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**A pedagogical bricolage for
more critically promoting
mutual respect and tolerance**

**How do teachers of Religious
Education (RE) promote
mutual respect and tolerance
with pupils aged 11-14?**

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Origins of the research

- Mutual respect and tolerance comprise two of a set of fundamental British values
- One requirement of teachers conduct is to “not undermin[e] fundamental British values, including democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect, and tolerance, of those with different faiths and beliefs” (Department for Education, 2011, p. 14)
- FBV are taken from Prevent (HM Government, 2011a) counter-terrorism policy
- Not defined and five bullet points of guidance
- The requirement to promote mutual respect and tolerance raises political and practical issues including Islamophobia, the issue of whether conversations in classrooms are chilled, the labelling of the values as British
- For RE teachers, this requirement presents a particular tension – of promoting “homogenising shared values” alongside the “demands of pluralistic RE” (Farrell, 2023, p. 95).
- Several scholars (Farrell, 2016; McDonnell, 2021; 2023) identify that there is potential for RE pedagogies to offer a more critical means of promoting FBV

How do teachers of Religious Education (RE) talk about the promotion of tolerance and mutual respect in terms of their pedagogy with pupils in key stage three (pupils aged 11-14)?

A pedagogical bricolage

- Freathy *et al.* (2017, p. 429) propose that rather than RE relying on one pedagogy, we should reconceptualise RE teachers as “pedagogical bricoleurs”
- They draw on Denzin and Lincoln’s (1994) characterisation of qualitative researchers as working as different types of bricoleurs
- The different RE pedagogies set out by Grimmitt (2000) provide a range of possibilities with different methodological positions
- Utilising a bricolage approach can enable exploration of different representations of the world, allow the use of different methodologies and create space for personal reflection and reflexivity

RE pedagogy

- Grimmitt (2000) examines eight models or approaches to RE
- All have constructivist underpinnings (Holt, 2015)
- Focused on three:
- Critical RE (Wright, 2003; 2007) – *engaging critically with the truth claims of religions; critical engagement about differences*
- Conceptual enquiry (Erricker 2000; 2010) – *starting from the narratives of learners, explore concepts using dialogue, introduce religious perspectives*
- Interpretive RE (Jackson, 1997) – *ethnographic approach, using insider accounts (including children's)*

Methodology

- Multiple nested case study of three RE departments
- Focus on key stage three (pupils aged 11-14)
- Semi-structured individual interviews and document analysis
- Discourse analysis – Critical discursive psychology (Wiggins, 2017)

Findings

- Underpinning features:
 - A frank and honest classroom space
 - A positionally aware and reflexive practitioner
- Key aspects of a bricolage approach

Moving towards a pedagogical bricolage...

- The important, but limited, **role of substantive knowledge** (Kueh, 2017; Ofsted, 2021).
 - Content may need to differ between contexts and should connect to the context of pupils (Erricker, 2010)
 - Some teachers highlight the significance of how truth claims are presented (Wright, 2007).
- **The use of real-life examples**
 - Teachers talk about using insider accounts from religious people (Jackson, 1997), pupils (Jackson, 1997; Erricker, 2000; 2010) and themselves.
 - Engaging with pupils' peer accounts is particularly powerful. However, teachers do not talk about the challenge of whether and how the validity of these accounts should be explored with pupils (Gearon, 2013; Wright, 2007).
- The use of **teachers' personal life knowledge**
 - Teachers use examples from their own lives not only to engage pupils but as a means of promoting mutual respect and tolerance
 - Teachers talk about how this helps them to be positioned by pupils as authentic promoters of mutual respect and tolerance

Moving towards a pedagogical bricolage...

- **Iterative self-reflection**

- This enables pupils to compare the ideas they learn about from other people to their own experiences (Jackson, 1997, p. 130; Erricker, 2010).
- Teachers talk about the importance of this as integrated into RE teaching, not as an add-on to the end of lessons

- **RE classroom as a discursive space**

- The classroom provides a frank and honest space where pupils can express their ideas
- Intolerant comments might lead to discussion which promotes mutual respect and tolerance
- Dialogue and discussion can be combined with other approaches e.g. as a means of exploring pupils' experiences of a belief/worldview

Recommendations and implications

- Do RE teachers need to have a strong knowledge of pedagogy?
- How can they be supported to do so?
- Which pedagogies are best suited to enabling critical promotion of values in RE?
- Can other pedagogies (from outside the RE tradition) offer something to this discussion too?

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