

respect RE, for once, is not separated from the rest, or trailing along behind. We are in this with the other subjects and, at the time of writing, PE is the only other subject which has produced its own standards. There is opportunity here for whole school staff development and, thereby, whole school improvement.

However, schools cannot improve, particularly in their RE provision, without regional and national support. It is essential for teachers to have access to specialist advisory support, through LEAs, the professional organisations and providers of INSET. Northamptonshire's RE Adviser has commented that the term 'continuing professional development' is misleading and largely inaccurate, especially for primary teachers. What most teachers have is 'intermittent professional development' which may be episodic, unrelated and variable in quality. This document from the TTA says quite firmly that teachers have to take responsibility for their own professional development and it is right. We are professionals and it is time to start making legitimate professional demands on our employers. This includes the supply of specialist teachers for RE. We have had a short period of recognition that there is a shortfall but it is unlikely to be sustained. This impinges on all our lives and we have the right to make our objections heard.

Conclusions

This brief introduction to standards for Subject Leaders in RE is one step in a series which we hope will contribute to improving schools. Negotiations are under way about the publication and dissemination of the AREIAC document. Providers of CPD are discussing ways of linking with Higher Education Institutions to provide formal certification for progress towards the achievement of the standards. AREIAC members and other INSET providers will be using these standards to promote more effective subject management and readers of the documents will see that there is sufficient material to use to base several teachers' courses, possibly to develop distance learning packages. Members of the series will seek publication of relevant material to promote further research in the hope of making RE standards more widely known. Reports will go to the RE Council to inform all the RE organisations and faith communities in England and Wales, and the European Forum for Teachers of RE, to attempt to gain both national recognition and co-operation. Most importantly,

teachers will be able to use these documents to monitor, plan and promote their own professional development.

I am indebted to the participants in the November seminar which I had the privilege to chair, but I must accept responsibility for the views expressed here.

References

- Teacher Training Agency (1998) *National Standards for Subject Leaders* (London: Stationery Office?). Copies of this document (which is also available in Welsh) can be obtained by telephoning 0845 606 0323.
- AREIAC (1998) *Standards for Subject Leaders in Religious Education* (final version in preparation).

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Inter-Faith Issues in Religious Education: A Response to Lat Blaylock

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Lat Blaylock's article, *'The Space Between Us Is Holy': Inter Faith Issues in Religious Education (Resource 21(2), Spring 1999)* was right to suggest that RE should promote religious tolerance and understanding, but we need to be clear what we are doing when we introduce an inter-faith element into RE.

I was interested to read this article, and share its enthusiasm for RE's promotion of religious tolerance and understanding. I should, however, like to challenge some of the assumptions and arguments that may seem to link this enthusiasm to the development of RE in an inter-faith direction.

The article appears to confuse the tolerance and respect which good RE demands of its pupils in their encounters with faith communities, with the tolerance and respect that it is advocating between members of those communities.

On the one hand, one aspect of RE is an attempt to foster some degree of tolerance, respect and appreciation for the religions which are its subject, in pupils who arrive in the classroom with a wonderful diversity of faith backgrounds (including, of course, atheism). Whether or not any of the children happens to belong to the faith being studied, RE teachers expect their pupils to show respect for its beliefs and practices. In this sense, then, RE treats its pupils as religious onlookers – even if one or more child's evaluation of a particular religion happens to be, 'I agree with that', or even, 'This is my faith.'

On the other hand, one aspect of being a member of a faith community is the interaction between one's own religion and others – and I share the article's hope that any inter faith dialogue will be tolerant, open and harmonious. This, though, is quite a different matter from the observation of a religion by outsiders. People engage in inter faith dialogue from a position of commitment to one religion or another. They are not hoping to evaluate their own beliefs and practices in relation to those of other faiths, even if they are open-minded enough to hope that they might learn from the encounter. Rather, each religion's beliefs and practices are relatively fixed, and the aim of inter-faith dialogue is harmony between people.

The article defines inter-faith issues as 'issues of belief and practice ... which have to do with the development and exercise of mutual respect and understanding between the members of different faith communities, and questions of how to respond when this kind of understanding and respect is absent.' Now, I have no quarrel at all with the claim that such issues would form a fascinating and important individual topic on any (secondary?) school's RE syllabus. I do want to challenge the confusion of this topic about the interaction between faiths, with RE's promotion of pupils' respect for faiths.

As an analogy, consider the situation of a counsellor in an organisation like Relate. The organisation's training will have emphasised the counsellor's respect for her clients' autonomy, whether or not she happens to agree with either of their positions, or to like either of them as a person. Similarly, she will no doubt – as a caring human being – hope that her clients in turn will be respectful in their dealings with each other. There are two noteworthy aspects of her situation. Firstly, Relate's training can only have an effect on

her respect for the clients, and not on their respect for each other. Secondly, it is arguable that it *should* only have an effect on the former, and not on the latter, since her clients' dealings with each other are ultimately nobody's business but their own – this being limited only to the extent that they have entered into a contract with their counsellor.

Now, an RE teacher's relationship with her pupils can to a limited extent be compared with that between Relate and its counsellors: in both, there is an attempt to shape people's dealings with a particular group in society. Relate is instrumental in shaping the type of relationship that its counsellors will have with their clients; RE teachers are instrumental in shaping the type of relationship that their pupils will have with the religions that they encounter.

To return to the contrast between pupil-faith dialogue and inter-faith dialogue, this analogy clearly points up the distinction between the two. Firstly, RE teachers can only hope to have an effect on their pupils' respect for religions, and not on religious people's respect for each other. Secondly, it is arguable that RE teachers *should* only have an effect on the former and not on the latter, since inter-faith relationships are ultimately nobody's business but their participants' (and they have certainly not entered into any sort of counselling contract with the nation's RE teachers).

I think that the confusion of these distinct issues hides a more insidious assumption in the article: that inter faith dialogue is to be advocated in all circumstances. Now, I hasten to add that I happen to share this assumption, generally speaking – but I feel that we need to make explicit the fact that it is a presupposition, before handling the issue in RE lessons. I should be most uncomfortable, for instance, in following the advice to invite 15 year olds 'to propose a design for a place of worship in a shared facility ... appropriate for use by members of different faiths.' My discomfort would result from the knowledge that members of various faith communities may themselves be unhappy about this project. Similarly, many of the questions that the article suggests as examples of inter-faith issues that could be considered by pupils (see pages 15–16) are based on the premise that the ideal is for religious communities to work together towards shared goals. In one sense this is a truism (peace and harmony all round), but from another perspective it runs the danger of glossing over the genuine differences that

do exist between religions. Of course I do not mean to imply that either Lat himself or many participants in inter-faith dialogue, are running this danger – but rather that RE teachers could do so if they do not explicitly question, with their pupils, the basis of such dialogue.

I have two further, less serious, concerns about the proposed new direction of RE, both of which are raised in the article, but which I should like to emphasise more strongly. The first is that any attempt to enable pupils to reflect on the interaction between the faiths that they study should not be based on invalid generalisations across religions. Not all faiths will fit into the same conceptual mould, and it would be pointless to try to make them do so simply for the sake of studying them in parallel. The second is that pupils need to be given a firm grounding in each of the religions to be included before embarking on an inter faith-study: without pre-existing knowledge and understanding of the relevant faiths, it would be unreasonable to ask, for example, what areas of agreement there are between Christianity and Hinduism in the field of ethics.

In conclusion, however, I should like to return to my opening remark: that I share Lat's enthusiasm for RE's promotion of religious tolerance and understanding, despite my misgivings about the confusion of this issue with the need to push RE in an inter faith direction. I hope that his article will provide the stimulus for a wider discussion of these two separate, but nonetheless important, topics.

REVIEW

A War Against Memory? The Future of Holocaust Remembrance,

**Isabel Wollaston, SPCK, 102 pages,
pbk £9.99, ISBN 0-281-04937-8**

I received this small book on the day I handed over to one of the editors of *RE Today* an article on Beth Shalom, the Holocaust Memorial Centre in Nottinghamshire. A visit for all pupils to this superb facility is part of the core of our Religious Studies work

in Year Nine on Judaism. The Holocaust raises more questions than it answers. The topic disturbs, in the best sense of the word, both students and teachers. How we respond to it varies enormously. Yet respond to it with the deepest parts of our humanity we must, regardless of our religious affiliations or none.

In *A War Against Memory?* Isabel Wollaston, a lecturer in theology at Birmingham University, examines the variety of ways in which the Holocaust is perceived and remembered by victims, survivors and others trying to find authentic ways of representing these events. It is a scholarly work which is unafraid of opening up the often vehement disagreements over what should be remembered, by whom and for what purposes. I found it extremely illuminating, not least because it caused me to examine my own assumptions about what is and what is not helpful in the way I engage with this issue with my own students. It made me even more acutely aware of the fact that the Holocaust divides as much as it unites. There continues to be massive controversy over the legitimacy of the attendant modes of remembrance and study, be it testimony, research, education, film, literature, support for the State of Israel, Israeli attitudes to its neighbours, memorials, museums and so-called 'Holocaust tourism'.

The headings used by the author ask us why we should remember, and give a range of reasons. For some it is a sacred duty, for others a safeguard for the future. We are forced to ask whether the event can be comprehended; what can and cannot be said and by whom. Various ways of memorialising the Holocaust are looked at: some *in situ*, notably Auschwitz, others at a distance, notably outside Europe. The Holocaust in popular culture is scrutinised, especially as portrayed in film and in novels. Reactions to specific works, and to these genres as such, are deeply divided between applause and condemnation. Inevitably a chapter is devoted to the Holocaust and Jewish identity. Much of the discussion consists of responses, theological and other, to the influential view of Emil Fackenheim, its supporters and detractors. Finally the mythological uses to which the Holocaust is put – in the technical sense of evocative stories that transmit and reinforce societal values – are outlined in their diversity.

This may be a brief work, but it is full of stimulating information and insight. Much of it is arresting. Rarely does it fail to ask questions of the reader, however implicit, of the way we might be carelessly handling