.
- ▶ Terms and concepts associated with teaching about religions and beliefs can be ambiguous, leading to potential misunderstandings and conflicts.
- ▶ There is a need for common understanding when joint and common policies and actions are needed.
- ▶ There is a need for common understanding when developing educational goals and objectives for curricula, for teaching and for training programmes.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, religions, history, media, etc.
- ▶ Knowledge and understanding of language and communication.
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Tolerance of ambiguity.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ How to respond to different meanings of the same concepts or terms.
- ▶ How to respond to conflicting truth-claims among learners and between religions, arising from different contexts.
- ▶ How to encourage students to accept, to try to understand and to appreciate other ways of understanding concepts or terms and reflect on their own understanding, as an important step towards joint efforts.
- ▶ How to decide on the sources of information for clarification of concepts or terms (religious, sociological, philosophical, historical, etc.).

How does this affect me?



- ▶ It challenges my way of thinking, my actual knowledge about this topic and my readiness to learn from the diversity around me.
- ▶ It challenges me as a teacher, regarding my ability to use the right educational approach for teaching about controversies and differences in the classroom.
- ▶ It challenges my readiness to consider and explore controversial, difficult issues very carefully, especially those concerned with religious plurality and differences over truth-claims.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I will be able and ready to teach in ways that enable learners to express their own views and beliefs, expecting them to listen fully and carefully to one another.
- ▶ I will be able and ready to manage discussion of controversial issues, and to recognise and communicate to learners that agreement or final answers may be unreachable.
- ▶ I will be able and ready to challenge learners' ways of learning, exploring, interpreting, taking and defending positions with respect to controversial material, topics and issues.

What can I do?



- ▶ Explain the meanings of key terms used in documentation such as policy and curricular documents.
- ▶ Present a clear methodology for the study of religions and non-religious world views, concepts and terms that takes into consideration the variety of concepts and theories behind them.
- ▶ Encourage students to explore the different meanings given to technical terms and the reasons for these (values, interests, positions, lack of knowledge, etc.).
- ▶ Set a good example of fair representation and interpretation of religions, concepts and terms, acting fairly and impartially as a teacher.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ My knowledge and understanding of different religious and non-religious world views, including diversity between and within these, so that I can represent and encourage learners to interpret them fairly.
- ▶ My knowledge and understanding of the key concepts associated with particular religions and non-religious world views.
- ▶ My knowledge and understanding of the perspectives, practices and beliefs of groups within particular religions and non-religious groups.
- ▶ A range of teaching methods that promotes inquiry into religious diversity and the exchange of different perspectives among learners.
- ▶ Skills in managing discussion of controversial issues, encouraging learners to participate in dialogues over difference and insisting that they listen and speak respectfully to one another.

ACTIVITY 1 – UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCES OR AMBIGUITIES IN TERMS OR CONCEPTS

Focus

These activities aim to make participants aware of the fact that there are always differences or ambiguities in the terms and concepts used in every field of study and, in particular, in teaching about religions and beliefs; these are a potential source of misunderstandings and conflicts.

The participants have to be aware of the need for a common understanding when joint and common policies and actions are needed, and also when developing educational goals and objectives for curricula, for teaching and training programmes, as well as when taking part in discussions on such topics.

Tips

These activities can take place during a training session with teachers and students in school or other environments. Because the participants in training need to be familiar with the different meanings that concepts and terms can have, and the reasons for these, they may need to carry out some library or internet-based research in order to identify these meanings and the information related to them. In later sessions, trainers could discuss with learners their research and understanding of the terms and concepts. For Activity 3, learners should be reminded in advance to bring the curriculum documents, programmes or textbooks which they normally use.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ Identify and explore different meanings of religion-related terms and concepts and the reasons (values, interests, positions, lack of knowledge, etc.) behind the different meanings.
- ▶ Explain the meanings of key terms related to religions used in documentation such as policy documents and curricula, and the significance of these terms in practice.
- ▶ Explain the importance of a clear methodology for the study of religions and non-religious world views, in relation to the fact that the concepts and terms involved can have different meanings.
- ▶ Fairly represent and interpret religions and non-religious world views, including concepts and terms relating to difference and controversy.
- ▶ Participate in a discussion where controversial issues are addressed.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of religions and non-religious terms, concepts and views.
- ▶ Ability to question and clarify concepts, terms and ideas.
- ▶ Openness to learning about others.
- ▶ Ability to identify trustworthy sources of information.
- ▶ Self-awareness, including awareness of one's own limitations.

Procedures/steps

Introduction

Getting familiar with the issues.

Focus

This activity will help the participants to address terms and concepts with which they are familiar. It will inform them about the topic and the importance of addressing it in their daily work. In addition, this activity will help the participants to clarify their thinking and the methodology for addressing terms and concepts that have different interpretations.

1. The trainer invites the teachers to recall any terms and concepts with which they have been dealing that have differences in meaning, and writes them up on a board, flip chart, etc. The trainer can also suggest terms and concepts, for example, "culture", which differ according to context. The participants can be asked to brainstorm as many words as possible that could be synonyms of the chosen term.

For example:

- ▶ Culture equals behaviour or etiquette (the meaning is reduced).
- ▶ Culture equals education (the meaning is altered).

10 minutes

2. The trainer splits participants into groups and invites them to consider both cases (reduced meaning and altered meaning) for each term or concept. They should discuss the consequences each meaning has when developing a training programme in the framework of intercultural education. Then the groups present their work to others.

10 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

The trainer invites the participants to interpret the findings and reflect on them. There is discussion of the following general questions:

- ▶ What happens if we reduce or expand the content of the concepts?
- ▶ What happens if we use the same concept to mean different content?
- ▶ What may be the effect of a wrong understanding of the concept on the development of educational policies?

ACTIVITY 2 – EXAMINING SPECIFIC CONCEPTS

Procedures/steps

Introduction

Getting familiar with the issues.

Focus

1. The trainer invites the participants to recall what they learned from the previous activity and writes the key points on the board. Then he or she writes the term “religion education” on the board, splits the group into four smaller groups and gives them specific tasks as follows:
 - ▶ Group 1 and Group 2 will develop a short curriculum (aims, objectives and a short plan of action) for “religion education” for pre-university level.
 - ▶ Group 3 will develop a short curriculum (aims, objectives and a short plan of action) entitled “education for religion”.
 - ▶ Group 4 will develop a short curriculum (aims, objectives and a short plan of action) entitled “education through religion”.

Next, each group presents its curriculum, and the trainer summarises the key points of each curriculum on the board.

20 minutes

2. The trainer invites the participants to read the following passage from *Signposts* (p. 28), considering the meaning of the concept they used during the activity and other related aspects.

The expression “religious diversity” is also ambiguous, and is used in various ways. It can refer to the internal diversity of a given religion, to the variety of relationships individuals might establish with an inherited religious tradition, or to several religions being practised (very likely in a variety of ways) in the same space.

In some languages, such as English, the term “faith” can be used interchangeably with “religion”. Yet the range of meanings for each term does not exactly match, and some writers prefer the use of “faith tradition” or “religious tradition” in preference to “faith” or “religion”, in an attempt to suggest something less bounded and reified. The German language clearly differentiates between “faith”, referring to the individual’s perspective and “religion”, referring to a more institutionalised perspective.

“Secular” can be used as an oppositional idea to “religious”, as in the expression “religious and secular diversity”. In Russian discussion, for example, the term “secular” tends to be associated with atheism and non-religion. However, in many contexts the word “secular” is used non-theologically, as meaning a style of governance, rather than an atheist position. In this sense, there is an important distinction to be made between “secular” and “secularist”.

A secular education system may support a form of religious education which allows freedom of religion or belief. This is entirely different from a secularist agenda, which seeks to suppress the study of religion or to interpret religion entirely in a reductionist way.

Moreover, descriptive uses of terms (secularity, plurality, modernity/postmodernity, etc.) need to be distinguished clearly from normative uses (secularism, pluralism, modernism/ postmodernism).

5 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

The trainer invites the participants to reflect on their reading of the *Signposts* passage and asks them how they would respond to what they have read. Then he or she leads the discussion through a set of questions that refer back to the objectives of the activity:

- ▶ Why do we sometimes attach different meanings to the same concept?
- ▶ What needs to be done in this respect? (What needs to be explored, clarified, etc.)
- ▶ What do we need to do in order to solve the problem of different meanings for the same concept?

Possible answers include:

- ▶ Question the concept?
- ▶ Accept our limitations and those of others as sources of information and knowledge?
- ▶ Find the right source of information?
- ▶ Define a clear method of study?

20 minutes

ACTIVITY 3 – A RESEARCH ACTIVITY

■ The trainer invites the participants to recall what they learned from the previous activity and writes the key points on the board. Then he or she writes the term “religion education” on the board, splits the group into four smaller groups and gives them specific tasks as follows:

- ▶ Look through the curriculum documents, programmes or textbooks which they normally use to find some of the religion-related or culture-related terms, concepts or ideas used in this activity.
- ▶ Identify and explore the different meanings given to the religion-related or culture-related terms, concepts or ideas, and the reasons behind the different meanings (values, interests, positions, lack of knowledge, etc.).

- ▶ Look through different sources of information on religion-related or culture-related terms, concepts or ideas and identify the most accurate or useful ones, giving reasons for these choices.

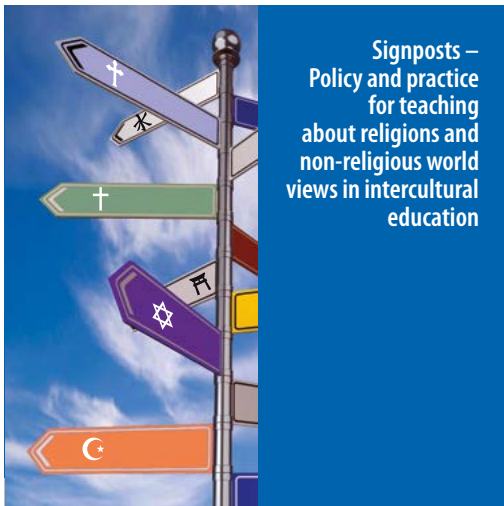
■ Later, the trainers can present the results of their research to the group, together with their suggestions for curriculum developers or for institutions responsible for developing education materials.



Chapter 4

Competence and didactics for understanding religions

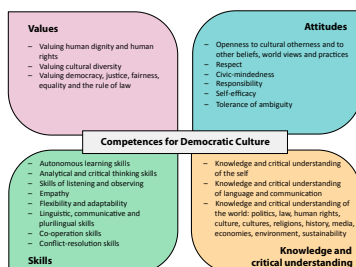
Key points



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- ▶ Teaching quality and student competence are inter-related. Two didactical approaches are emphasised: interpretive and dialogical.
- ▶ The interpretive approach concentrates on: representation (how religions and non-religious world views are portrayed or represented to learners); interpretation (how religious language and symbols are interpreted by learners); reflexivity (how learners respond to their learning about religions and non-religious world views).
- ▶ The dialogical approach, as developed by Julia Ippgrave, also has three key elements: acceptance of diversity, difference and change; being open to and responding positively to difference; and discussion and debate.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills, empathy.
- ▶ Respect, tolerance of ambiguity, openness to other beliefs and world views.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of religions, knowledge and critical understanding of communication.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ How to respond to conflicting truth-claims among students, and between religions, including whether to take sides on an issue – so that the teacher does not feel compromised or the students sense there is a “hidden agenda”.
- ▶ How to encourage students to listen to other people’s points of view – so that students come to respect other people, appreciate their opinions and learn personally through reflecting on others’ beliefs and values.
- ▶ How to handle controversial issues, especially those concerned with the representation of religions and non-religious world views, even-handedly – so that teachers do not feel compromised or vulnerable to criticisms of partiality or incompetence.

How does this affect me?



- ▶ I will have to be open to the possibility of learning from the religious diversity around me.
- ▶ I will have to be a patient, open-minded listener.
- ▶ I will have to be ready to consider controversial, difficult issues very carefully, especially those concerned with religious plurality and differences over truth-claims.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I will have to be ready to teach in ways that enable young people to express their own views and beliefs, expecting them to listen fully and carefully to one another.
- ▶ I will have to be ready to manage discussion of controversial issues, and to recognise – and communicate to young people – that agreement or final answers may be unreachable.
- ▶ I will have to challenge young people to express views on controversial material, while insisting that they do so sensitively, at the same time, protecting them from insensitive responses from others.

What can I do?



- ▶ I can establish effective ground rules with the young people that I teach, in order to promote fair representation and interpretation of religions and non-religious world views and dialogue over controversial issues in a safe space.
- ▶ I can embody the values underpinning the principles of fair representation and interpretation of religions and non-religious world views and dialogue over difference, acting fairly and impartially as a teacher, building a classroom culture where all young people are confident to speak and listen. I can set a democratic example to young people.
- ▶ I can also share these values and practices with colleagues, parents and other members of the school community, explaining what is meant by fair representation and interpretation of religions and non-religious world views and dialogue over controversial issues in a safe space.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ I need to develop knowledge and understanding of different religious and non-religious world views, including diversity between and within these, so that I can represent and encourage young people to interpret them fairly.
- ▶ I need to develop skills in managing discussion, encouraging young people to participate in dialogues over difference and insisting that they listen respectfully to one another.
- ▶ I need to develop a range of teaching methods that promote inquiry into religious diversity and the exchange of different perspectives among young people. This also means having regard to classroom layout and the materials displayed in the classroom: does the layout facilitate communication between students, not just from the teacher? Do the materials on display illustrate that people's views and beliefs are different and that respect is needed? Are ground rules for discussion clearly displayed?

ACTIVITY 1 – UNDERSTANDING AND MAKING USE OF THE INTERPRETIVE APPROACH

Focus

The focus for this activity is on helping the participants to understand the interpretive approach and to use it to plan a lesson or lessons. The activity involves analysing a text which summarises one teacher's use of the approach, and then planning a lesson or series of lessons for a different age range or with different content.

Tips

- ▶ It may help you to photocopy the Material (below) onto A3 paper so that there is plenty of space around it for the participants' notes.
- ▶ You will also need sets of highlighter pens in different colours.
- ▶ You could also have the debriefing/follow-up questions (below) ready in advance on a PowerPoint slide or flip chart.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To build knowledge and understanding of the interpretive approach.
- ▶ To learn to use the interpretive approach in planning a lesson or series of lessons.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills, empathy.
- ▶ Respect, tolerance of ambiguity, openness to other beliefs and world views.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of religions and non-religious world views, knowledge and critical understanding of communication.

Procedures/steps

1. Ask the participants to reread the account of Kevin O'Grady's teaching using the interpretive approach given in the Material (below).
10 minutes

2. Next ask the participants to go back over the account, highlighting and annotating the text. They should use one colour to highlight passages dealing with how religions are portrayed or represented to learners, another for passages dealing with how religious language and symbols are interpreted by learners and another for how learners respond to their learning about religions. In each case, they should also briefly note how the teaching aimed to ensure that the relevant principle was put into practice.

30 minutes

3. Ask for feedback from each participant, discussing each of the three principles of the interpretive approach in turn, and how the teaching aimed to put each into practice. Try to make sure that any questions or issues that arise are clarified at this point.

15 minutes

4. Point out to the participants that Kevin O'Grady's teaching was planned to educate 12-13-year-old pupils about Islam, according to the three principles of the interpretive approach. Working in pairs, they should now plan a lesson (or make an outline plan for a short series of lessons) of their own, making use of the same three principles, but adapting these to another age range and/or focusing the learning on a different religious tradition.

45-60 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

Ask each pair of participants to present the lesson or short series of lessons prepared at step 4 (above) to the group for discussion. As the group discusses the lessons, use the following questions as a checklist:

- ▶ Will the teaching ensure that religion(s) or non-religious world views are represented fairly to learners?
- ▶ Do learners have opportunities to interpret religious or non-religious language and symbols, asking questions such as: what might this mean to the people concerned?
- ▶ Do learners have opportunities to respond to their learning, exploring questions such as: what might this mean for me, or what are the similarities and differences to my own way of life?

45-60 minutes

Material – Chapter 4, Activity 1

- This is an account of Kevin O’Grady’s teaching using the interpretive approach (from *Signposts*, p. 41).
- ▶ “I designed an action research project conducted with a class over 12 weeks, using classroom observation, group interviews and analysis of diaries kept by students. The pupils contributed to the research, identifying their own interests and preferences. Their contributions helped our planning of work on Islam. Pupils recorded new ideas and their evaluations of work in progress in the diaries. They also wrote down responses to my questions asked in group interviews.
 - ▶ I analysed the diary entries and revised our programme of study to take account of the pupils’ ideas. Their ideas from the diaries prompted an approach to studying Islam that connected with topics of particular interest to them.
 - ▶ I moved from the students’ own personal interest in dress and fashion (a common theme in the diary entries) to their questions about Islamic dress, using examples from selected stories in the media, relating these to Islam more widely. Interest in the symbolic significance of clothing and their fascination with fashion accounted for pupils’ interest in Islamic dress. Interests such as these were incorporated into our lesson plans. Work on the students’ attitudes to clothes, and comparison with Islamic codes, was included. The topic as a whole was informed by the aim that Islamic material would prompt a reassessment of students’ own attitudes, whether to clothes, family life or any questions they had raised.
 - ▶ Students identified activities such as art, creative writing and discussion of videos as important, but drama was the most popular activity for exploring issues. The questions raised were both about Islam (about Muslims, Islamic beliefs and concepts) and about the individual and society (personal and religious questions and questions about society and the wider world).
 - ▶ Students’ diary entries, and my log of observations, confirmed the importance pupils gave to learning about themselves, as well as about Islam. Questions were also raised by pupils about race and ethnic identity, and the opportunity was taken to explore these, contributing to intercultural and citizenship education as well as the study of religions.
 - ▶ Imaginative activities designed by the pupils included – in the example of Islamic dress – analysing the relationship between bullying and dress, researching Islamic dress codes and using drama to explore what it might feel like to experience a ban on wearing a religious form of dress at school. It was gratifying that the pupils showed a high degree of maturity in discussions following these activities.
 - ▶ Issues of representing both Islam as a religion and individual Muslims, in the context of school, family and media portrayals, were discussed. Issues of interpretation were considered through discussing the meaning of key concepts and symbols (including dress). Issues of reflexivity were covered through the movement back and forth between students’ personal interests and concerns and their equivalents in the examples from Islam that were studied.”

ACTIVITY 2 – UNDERSTANDING AND MAKING USE OF THE DIALOGICAL APPROACH

Focus

The focus in this activity is on understanding and making use of the dialogical approach. The activity involves the participants in trying out some of the learning techniques developed by Julia Ipgrave, discussing where and how these might fit into the curriculum of their schools, and, where possible, trying out the techniques with children in school.

Tips

You should photocopy the Material (below) in advance for the group, also preparing the provocative statement cards for the Circle activity.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To develop knowledge and understanding of the dialogical approach.
- ▶ To explain where and how the dialogical approach might fit into the curriculum of your school.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills, empathy.
- ▶ Respect, tolerance of ambiguity, openness to other beliefs and world views.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of religions, knowledge and critical understanding of communication.

Procedures/steps

1. Ask the teachers to reread the summary of Julia Ipgrave's teaching in the Material below, then briefly discuss any points or questions that arise.
10 minutes
2. Next, try out the "man-eating tiger" role-play activity with the teachers in your group. Note that it is important to follow up the role-play with a discussion while still in role, a chairperson asking the characters in turn to comment on their reasons for their views, the ways in which they arrived at those reasons, reasons why other people would disagree with their views and whether those other people have a point. Each participant should then be asked to summarise what he or she has learned through the activity.
45 minutes
3. Once you have tried out the "man-eating tiger" role-play activity in your group, you should discuss with the teachers where it would fit into the curriculum of their schools or teaching practice schools. Ask them to try it out with a class in school, if possible – at a future date as they may have opportunities to report this teaching back to your group.
25 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

Ask the participants to try out this further dialogical activity in your group, before again trying it out with young people in school, if possible. You will need sets of perhaps six cards with provocative statements, for example:

- ▶ Life has no set purpose.
- ▶ When you die, you die, and that's the end.
- ▶ Marriage must be for life.
- ▶ Children should follow their parents' religion.
- ▶ There is no God.
- ▶ The universe cannot have come from nothing, there must be a Creator.

Sit in a circle. Each participant takes a card and is then responsible for chairing a discussion of its statement. He or she must ensure that each person is able to respond thoughtfully while others listen respectfully. Again, speakers should comment on their reasons for their views, the ways in which they arrived at those reasons, reasons why other people would disagree with their views and whether those other people have a point. At the end, each participant should again be asked to summarise what he or she has learned through the activity.

60 minutes

Material – Chapter 4, Activity 2

■ This is a summary of an aspect of Julia Ipgrave’s teaching using the dialogical approach (from *Signposts*, p. 43).

■ Children were encouraged:

- ▶ to be reflective about their contributions and to justify their own opinions (What are your reasons for thinking that?);
- ▶ to consider how they arrived at their conclusions (How did you reach that answer?);
- ▶ to recognise the possibility of alternative viewpoints (Can you think of reasons why some people would not agree with what you have said?);
- ▶ to be open to the arguments of others (Do you think X has a point here?)

■ Role-play was used to help children to engage with different points of view. In this, children (as individuals or in groups) had to argue a case from the point of view of a particular interest group. For example, 9-year-olds took on the roles of conservationist, tourist, government official and bereaved father in discussing whether a man-eating tiger should be hunted and killed. Such activity helps children to identify values from their own background which may not be identical to – but may nevertheless overlap significantly with – the values of other children, and with conventionally expressed human rights values.

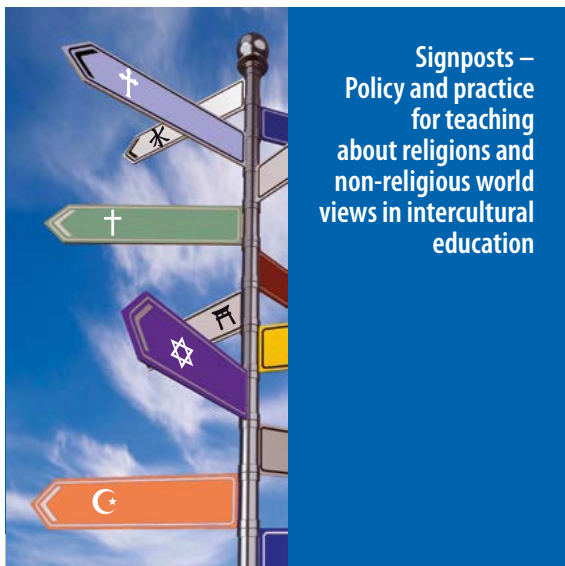
Provocative statements used in Circle activity

- ▶ Life has no set purpose.
- ▶ When you die, you die, and that’s the end.
- ▶ Marriage must be for life.
- ▶ Children should follow their parents’ religion.
- ▶ There is no God.
- ▶ The universe cannot have come from nothing, there must be a Creator.

Chapter 5

The classroom as a safe space

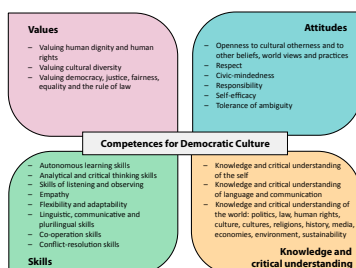
Key points



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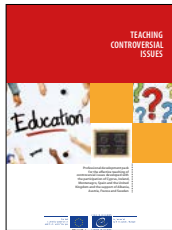
- ▶ Safe space is basic to teaching within a human rights framework.
- ▶ It refers to a classroom atmosphere where young people feel free and able to discuss their views openly together, respecting ground rules about listening to and respecting others.
- ▶ Teachers should therefore be non-judgmental and unbiased, clear on ground rules for participation, comfortable with conflict, supportive and respectful.
- ▶ Discussions must relate to young people's personal lives.
- ▶ Research from the REDCo project supports the above points. Students wish to understand each other's religions and non-religious world views, believe that this is possible, see school as the place where this should happen and want it to happen in a safe classroom space where procedures for discussion are agreed and clear.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law.
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing.
- ▶ Co-operation skills.
- ▶ Respect, tolerance of ambiguity, openness to other beliefs and world views.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of communication.

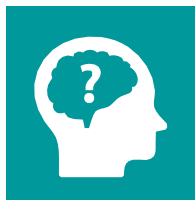
Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ Religious and world view difference can often arouse strong emotions. It can be politically sensitive. Some disagreement between young people is inevitable.
- ▶ Questions prompted by the study of religions and non-religious world views can raise controversy, for example: is there a God, or not? Does life have a meaning? Can it ever be right to take life? There are many other such challenging, potentially divisive questions.
- ▶ Teachers need to prepare to manage discussion of such questions in the classroom. Young people need to discuss them, as part of their preparation for adult life, and they need to do so safely.



How does this affect me?



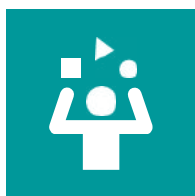
- ▶ I will have to be sensitive to the presence of difference around me and its potential to raise controversy.
- ▶ I will have to be committed to safe, peaceful ways of managing controversy and conflicts of views.
- ▶ My own skills of listening, reflection and reasoning will become even more important.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I will have to be ready to teach in ways that enable young people to express their own views and beliefs, expecting them to listen fully and carefully to one another.
- ▶ I will have to be ready to manage discussion of controversial issues, and to recognise – and communicate to young people – that agreement or final answers may be unreachable.
- ▶ I will have to challenge young people to express views on controversial material, while insisting that they do so sensitively, at the same time, protecting them from insensitive responses from others.

What can I do?



- ▶ I can establish effective ground rules with the young people that I teach, in order to promote discussion of controversial issues in a safe space.
- ▶ I can embody the values underpinning the classroom as a safe space, acting fairly and impartially as a teacher, building a classroom culture where all young people are confident to speak and listen. I can set a democratic example to young people.
- ▶ I can also share these values and practices with colleagues, parents and other members of the school community, explaining what is meant by the classroom as a safe space and how I am trying to make my classroom into a safe space.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ I need to develop knowledge and understanding of different religious and non-religious world views, so that I can anticipate what differences are likely to appear in my classroom and be ready to manage these.
- ▶ I need to develop skills in managing discussion, encouraging young people to participate and insisting that they listen respectfully to one another.
- ▶ I need to develop a range of teaching methods that promote the exchange of different perspectives among young people. This also means having regard to classroom layout and the materials displayed in the classroom: does the layout facilitate communication between students, not just from the teacher? Do the materials on display illustrate that people's views and beliefs are different and that respect is needed? Are ground rules for discussion clearly displayed?

ACTIVITY 1 – SCENARIO: LETTER WRITING TO PARENTS

Focus

The focus for this activity is on preparation for teaching about a controversial issue. Communication with parents can be vitally important in such cases, and thinking about how to do so will also help the participants to clarify their own values and purposes. The activity involves carefully drafting a letter to parents in order to inform them about the planned teaching, to invite discussion and to enable parents to support the school.

Tips

- ▶ In choosing the controversial issue, it may help the participants to reflect back on which issues have recently caused controversy in their teaching, in their school or in the news. Which particular problems or sensitivities have arisen, and why?
- ▶ In drafting the letter, participants should try to put themselves in the positions of the parents that will receive it. How would the parents feel? What questions would the parents have, and what clarifications would they seek?
- ▶ It will help to try to consider different possible parental reactions, for example from parents belonging to different cultural or religious communities.
- ▶ Suggested timings for the activity are given below, but are approximate. When, for example, longer discussions develop, you might find it helpful to allow and encourage these; if they do not, but you are sure that the learning is secure, with important points covered sufficiently, then you can move on to the next step. Naturally, in practice, the timings will also depend on group size.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To gain awareness of possible problems and sensitivities involved in teaching controversial issues.
- ▶ To develop expertise in communicating with parents and building parental support.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law.
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing.
- ▶ Co-operation skills.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of communication.

Procedures/steps

1. Ask the participants to imagine that they are preparing to teach about a controversial issue during their lessons in two or three weeks' time, and have decided to let parents know about this (the aims are to avoid misunderstandings, protect sensitivities and ensure parents' support). Ask them to choose an issue that is important in their own context (example issues: should display of religious symbols be allowed in public? Does religion do more harm or good? Is pacifism the best approach to conflict?). The participants could work in pairs to do this (see Handout below).

20 minutes

2. Ask the participants to take turns in explaining their choice of controversial issue to the group, also answering any questions that arise from the group. They should then draft their letters, considering the following questions:

- ▶ What will we say about the purposes and planned conduct of the lessons?
- ▶ What are the key messages to communicate about impartiality and safety?
- ▶ Will parents be invited into school to discuss the planned lessons with us, if they want to?
- ▶ Will parents be allowed to withdraw their children from the lessons if they prefer to and what alternative arrangements would be made?

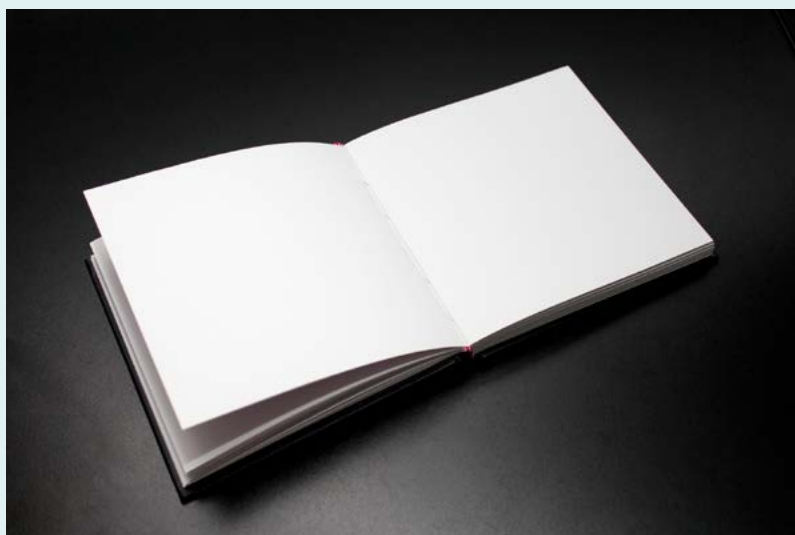
Again, they should imagine possible reactions from parents from different communities. Because of the need to consider the questions carefully, the letters should go through different drafts.

60 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

Once the letters have been drafted, they should be read aloud to the group and discussed. The checklist for discussion should be the questions at step 2 (above). Have the purposes and planned content of the lessons been communicated clearly? Have the key messages about impartiality and safety been communicated clearly? Are the arrangements for possible discussion with parents and possible withdrawal of children clear? Have possible reactions of parents from different communities been taken into account? Following this discussion, the letters should go through a final draft.

20 minutes



Handout – Chapter 5, Activity 1

■ Imagine that you are preparing to teach about a controversial issue during lessons in two or three weeks' time and have decided to let parents know about this (your aims are to avoid misunderstandings, protect sensitivities and ensure parents' support).

■ Choose an issue that is important in your own context (example issues: should display of religious symbols be allowed in public? Does religion do more harm or good? Is pacifism the best approach to conflict?).

■ Draft your letter, being ready to explain and discuss its contents. Consider points such as: what will you say about the purposes and planned conduct of the lessons? What are the key messages to communicate about impartiality and safety? Will parents be invited into school to discuss the planned lessons with you, if they want to? Will parents be allowed to withdraw their children from the lessons if they prefer to and what alternative arrangements would be made?

ACTIVITY 2 – GROUND RULES FOR THE CLASSROOM

Focus

The focus for this activity is on developing clear rules for classroom discussion of controversial issues, as an effective basis for making the classroom into a safe space. The activity involves making a poster for display in the classroom, which lists these rules and can be used to give them prominence and to remind young people of them.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To develop knowledge and understanding of the conditions needed to maintain the classroom as a safe space.
- ▶ To explain and illustrate the management of the classroom as a safe space.
- ▶ To develop skills in communicating with young people.

Tips

- ▶ It will be worth suggesting to the participants that in practice in school, young people should also be consulted on the development of safe space rules.
- ▶ For now, when identifying the rules, the participants might try to put themselves in the positions of young people of different ages, asking: will these rules be meaningful and clear? Are they rules that the young people will feel able to respect and follow? Will they actually help to maintain a safe space in the classroom?
- ▶ Suggested timings for the activity are given below, but are approximate. When, for example, longer discussions develop, you might find it helpful to allow and encourage these; if they do not, but you are sure that the learning is secure, with important points covered sufficiently, then you can move on to the next step. Naturally, in practice, the timings will also depend on group size.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness, equality and the rule of law.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of communication.

Procedures/steps

1. Ask the participants to think about the classroom rules that will be needed in order to maintain a safe space in the classroom, and to make some suggestions. Once some suggestions have been made, noted on a flip chart and discussed, talk the participants through the following ideas for rules (you could copy them on to a PowerPoint slide in advance, together with the checklist questions given at step 2 below):
 - ▶ Listen silently and carefully to whoever is speaking.
 - ▶ Wait until the speaker has clearly finished before responding.
 - ▶ Begin your response by identifying something positive in what the speaker has said.
 - ▶ Never resort to personal comments about the speaker or his or her religion or background.
 - ▶ If you would like to ask the speaker a question about what he or she has said, ask for permission first.
 - ▶ If somebody chooses not to answer a question, respect their freedom to decline.

Allow some time for the participants to ask about or respond to each suggested rule.

20 minutes

2. Next, the participants should design a poster for display in their classrooms, headed "Safe Space" and giving clear ground rules for the conduct of discussions. Again, they can consider the rules suggested above, add others of their own, and lastly arrange the rules in order of importance, also giving some thought to how the poster will be presented (for example, whether the poster should also contain images). They should also keep referring back to the following checklist questions: will these rules be meaningful and clear? Are they rules that the young people will feel able to respect and follow? Will they actually help to maintain a safe space in the classroom? The participants could work in pairs to design the poster (see Handout below).

30 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

Once the posters have been drafted, they should be presented to the group and discussed. The checklist for discussion should be the questions at step 2 (above). Will these rules be meaningful and clear? Are they rules that the young people will feel able to respect and follow? Will they actually help to maintain a safe space in the classroom? Following this discussion, the posters should go through a final draft.

30 minutes

Handout – Chapter 5, Activity 2

■ Design a poster for display in your classroom, headed “Safe Space” and giving clear ground rules for the conduct of discussions. It may help you to consider the following suggestions, add others of your own, and lastly to arrange the rules in order of importance. Be ready to discuss your ideas.

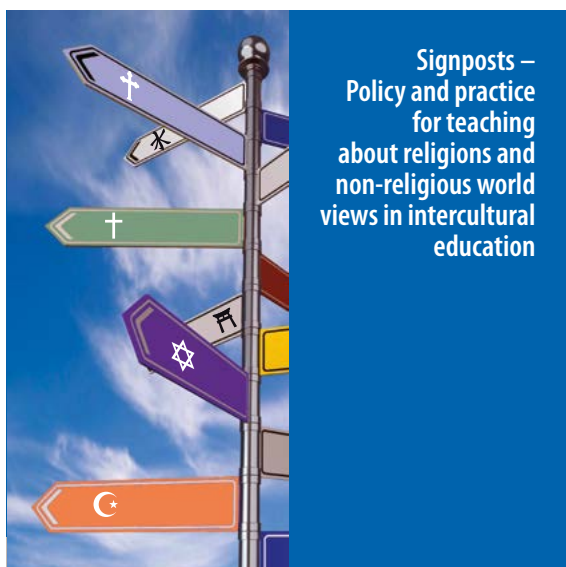
- ▶ Listen silently and carefully to whoever is speaking.
- ▶ Wait until the speaker has clearly finished before responding.
- ▶ Begin your response by identifying something positive in what the speaker has said.
- ▶ Never resort to personal comments about the speaker or his or her religion or background.
- ▶ If you would like to ask the speaker a question about what he or she has said, ask for permission first.
- ▶ If somebody chooses not to answer a question, respect their freedom to decline.



Chapter 6

The representation of religions in the media

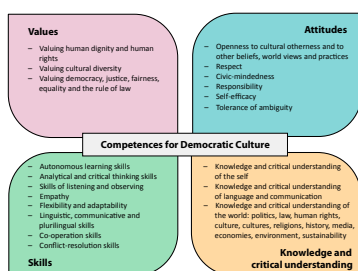
Key points



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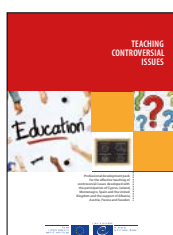
- ▶ Most information today comes to people through the internet and visual media, and young people tend to use the internet and media as trusted sources of information.
- ▶ Images which people see in visual media influence their thoughts, feelings and behaviour towards people from other cultures and religions, often without them being aware of the influence.
- ▶ Young people's language and minds, to a large extent, are influenced by dominant discourses on religion and politics, in particular by dominant media representations of Islam, which tend to be negative.
- ▶ There is a need for teachers to enable students to utilise their personal discourses in analysing the media presentation of religions.
- ▶ The quality of materials – and of students' learning through them – is often dependent on teacher knowledge, skills and commitment.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, religions, history, media, etc.
- ▶ Openness to otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Valuing of democracy, justice, equality and the rule of law.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ How to respond to different meanings sometimes given to the same concept or term.
- ▶ How to respond to different conflicting media claims about religions, individuals, events, etc.
- ▶ How to make learners accept, try to understand or appreciate other ways of understanding concepts or terms, and to reflect on their own understanding, as an important step towards joint efforts.
- ▶ How to decide which sources of information are reliable, in order to clarify media messages.

How does this affect me?



- ▶ It challenges me as a teacher, regarding my ability to use the right educational approach for teaching about controversial issues and differences in the classroom, including those presented by media messages.
- ▶ It challenges my readiness to consider and explore controversies, especially those concerned with media information.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I will be ready and able to assess sources of information critically, including different authorities and media sources.
- ▶ I will be ready and able to teach in ways that enable learners to express their own views and beliefs, expecting them to listen fully and carefully to one another.
- ▶ I will be ready and able to manage discussion of controversial issues, and to recognise and communicate to learners that agreement or final answers may be unreachable.
- ▶ I will be ready and able, if necessary, to challenge learners' way of learning, exploring, interpreting and taking and defending positions with respect to controversial material, topics, issues, etc.

What can I do?



- ▶ Present a clear methodology for the study of religions and non-religious world views, concepts and terms that takes into consideration different explanations of these.
- ▶ Encourage learners to explore the different meanings of technical terms and the reasons (values, interests, positions, lack of knowledge, etc.) behind these different meanings.
- ▶ Set a good example of the fair representation and interpretation of religions, concepts and terms, including those dealing with difference and controversy, acting fairly and impartially as a teacher.
- ▶ Help learners to analyse intercultural encounters and media images.
- ▶ Encourage a critical approach to internet use, asking learners to be more sensitive to stereotyping and implicit messages about people from other religions and cultures.
- ▶ Select and adapt published materials in order to meet the needs of the learners, helping them to analyse media representation of religions.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ My knowledge and understanding of the effect of media content on individual judgments and behaviour.
- ▶ My knowledge and understanding of the effects of propaganda in the contemporary world.
- ▶ My ability to use more than one source of information before forming an opinion and making a decision.
- ▶ My knowledge and understanding of how histories may be presented and taught from an ethnocentric point of view.
- ▶ My willingness and readiness to accept and try to eliminate my own prejudices and stereotypes.
- ▶ Materials to help learners to analyse media images, including examples from religions of communal living, positive social involvement and collaborative action between different faith communities.
- ▶ My ability and readiness to deal with inaccuracy and to adopt critical approaches to media representation of religions.

Activities

Focus

These activities aim to sensitise the participants to the role of the media, beyond its mission as a source of information and a democratic tool; that is, as potentially a power instrument that could manipulate people through discourses on religion and politics, producing negative attitudes towards different people and religions, as well as conflict between them. The activities will help participants to be able to analyse media representations of religions, groups and events, in order to be able to identify media-based propaganda, prejudices and stereotypes and prevent the creation of personal ones.

They will help participants to better understand the importance of using different sources of information about religions, events and people, to create well-informed and unbiased opinions and judgments about them. They will help the participants to improve their use of the human right to express opinions.

Tips

These activities can be used at any time when media issues involving politics, conflicts, social events, religions or individuals are addressed in the school community. The activities can be used when there is a need for reflection on our own way of thinking, our prejudices, our limitations and so on. Trainers and participants alike need to be well informed, in order to maintain unbiased opinions and judgments.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of language and communication.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, culture, religions, history, media, etc.
- ▶ Openness to otherness and to other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, equality and the rule of law.
- ▶ Questioning authorities and sources of information.

ACTIVITY 1 – HOW DO WE CREATE OUR IDEAS ABOUT PEOPLE AND EVENTS?

Focus

This activity aims to help participants to be aware of where their ideas and information about people, events, politics and religion, come from. It aims to help them to reflect on their own prejudices and stereotypes and question their patterns of ideas and knowledge creation.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

The participants need to be able to:

- ▶ identify where their ideas about religions, events and people come from;
- ▶ describe, through examples from everyday life, the role of the media today both as a democratic tool and as a power instrument;
- ▶ identify the effects that propaganda has on their way of thinking;
- ▶ reflect critically on how different people may interpret the same information or event differently;
- ▶ question authorities and the media as sources of information;
- ▶ use more than one source of information before creating an opinion or making a decision;
- ▶ set a good example of the fair representation and interpretation of religions and concepts and terms, including those dealing with difference and controversy, acting fairly and impartially as participants.

Procedures/steps

1. A case study

The trainer announces the following information:

“A gunman opens fire at a youth camp and up to 84 people are dead.”

He or she asks the participants to express their first reactions and write down their answers, for example on a flip chart or board. He or she may use the following questions:

- ▶ Who might be the person responsible?
- ▶ What might be the reasons for the shooting?
- ▶ How do you support your suggestions?

10 minutes

2. The trainer informs the participants that:

“Later, the news informs people that a Muslim person is responsible for the shooting.”

The trainer now divides the class into three groups representing the roles of Muslims, Christians and atheists and asks them to discuss and note answers to the following questions:

- ▶ What would you think as a Muslim?
- ▶ What would you think as a Christian?
- ▶ What would you think as an atheist?

They should also try to describe the perpetrator of the shooting from different perspectives (physical, intellectual, moral, social, etc.).

Next, the groups present their answers to the questions and their perceptions of the perpetrator. The trainer should use the following questions to prompt a discussion:

- ▶ Why did you describe the presumed perpetrator in the way you did?
- ▶ Were your first reactions influenced by any past experiences you have had?
- ▶ Would anybody like to say something about this situation and the way the same event was described from the perspectives of different groups?
- ▶ Do you still agree with your first ideas or thoughts about the event, or the perpetrator?

20 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

The trainer informs the participants that the person responsible for the shooting has turned out not to be a Muslim, nor linked to any particular group.

The trainer now invites all groups to identify possible stereotypes, prejudices and generalisations in the ways in which the different groups have previously described the perpetrator. These questions may help the discussion:

- ▶ Did you identify any stereotypes or prejudices in your discussion?
- ▶ If yes, where do you think they came from?
- ▶ Did you have any prior information regarding the possible perpetrator?
- ▶ Where did you get that information?
- ▶ Did you ever have any doubt over whether or not that information was true?
- ▶ Did you ever try to make use of sources of information other than media ones?
- ▶ What do you now think about your immediate responses?
- ▶ Is there anything you would change in the way you made these responses?
- ▶ Is there anything you would change in your general way of thinking about issues such as these?

15 minutes

ACTIVITY 2 – HOW DO WE SENSITISE OURSELVES TO THE POTENTIAL POWER OF THE MEDIA?

Focus

This activity aims to sensitise learners to the role of the media, beyond its mission as a source of information and a democratic tool; that is, as potentially a power instrument that could manipulate responses through discourses on religion and politics, producing negative attitudes towards people and religions as well as conflict between them.

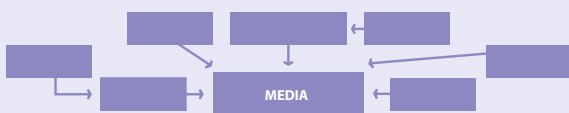
Objectives/expected learning outcomes

The participants need to be able to:

- ▶ describe, through examples from everyday life, the role of the media today, both as a democratic tool and as a power instrument;
- ▶ describe the effects that propaganda has in the contemporary world;
- ▶ describe the ways in which the media presents and interprets religions and religion-related events;
- ▶ question authorities and the media as sources of information;
- ▶ critically consider their own patterns of gaining information and knowledge.

Procedures/steps

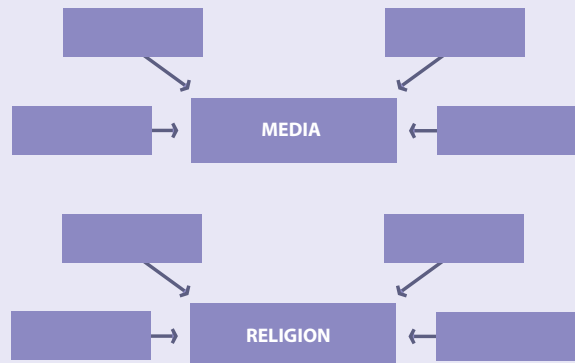
1. The trainer invites the participants to use their prior knowledge and to offer ideas about the positive or negative impacts of media on society, arranging their suggestions in a concept map:



The trainer may add his or her own ideas.

5 minutes

2. In groups, the participants are asked to create clusters of concepts regarding media and religion, making use of the concepts used in the concept map:



The groups share their ideas with other groups, giving examples in support.

10 minutes

3. The trainer invites the participants to think or reflect for several minutes about the results of the clustering exercise. The participants are then asked to discuss the following questions:
 - ▶ Is it possible that the media create conflicts, rather than just offering information on the conflicts created by others?
 - ▶ Why do different people view the news in different perspectives?
 - ▶ Do you believe in the possibility of an independent media? Why, or why not?
 - ▶ Do you believe in total freedom for the media or should there be some limitations?
 - ▶ Why do you think that individuals may be sensitive about matters related to their religion?
 - ▶ Should the media stay away from these aspects of individual identity?
 - ▶ Is there anything that the law can do, or should do, in this regard?

Debriefing and follow-up

The trainer invites the participants to work on the Handout below.

15 minutes


Handout – Chapter 6, Activity 2

The following passage is from *Signposts*, p. 61:

Young people, media and religion in the classroom

- ▶ “How do young people talk about religion, what are they talking about and why do they talk the way they do? During my time as researcher in the field of young people and religion, these questions have frequently come back to me. Based on classroom observation, video recordings of classroom interaction and interviews with students from various ethnic and religious/non-religious backgrounds, I found that young people’s language to a large extent is influenced by so called ‘dominant’ discourses on religion and politics. These discourses are mainly encountered through the media and public debates. Students were especially affected by dominant media representations of Islam. In the classroom they drew on this media discourse, tending to be more negative about Islam and Muslims in this context than they were in the individual interviews with me. Clearly, such attitudes can have a negative effect on the idea of the classroom as ‘safe space’ for dialogue.
- ▶ In my study I found that students’ everyday discourses are characterised both by dominant discourses in the multicultural debate, and their own personal experiences with religious and cultural diversity. These discourses are often in opposition to each other, and it seems that it is more difficult for them to activate discourses related to their own experiences than to representations in the media. When students interpret reality based on their personal experiences with cultural and religious diversity in their everyday life, these representations are, in general, more positive than the representations they encounter in the media. In short, the powerful effect of media discourse (including television news and the internet) is clear, but students are also capable of formulating their own more independent positions. In relation to school these are important findings.
- ▶ According to the students, school is one of the few venues where they actually talk about religion and their experiences with religious diversity; school in general and religious education in particular can therefore play an important role. My studies of classroom interaction show that giving students the opportunity to share their views and to criticise dominant discourses, can enable them better to relate their knowledge and understanding of religions to their own personal and social development – but this requires input from the participant. The connection of the personal and the social in classroom interactions suggests ways in which personal reflection can be connected with themes of social morality and citizenship. The discourse analysis revealed that there is much to learn from how young people talk. If this knowledge is used to help students to be more aware of how they talk about others, what they talk about and why they talk like they do, it becomes easier to uncover where and how prejudices and stereotypes are constructed. Making these processes more visible and clearer both to students and participants might hopefully contribute to a more open, transparent and balanced discussion in the classroom.”

■ The above text summarises research by Marie von der Lippe with young Norwegian people. Discuss and reflect, using the following questions:

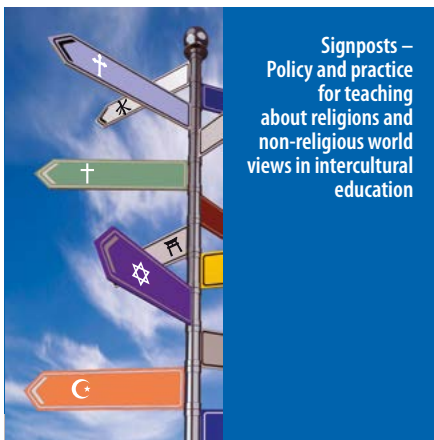
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ How might we try to question the media or other authorities when attempting to find out the truth? How as teachers might we help young people to do so?▶ How might we change our way of approaching information, media claims or apparently authoritative accounts of religions, events or people?
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Chapter 7

Non-religious convictions and world views

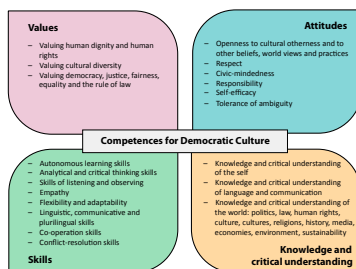
Key points



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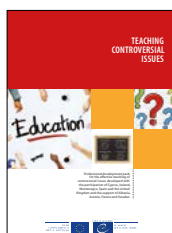
- ▶ The study of both religions and non-religious convictions is based on the right of freedom of religion or non-religious belief.
- ▶ There is no fixed definition of a non-religious conviction. There are organised world views that are not religious, and personal world views that are developed by individuals.
- ▶ All religions are world views, but not all world views are religions.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Openness to other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Empathy.
- ▶ Knowledge of language and communication.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ Should a personally developed conviction or view of life be valued equally with an organised world view?
- ▶ Is a religious conviction stronger and more powerful than a non-religious one?
- ▶ Can a teacher be open-minded in teaching, if she or he has a strong religious or non-religious conviction?
- ▶ How should personal and organised non-religious world views be represented in the curriculum?

How does this affect me?



- ▶ I will have to try to understand those people who have a religious conviction or world view and those who have a non-religious conviction or world view, and respect both.
- ▶ I will have to be aware of my own use of words and concepts such as “world views”, “life views”, or “non-religious”.
- ▶ I will have to challenge my own values. Do I really value cultural diversity? Do I really value diversity within my own religion, for instance, or within a world view similar to mine?

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I will have to teach in a way that develops tolerance, as well as mutual understanding and trust, between students that have different world views, both religious and non-religious.
- ▶ I will have to show interest in different world views, and encourage my students to develop such an interest, while still reflecting on my own beliefs and encouraging my students to do the same.
- ▶ I will have to be aware that every single person has her or his own conviction. Some people identify with a religion, an organisation or a world view, while others do not.

What can I do?



- ▶ I can establish my classroom as a safe space, where everyone can give their opinion and feel that it is welcome.
- ▶ I can encourage my students to try out new thoughts, even if they are not yet well developed.
- ▶ I can work with my colleagues on questions about different world views, including how they can be taught, and we can discuss our understanding of different words or concepts, working towards a common understanding.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ I need to develop my own understanding of both convictions and world views.
- ▶ I need to develop my own curiosity.
- ▶ I will try to help to develop positive conversations between the teachers in my school about these issues.

ACTIVITY 1 – SCENARIO: ANSWERING A LETTER FROM YOUR COUSIN

Focus

The focus of this activity is to develop skills related to seeing beliefs and convictions from different viewpoints, or different life views. The activity also aims to challenge participants' own thoughts and values related to religious diversity. It may be easy to think about oneself as open and inclusive. But what happens when I see myself from the other's point of view? Am I always honest when I talk about religion and views of life? Or do I have hidden attitudes or intentions? Will the recipient of my message always hear what I intend to send?

Tips

- ▶ If necessary or appropriate, this can be a private task. At the start, the participants should be reassured that they do not have to share their thoughts aloud, if they do not want to.
- ▶ Suggested timings for the activity are given below, but are approximate. When, for example, longer discussions develop, you might find it helpful to allow and encourage these; if they do not, but you are sure that the learning is secure, with important points covered sufficiently, then you can move on to the next step. Naturally, in practice, the timings will also depend on group size.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To explain and express thoughts of people with different points of view.
- ▶ To explore one's own thoughts about religion and non-religious views of life.
- ▶ To figure out how one's own thoughts and values influence self-expression, discussion and reflection.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Openness to other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Empathy.

Procedures/steps

1. Ask the participants to read the letter from their "cousin", as found in the Handout below. Go through the tasks with the participants. Ask if there are any questions about the letter or the tasks.
5 minutes
2. Ask the participants to complete tasks 1 and 2, repeating the reassurance that their answers will remain private if they wish.
25 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

Invite the group to participate in a discussion:

- ▶ Has anyone discovered anything about themselves and their own thoughts, that they want to share in the group?
- ▶ Has anyone discovered anything about a world view that they do not share or with which they do not agree, that they want to share in the group?
- ▶ How did it feel to respond to the thoughts that you expressed in the first letter?
- ▶ Is there anyone who would like to read one or both of their letters? If you would like to, it will be up to you whether the group are then invited to respond with questions or comments.
- ▶ On reflection, do you think that there are different ways in which different people hold non-religious world views?

30 minutes

Handout – Chapter 7, Activity 1

Letter from your cousin:

Hi!

I am so glad that we are getting to know each other, and that we can speak about such matters as we did last time we met. Since then, I've thought a lot about our conversation. And I would like to challenge you: what are the main reasons that you don't believe in God? I have another question: what are the most important values in your life?

Love from your cousin

Tasks:



1. Write an answer to your cousin. If you are a believer in God yourself, try to put yourself in the shoes of someone who is not.
2. Then try to put yourself in the shoes of the "cousin". Write an answer to the answer that you wrote in task 1.

ACTIVITY 2 – DO I VALUE DIVERSITY? LISTENING TO A SONG

Focus

The focus of this activity is to consider how it feels when one's own conviction is challenged. A song lyric performed by Joan Osborne poses questions that can make both religious and non-religious people reflect, about both their own life views and the diversity of life views that exist.

Tips

- ▶ Play the song without yet introducing the questions that follow afterwards, to allow the participants' own feelings to be unaffected by the task questions.
- ▶ Suggested timings for the activity are given below, but are approximate. When, for example, longer discussions develop, you might find it helpful to allow and encourage these; if they do not, but you are sure that the learning is secure, with important points covered sufficiently, then you can move on to the next step. Naturally, in practice, the timings will also depend on group size.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To explain and express thoughts of people with different points of view.
- ▶ To consider how texts about faith and belief can affect one's own feelings and those of others.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Openness to other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Knowledge of language and communication.

Procedures/steps

1. Hand out lyric sheets (see Handout below). Ask the participants to read and/or listen while you play the song. The lyrics are also posted on: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRsJHjZyask
2. Next, hand out and read through questions 1-6. Play the song once more. The participants could write key words to the answers while listening this second time. After listening, give them an additional 5 minutes to finalise their key-words, preparing for a conversation in groups afterwards.
20 minutes
3. Divide the participants into groups of three. Invite them to share their "keyword" answers to the questions, in their groups. Every participant should answer each question in turn. While each participant may be asked to briefly clarify points, the group should not start a full discussion yet.
30 minutes
4. In the same groups, the participants should now role-play a talk show on TV. The youngest member of the group has the role of the talk-show host. The other two are guests: one who believes in God and one who does not. The second verse of the song contains three questions. The talk-show host asks these questions and the guests answer from their role-play point of view.
10 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

In plenary: ask each participant to identify one point which struck him or her while another person was speaking in today's session. These points should be shared aloud.

15 minutes

Individually, the participants should also be asked to write or draw something in their mindset that changed or developed during the session.

10 minutes

Handout – Chapter 7, Activity 2

One of us

If God had a name, what would it be?
And would you call it to His face?
If you were faced with Him in all His glory
What would you ask if you had just one question?

And yeah, yeah God is great
Yeah, yeah, God is good
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

What if God was one of us
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make His way home?
If God had a face, what would it look like?
And would you want to see?
If seeing meant that you would have to believe
In things like heaven and in Jesus and the saints and
all the prophets?

And yeah, yeah God is great
Yeah, yeah, God is good
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

What if God was one of us
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make His way home?
He's trying to make His way home
Back up to Heaven all alone
Nobody calling on the phone
Except for the Pope maybe in Rome

And yeah, yeah God is great
Yeah, yeah, God is good
Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah

What if God was one of us
Just a slob like one of us
Just a stranger on the bus
Trying to make His way home?
Just trying to make His way home
Like a holy rolling stone
Back up to Heaven all alone
Just trying to make His way home
Nobody calling on the phone
Except for the Pope maybe in Rome

Lyrics by Eric Bazilian

Questions to answer on your own:

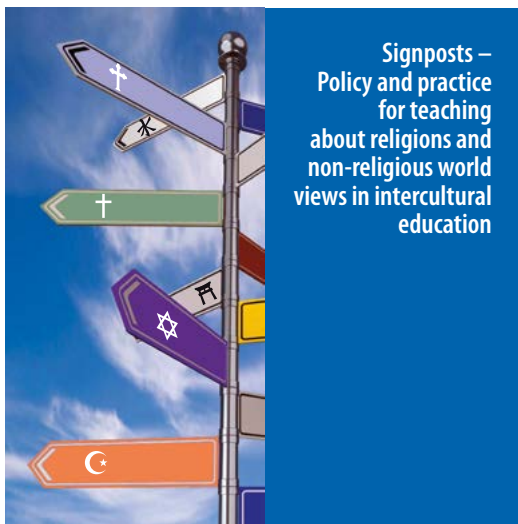


- ▶ What thoughts do I get when I hear this song and/or read the text?
- ▶ What emotions can I feel?
- ▶ Which text line made me think most?
- ▶ Which text line prompted most emotion?
- ▶ Does any text line unsettle me? Which one(s)?
- ▶ Why do I think this line or these lines affected me most?

Chapter 8

Human rights issues

Key points

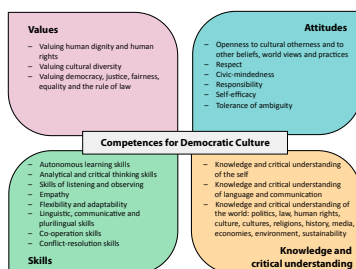


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Policy makers, schools and teacher trainers should take steps to ensure that:

- ▶ there is no discrimination on grounds of religious belief or conviction, or on grounds of non-religious belief or conviction, in schools or classrooms;
- ▶ teachers, students and parents are familiar with the main human rights codes and their statements about freedom of religion and belief;
- ▶ attention is given in schools to the rights of children and the rights of parents/legal guardians;
- ▶ the right to freedom of expression in schools and classrooms is balanced with duties and obligations concerning civility and sensitivity to the presence of minorities.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights.
- ▶ Respect.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, religions and non-religious convictions.
- ▶ Conflict-resolution skills.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ International law states that parents and legal guardians have the right to raise their children in conformity with their own religious or philosophical convictions. At the same time international law recognises that at some point in the child's development, he or she may wish to claim his or her own rights in relation to religion or belief. In many countries, parents have influence over how children encounter religions and non-religious beliefs in school. How much should parents control this? And when do children have enough competence to make such choices themselves?
- ▶ Human rights can conflict with each other. Opinions that are associated with a religion or belief may be unacceptable from a human rights perspective (for example, outlook on sexual orientation or practices, gender issues).
- ▶ Should we focus more on rights or obligations? What do different religions and non-religious world views say about this?



How does this affect me?



- ▶ I will have to consider my own positions on the various human rights.
- ▶ I will have to show that I respect the human rights myself, and as a part of my professional duties.
- ▶ I can express my religion or non-religious belief, but must not exploit my position to impose beliefs onto my pupils.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I have to – through my teaching and behaviour – protect and fulfil the human rights, and contribute to a diverse democracy.
- ▶ I have to explain to my students the importance of learning about others' religious and non-religious beliefs, in order to live together with understanding and respect.
- ▶ I should teach about the relationship between rights and obligations.
- ▶ I must ensure that the right to freedom of expression in my classroom is balanced with obligations concerning civility and sensitivity to the presence of minorities.

What can I do?



- ▶ I can have a good, clear dialogue with parents, which emphasises both parental rights and the school's mission when it comes to teaching about religions and non-religious world views.
- ▶ I can challenge children with different religious and non-religious beliefs to discuss moral issues based on their own beliefs, or in relation to other points of view.
- ▶ I can respect, without questioning, a pupil's wish to wear a religious symbol or item of dress.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ I need to develop my own knowledge of human rights and their place in my own country's laws.
- ▶ I need to develop my own skills of handling different opinions in the classroom, including opinions which may be extreme, and balancing the right to freedom of expression and the need for civility.
- ▶ I need to develop my own skills of insisting on human rights while showing respect for someone else's opinion.

ACTIVITY 1 – EQUAL VALUES, DIFFERENT REASONS?

Focus

The focus of this activity is to consider whether the articles in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights really are universal or not. As is pointed out in *Signposts*, the ideas behind the statement are sometimes argued to be rooted in Christian tradition (p. 80). At the same time, the declaration has been adopted by all member states of the Council of Europe and is an important part of the Council of Europe's moral basis.

Tips

Suggested timings for the activity are given below, but are approximate. When, for example, longer discussions develop, you might find it helpful to allow and encourage these; if they do not, but you are sure that the learning is secure, with important points covered sufficiently, then you can move on to the next step. Naturally, in practice, the timings will also depend on group size.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To increase human rights competences.
- ▶ To understand why one needs even more knowledge about both human rights and the different religions.
- ▶ To give examples of how there may be similarities between outcomes sought by the different religions, although the background or reasoning may be different.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Valuing human dignity and human rights.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of the world: politics, law, human rights, religions, history, etc.

Procedures/steps

Ask the participants to read the following slightly adapted *Signposts* passages (pp. 80-81): "Intercultural discussion about human dignity and human rights"; "The concept of human dignity"; "Towards a constructive dialogue about human rights". See Handout 1, below.

5 minutes

Divide the participants into groups of three. Each participant role-plays one of three world views: one of them is non-religious, each of the other two takes the role of one religion represented in the relevant country or region.

In the group, they now read some of the articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (see Handout 2, below). The participants take turns at explaining their approval or disapproval of each article, giving reasons which they think might be given by the religion or non-religious world view that they represent, based on a text or other knowledge that they have about its values. They should be given some time to think over their response before they make it.

For example: I, as a Jew, support the article that no one shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, because we have a reciprocity principle: "What is hateful to you, do not do to others."

Allow room for conversation after the discussion of each article.

After the role-play activity, write up some of the statements (perhaps two to four) on posters and display them in the room.

40 minutes

Debriefing and follow-up

In groups (if possible, with those who represented the same religion or world view in the same group), the participants should now discuss these questions:

- ▶ What are your reflections on the activity?
- ▶ Which aspects of the activity were most difficult?
- ▶ Which aspects of the activity were most enjoyable?

10 minutes

In plenary, the whole group should next discuss the following questions:

- ▶ Within the groups, did you find more consensus or more disagreement regarding human rights?
- ▶ What did you find out about the background or reasoning of the different religions or world views represented in the role-plays?
- ▶ Next, everybody should walk around and look at the posted statements, before coming back to discuss the following questions.
- ▶ What are the main similarities and differences between the different views?
- ▶ Are there any contradictions between representatives of the same religion or world view?
- ▶ How did it feel to represent a religion or world view other than your own?
- ▶ Are there other points arising from your discussions that you would like to raise?

15 minutes

Handout 1 – Chapter 8, Activity 1

(Three world views – extracts from *Signposts*, pp. 80-81)

Intercultural discussion about human dignity and human rights

Some critics question the universality of human rights, especially arguing that all value systems are in some way related to particular cultural (including religious) history and experience (e.g. MacIntyre 1981: 69). Some have argued that the ideas of natural rights and human equality are rooted in Christian tradition (Waldron 2002). Whatever the roots of the idea, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was expressed in the secular (but not secularist) context of an intergovernmental organisation which is part of the public political sphere. The Universal Declaration forms the moral basis of the work of intergovernmental organisations which have to maintain neutrality towards religious claims. Nevertheless, the Western political and cultural context in which the Universal Declaration was developed is plain to see.

The concept of human dignity

Many critics of the universal imposition of Western liberal democracy and a Western formulation of human rights do accept the idea of the innate value of the human person – what the Universal Declaration calls “human dignity”. However, they express it differently from the Western view of the individual, autonomous person. Rather, they use moral concepts and practices from within their own cultural and religious traditions which support the idea of human dignity as being a necessary condition for a just society.

One version of this view points out the relational nature of individual identity in some cultures, in which persons are not considered as “self-contained units” which can be defined in isolation from human relationships (Parekh 1994). This does not mean that there is no concern here with human dignity or a just social order. In a traditional Hindu family, for example, certain family members are expected to take on particular responsibilities by virtue of their particular position in the family (which could be as eldest son, or first cousin, for example). Thus, autonomy, as understood by some Westerners, is restricted by virtue of a person’s birth. This does not negate the idea of human dignity, however.

Towards a constructive dialogue about human rights

It has been argued that there can be constructive dialogue between individuals and groups having different emphases when discussing the concept of human dignity. This dialogical view acknowledges different moral, religious and cultural sources for ideas of human dignity, but also recognises some close overlap between the different ideas. This dialogical view is consistent with the work of the Council of Europe, which has a strong commitment to the promotion and exploration of intercultural (including inter-religious) dialogue. On this view, there is a recognition that there are related expressions of the idea of human rights within different cultural or religious ways of life. For example, consensus might be found through the discussion of “overlapping values” – of attempting to find some degree of common ground, even though particular moral justifications may be rooted in different traditions or beliefs (Jackson 1997). This is close to what the philosopher John Rawls means by an “overlapping consensus” (Rawls 1993).

A similar approach has been used in work on children’s dialogue, in which children from different religious and cultural backgrounds draw on their own traditions in addressing a common moral issue (Ipgrave 2013; see Chapter 4). There have also been discussions on reflexivity, including the idea that one’s understanding can be deepened through encounter with difference (Jackson 1997, 2004; see Chapter 4).

Handout 2 – Chapter 8, Activity 1

The articles below are from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948.

Article 3

■ Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

■ No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

■ No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 7

■ All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination.

Article 9

■ No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

■ Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal, in the determination of his rights and obligations and of any criminal charge against him.

ACTIVITY 2 – THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD VERSUS THE RIGHTS OF THE PARENTS

Focus

The focus of this activity is the possible contradiction between parents' right to raise children in accordance with their own religious or philosophical beliefs, and the child's own freedom of religion or belief.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ Be able to explain more about the Declaration of Human Rights.
- ▶ To weigh different rights against each other, and equip participants to deal with conversations and discussions where different rights stand against each other.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Valuing democracy, justice, fairness and the rule of law.
- ▶ Flexibility and adaptability.
- ▶ Conflict-resolution skills.

Procedures/steps

Divide the participants into groups of four.

Give each group a "dart board" and a list of statements found in Handout 1 (below). Ask each participant to select one "marker", for example a coin, a key or a rubber.

In their groups, participants read one statement at a time and then place their marker on the board. If they totally agree, the marker is put on the "bull's eye" or 10. If they totally disagree, it is put on the outer circle or 1. Decisions are explained, with those agreeing most strongly explaining first. Following the explanations, each participant is allowed to change his or her judgment and, if he or she wishes, to explain why.

30 minutes


Debriefing and follow-up

Groups can now discuss which statement presented the most interesting discussion. These discussions can be continued in plenary.

Handout 1 – Chapter 8, Activity 2



Statements

- 
- ▶ The parents of a 10-year-old boy should decide whether their child should participate when the school offers a visit to a church in December. The main part of the visit is a (religious) service.
 - ▶ A 12-year-old girl should decide herself whether she should participate when the school offers a visit to a mosque. In the visit, there will be no proselytising for Islam, only professional teaching about the building and the art inside it.
 - ▶ Parents can bring their children to a summer camp with their church's congregation, and expect that the children participate in all activities.
 - ▶ An 8-year-old daughter of Christian parents should be allowed to pray to Hindu gods and have figures of these in her room.
 - ▶ A 9-year-old boy may, due to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, assert his right to fast in the month of Ramadan.

ACTIVITY 3 – RIGHTS VERSUS OBLIGATIONS AND DUTIES

Focus

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been criticised for focusing unilaterally on rights and giving insufficient attention to responsibilities and duties. This activity focuses on the relationship between rights and duties.

Procedures/steps

Each participant should complete the worksheet about rights and duties individually (see Handout below).

20 minutes

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

To explore the relationship between rights and duties.

Debriefing and follow-up

In plenary, hold a follow-up discussion for comments and questions related to the worksheet.

10 minutes

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of human rights.
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills.

Handout – Chapter 8, Activity 3

The following is an extract from *Signposts* (p. 82). The initial passage is from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights:

Because rights and duties are inextricably linked, the idea of a human right only makes sense if we acknowledge the duty of all people to respect it. Regardless of a particular society's values, human relations are universally based on the existence of both rights and duties.

Examples of responsibilities in relation to rights included in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are as follows:

- ▶ If we have a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, we also have the obligation to respect others' thoughts or religious principles.
- ▶ If we have a right to be educated, then we have the obligation to learn as much as our capabilities allow us and, where possible, share our knowledge and experience with others.

Your task, based on the above, is to suggest responsibilities or duties that may comply with the rights of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; the first suggestion is made for you, as an example:

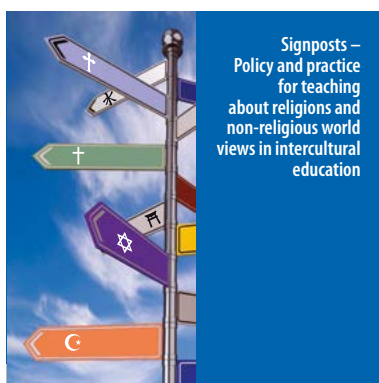
Right	Duty/responsibility
▶ Right to freedom of thought and religion.	▶ Obligation to respect others' thoughts or religious principles.
▶ Right to life, liberty and security.	
▶ Right to take part in the government of his/her country, directly or through freely chosen representatives.	
▶ Right of the child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis.	
▶ Right to freedom of opinion and expression.	
▶ Right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages.	



Chapter 9

Linking school to wider communities and organisations

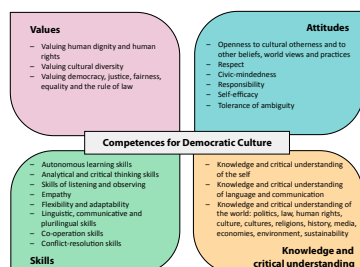
Key points



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- ▶ The Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec(2008)12 sees schools as a vital part of the public sphere, and gives high importance to the communication between schools and individuals and groups in wider society.
- ▶ Liaison with communities outside the school requires a whole-school policy and appropriate support for the staff and students involved, as well as a person (or persons) within the school with responsibility for the links.

Competences for Democratic Culture



- ▶ Valuing cultural diversity.
- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Respect.
- ▶ Empathy.
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills.
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing.
- ▶ Co-operation skills.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of culture, cultures and religions.

Controversial issues for teachers to consider



- ▶ Educational visits to religious communities are aimed at promoting learning; they are not acts of worship.
- ▶ If parents wrongly interpret a visit to a religious community as an act of worship, should they be free to withdraw their children?
- ▶ What conditions should be attached to receiving visitors or organising visits?
- ▶ How should these conditions be communicated to students and parents, including behaviour guidelines for students?
- ▶ What is the distinction between proselytising and informing or explaining?

How does this affect me?



- ▶ I need to prepare in order to bring a new voice into the classroom, or prepare students to hear new voices in the community.
- ▶ I need to be clear about the aims, the purpose and the educational value of linking my school to the community.

How does this affect my teaching?



- ▶ I will have to enable students to understand the language, beliefs and claims of those holding religious positions or non-religious stances within society.
- ▶ Teaching out of the classroom or school site requires different skills, for example awareness of safety requirements or relations with the public.

What can I do?



- ▶ Facilitate opportunities for exchanges and dialogue between pupils from different cultural environments.
- ▶ Invite visitors from religious and belief organisations into the school to act as resources (bearing in mind their needs as persons).
- ▶ Arrange student visits to religious and other communities.
- ▶ Work on building the links of the school to the community through a whole-school approach.
- ▶ Involve other teachers, students and parents in organising and maintaining these links.

What do I need to develop?



- ▶ Methods of teaching and learning which ensure democratic, community-based education.
- ▶ Awareness of the importance of establishing positive relationships with parents and the local community, including religious communities.
- ▶ Sensitivity to and awareness of the various religious and belief affiliations of students.
- ▶ I need to assist all staff involved to develop the necessary competences (see above).
- ▶ Confidence and awareness that local issues and concerns are linked with global ones.

ACTIVITY 1 – ORGANISING A SCHOOL–COMMUNITY LINK

Focus

In this activity we focus on the importance of linking schools to the wider community, and especially to significant people and places. We investigate the roles, issues and difficulties in organising a visit, taking into consideration the preconditions as described in the recommendation.

Tips

The activity offers several alternative scenarios, according to the teachers' knowledge and needs. The newly formed groups can either work in relation to their own schools, or select a school in a certain place in one of the Council of Europe member states (investigating online its educational, social and religious conditions), as well as likely places to visit. As will be seen below, the *Signposts* passages to be used in this chapter are longer than those used in previous chapters, and rather than finding them included as handouts, trainers and participants are asked to go back to the original *Signposts* text.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To understand and analyse the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholders in organising a school–community link.
- ▶ To implement the principles of teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education, by building links to the community.
- ▶ To recognise the value of using links to the community, and to use out-of-school visits as an educational tool.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Respect.
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills.
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing.
- ▶ Co-operation skills.
- ▶ Knowledge and critical understanding of culture, cultures and religions.

Procedures/steps

1. Form groups of five to six persons.
2. TPS (Think-Pair-Share) – Read individually the following parts of the recommendation: “Scope and definitions” and “Educational preconditions” (see Material 1 and 2 in Chapter 2, Activity 1, p. 27 of this training manual).
3. Give one role to each group (one group is “directors”, one is “teachers”, and so on). If you have groups of five and groups of six, skip the “local community representative” role in the groups of five (see Handout below).
4. Provide time for the groups to read their texts and understand the particularities of their roles.
5. Give numbers (1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and/or 6) to each member of each group. Then, gather all numbers 1 in one group, all numbers 2 in another group, and so on.
6. You now have new groups, in which all roles are represented.
7. Give groups the choice of which kind of school to work with (see Tips above).
8. The groups are tasked to organise either a school visit to a significant place in the local community, or a visit to a school of one or more persons, taking into consideration what was read at step 2.
9. Each group designs a poster, advertising the activity they have planned.
10. The posters are placed on the walls. Every group places a representative in front of their poster, a new member taking the role every 3 minutes. The participants circulate, viewing and discussing the posters.

Debriefing and follow-up

- ▶ How did you feel while participating in this activity?
- ▶ What are the benefits of organising a link to the local community?
- ▶ What are the possible risks and disadvantages?
- ▶ During visits to or from school, which people need support? Which people can provide it?
- ▶ Considering the use of this activity in teacher training, what would you keep and what would you change?

ALTERNATIVE

Follow steps 1-4, then:

5. Write a letter to a group of your choice, based on your role, informing them about a possible visit (for example, director to parents, teacher to local or religious community representative, parents to teacher, students to parents).
6. Create a poster with the list of the actions that the person in your role needs to carry out in order to organise a school–community link.
7. The posters are placed on the walls. Every group places a representative in front of their poster, a new member taking the role every 3 minutes. The participants circulate, viewing and discussing the posters.

Handout – Chapter 9, Activity 1

Organising a school–community link

Linking schools

Roles and tasks for the activity

<p>SCHOOL DIRECTOR</p> <p>Read the following texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “The Council of Europe ... up to ... in note form” (SP, p. 87). ▶ “In summary, on the school’s side ... up to ... safety issues, etc.” (SP, p. 89). ▶ “The recommendation ... up to ... training” (SP, p. 96). 	<p>PARENT</p> <p>Read the following texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “Usually, such visits ... up to ... within the classroom” (SP, p. 88). ▶ “One former secondary ... up to ... 2012a, p. 59)” (SP, p. 90). ▶ “They felt ... up to ... Britton 2012)” (SP, p. 95). 	<p>TEACHER</p> <p>Read the following texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “The Council of Europe ... up to ... classes involved” (SP, pp. 87-89). ▶ “They felt ... up to ... Britton 2012)” (SP, p. 95). ▶ “The recommendation ... up to ... training” (SP, p. 96).
<p>LOCAL COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE</p> <p>Read the following texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “preparation for ... up to ... safety issues, etc. (SP, p. 89). ▶ “Jo Beavan has conducted ... up to ... related to religion” (SP, pp. 95-96). 	<p>RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE</p> <p>Read the following texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “The Council of Europe ... up to ... in note form” (SP, p. 87). ▶ “With regard to visits ... up to ... hospitality” (SP, p. 88). 	<p>STUDENT</p> <p>Read the following texts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ “Usually such visits ... up to ... within the classroom” (SP, p. 88). ▶ “They felt ... up to ... Britton 2012)” (SP, p. 95).

ACTIVITY 2 – FINDING WAYS TO OVERCOME OBSTACLES IN ORGANISING A SCHOOL–COMMUNITY LINK

Focus

In this activity, we focus on the importance of keeping certain preconditions, as described in *Signposts*, when organising a school–community link, in order to help parents to understand its educational purposes and to overcome any objections to children’s participation.

Tips

Give time to the participants to get accustomed to reading through *Signposts*, instead of creating handouts with excerpts.

In the “where do you stand” activity, if you want to create a discussion, set up unclear or unjust statements and ask participants of both “sides” to consider where they stand in relation to these. After the activity, try to include persons of different opinions in all of the groups.

Objectives/expected learning outcomes

- ▶ To consider and prepare to overcome obstacles in linking schools to the community.
- ▶ To act and negotiate in order to safeguard equal educational opportunities for all school community members.
- ▶ To listen to or predict objections and form suitable propositions that take into consideration parents’ possible lack of information or fears.

Competences linked to activity

- ▶ Openness to cultural otherness and other beliefs, world views and practices.
- ▶ Respect.
- ▶ Analytical and critical thinking skills.
- ▶ Skills of listening and observing.
- ▶ Empathy.

Procedures/steps

1. Where do I stand? In the classroom, corridor or other space, mark two opposite corners as positive (+) and negative (-). Draw a line in the middle, signifying “no opinion”. Read aloud the statements and ask the participants to take up positions along the positive–negative scale. Nobody should occupy “no opinion” more than twice. You may use some of the following statements.
 - ▶ The presence of a minority religion representative at school is propaganda.
 - ▶ School visits are risky and costly, the added value is insufficient.
 - ▶ School should not accept exemptions from school visits: children should be offered equal learning opportunities.
 - ▶ Parents who do not allow their children to participate in interreligious visits are uneducated.
 - ▶ Parents should not be informed about school visits, it is simply a school activity.
 - ▶ Parents should be the ones proposing visits at religious places, because they are responsible for their children’s religious education, based on the Declaration of Human Rights.
 - ▶ Students who do not participate in interreligious school visits should be assigned extra work at school.
 - ▶ Students should not be informed about religions other than their own. They could get confused.
2. Form groups of four to five persons.
3. TPS (Think-Pair-Share) – Read individually the following parts of the recommendation: “Scope and definitions” and “Educational preconditions” (see Material 1 and 2 in Chapter 2, Activity 1 on p. 27 of this training manual).
4. Also invite groups to read *Signposts*, pp. 87-89.
5. Introduce Material 1 and 2 pages (below), which present the arguments of some parents in the UK who will not allow their children to participate in a visit to a mosque.
6. Give to each group one parent statement.
7. Using the texts of step 4 and/or 5, find arguments that might help parents to overcome their objections to a school visit to a mosque.

Debriefing and follow-up

- ▶ How did you feel while participating in this activity?
- ▶ What do you think causes parental objections to children's participation in visits to religious sites, for example mosques?
- ▶ In which ways might professionals empathise with parents' concerns and help them to overcome their fears?
- ▶ Considering the use of this activity in teacher training, what would you keep and what would you change?

ALTERNATIVE

Follow steps 1-5, then:

6. Give all the groups all the statements, allowing enough time for reading and discussion.
7. Make a list of preconditions that may help the parents to allow their children to attend the visit to a mosque.
8. As a school director, write a letter to parents announcing a school visit to a mosque.
9. Present the letters to plenary.
10. Debrief as above.

Material 1 – Chapter 9, Activity 2

Parents that don't let their children participate in a visit to a mosque

- ▶ I'm a maths teacher, but due to timetabling I've been asked to go on a similar trip. The number of parents who have refused permission for their year 8 children is staggering. What is worse is the fact most of them haven't explained why to the children – most staff are pretty sure we know as the parents have been referring to the trip as "The mosque trip". I could not be more confused to be honest, I'm so excited about going on this trip as we are visiting four different places of worship and I think a lot of the kids are confused as to why they can't attend.
- ▶ It's nothing to do with courtesy; I won't let my daughter cover her head, as most of the big religions require women to wear head coverings in church, because they are made of man rather than God, which basically means they're not as good. So no it's not just a matter of courtesy, it's engaging in something which would mean my daughter was acknowledging that she was inferior. I would have no problem with her going when she wasn't required to wear one, but not when she reached the age that she had to.
- ▶ My two eldest are at secondary school now and little one is only a baby. It hasn't arisen during their school time. The problem I found when they were at primary school is they seemed to be learning about every religion except for Christianity!! So if they had of [sic] had a school trip as above and NOT learning about Christianity then no, they wouldn't have gone! I am fed up at how Christianity seems to be marginalised more and more these days, as a Christian-Spiritualist I find it offensive.
- ▶ I wouldn't let my daughter visit a mosque actually. She is christened so the only place of worship she will be going is a church. I don't agree with Islamic religion for reasons I'm not going to go into as it will start a debate which isn't needed on this thread. So for that reason I wouldn't want my daughter being involved in it. It won't affect her education or her life if she doesn't visit a mosque. If you as a parent don't agree with something, you want to protect your child from it don't you? I'm all for bringing my child up with an open mind, and I'd never bring her up to be racist or discriminate against other cultures or religions, I just wouldn't actively encourage her engage in something I don't agree with.
- ▶ No my daughter would not be allowed to go. She will be brought up with whites, blacks, Chinese within our families and whoever else becomes our friends but to go on a school trip to go into one of these places is a no go!
- ▶ I would be fuming if my daughter went and was made to cover her head or face. It's not right.
- ▶ Sorry if I offend anyone but this is my opinion. And as for covering your head as a mark of respect, that's all well and good, but then I don't think Muslim women should wear a burkha out of a sign of respect for OUR culture and country, but we all know nobody cares about that! They scare the crap out of my dear daughter (DD) when she sees one. And before people tell me well then I need to educate my DD so she accepts them, I have! But it still scares her! So as a mark of respect for young kids etc maybe they should UNCOVER their heads and faces... but no, they don't. So no child of mine will be covering her head or visiting a mosque thank you.

Source: Online discussion thread available at www.netmums.com/coffeehouse/children-parenting-190/primary-school-age-411-years-60/665016-school-trips-mosques-temples-other-religious-places-all.html, accessed 13 May 2019.

Material 2 – Chapter 9, Activity 2

Parents that don't let their children participate in a visit to a mosque

- ▶ I'm sorry to say that I do have some problems with it. It depends to me on a few things, the age of the child. How the trip is explained, how the religious place is described in the context of religion. I don't mind the cultural aspect, but have a problem with actual religion and in particular the belief in God and blind faith. I don't want my daughter being taught that in any context until she is old enough to absorb it in an intellectual way and not just taking in what she is told. Very, very tricky, and I'm sure we'll have to tackle this soon enough. Unfortunately there is plenty of educational material about religion and faith, but I haven't seen any that is targeted at children that shows them an alternative view.
- ▶ I'm sure that not many will agree with me here, but I actually don't think that Religious Education should be taught in school at all as a separate subject, never mind having school trips to places of worship! As part of History maybe, but quite frankly, I think there are many more valuable things that children could be learning about which would actually be useful to them as they grow up.
- ▶ There are many people who do not believe in god, myself included. So why devote so much time to something which is potentially a fairy tale! We don't have Snow White and the seven dwarfs on the curriculum!
- ▶ The Islamic religion stays the same as it did when I was at school, it hasn't changed! I am only 24 so it wasn't a million years ago.
- ▶ No I haven't studied it in depth; I don't have a degree in Islamic religion sorry. But I do feel I know enough to make an informed decision for me.
- ▶ Like I said I'm not forcing my child into my views, but I am neither encouraging her to go into a place of worship which contradicts the religion she is christened in. Why would I want her to learn the facts of another religion if I believe them not to be true. If she wants to find out when she's older I can't stop her but then that's her choice as an adult. But as a child, she is under my guidance, and this is the way I am guiding her. I am not teaching or learning (sic) her to be racist or disrespect Islamic religion, I just choose not to inform her of it as I don't see it appropriate! Simple as that.
- ▶ My daughter has a varied education for her age, she's only 3. But as she grows I will teach her the best I can on all subject and including her religion, Christianity. I won't be teaching her about Islam, as I don't think it is necessary or appropriate. It will not make my daughter ignorant or uneducated and I doubt it will have any negative impact on her upbringing or life. Yes you could argue she will be uneducated about Islam, but like I said, it won't effect (sic) her, and I don't feel it necessary she know anything about it really. You can't teach kids everything, which is why in school you have "options" so you can pick subjects to specialise in.

Source: online discussion thread available at www.netmums.com/coffeehouse/children-parenting-190/primary-school-age-411-years-60/665016-school-trips-mosques-temples-other-religious-places-all.html, accessed 13 May 2019.

The same online discussion thread contains further expressions of parental opinion, if you would like to find others to use in this activity.

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