

An analysis and evaluation of teaching and learning in a unit of RE work taught by me in school, covering an area identified by me as requiring subject knowledge development.

The language of the teacher has to be simple to get the point across, yet the language must be complex enough for content to educate more. Simplification carries the danger of sweeping and incorrect generalisations of a complex subject, and complication carries the danger of losing out on learning. This became a central theme during two lessons on Hinduism and racism constituting a unit of work. One can, with complexity, paraphrase what Lev Vygotsky pointed out with the help of Pushkin (see Curzon, 1997, 111), that utterances are cognitive processes yet require apperception. In other simpler words, what is said should engage the brain in further thought yet with a pre-existing ability to follow what is said. Teaching and learning is at this margin, technically a zone of proximal development (Curzon, 1997, 109-110). It also relates to RE being marketable as a subject that, by its abstract nature, offers cognitive acceleration of benefit to other subjects. A smaller sub-theme is carrying out what is informally agreed between teachers and may not be explicit in the scheme of work.

The two lessons and one homework come under the shorter GCSE syllabus as outlined by the scheme of work (which stipulates one lesson for "the Hindu teaching on racism", but where all teachers did two, see RE Department, 2002). It is covered by the *Religion and Life* textbook (Watton, 1999), with possible

support from *Hinduism* (Penney, 1995). The school introduces Year 9 to two religions for the purpose of comparison, being Christianity and Hinduism, but through a range of issues on social harmony. In the previous year students in Year 8 are exposed to Christianity and Islam, and before that in Year 7 Christianity and Judaism. The issue covered in my teaching unit was racism (followed by multi-faith existence and religious pluralism, and then Christian attitudes to other religions).

This use of the shorter GCSE a year early tackles a classroom management problem in compulsory RE compared with other schools because it creates motivation for work amongst pupils and parents too (Departmental head's comment). On the one hand this imposes an extra demand on teachers to produce good quality retained learning. On the other hand, bringing RE closer to aspects of the National Curriculum in other subjects may deprive it of the freedom to be radically different from the rest of the school curriculum. As a primary school teacher argued (private conversation), RE is the time he can take risks and have good conversation with the children in a way impossible with other subjects. Instead this channelled approach to RE falls into standard models of external measurement and legitimation, theoretically reinforcing a Western modernist view of the self and where constructivist learning replaces transmitted learning (See Yates, 2001, 213-214). RE's subject area must surely suggest other views of the self (postmodern, Hindu, Buddhist, etc.) with wider

pedagogical impact on how it is taught. Instead it is the basically behaviourist model of objectives in assessment out measured cycle.

So the exam course requires evidence and clarity. As a teacher put it in a revision question and answer session during my observation, which covered the first lesson I was going to teach:

"Are Christians for or against racism?"
"Against." (pupil's reply).
"Yes. They are against."
(Exchange in observed RE class)

The point was then put that Hindus and Hinduism are also against racism.

The first lesson I took in the unit asked the children to write objectives down beginning with the text "This lesson I learn that"... This emphasises the purpose of the text. If they learn it they can add a "t" to learn. It was followed with:

"Hindus oppose racism because":

- Hinduism claims that if a person is insulted then their Atman is insulted and therefore Brahman (God) is being insulted.
- India experienced racial discrimination under British rule and would not wish to repeat this.
- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi experienced racism and taught against racism and discrimination.

This means pupils work during the register. It gets the lesson started without pausing. Classroom management is made much easier and this has been adopted for every lesson from observation of existing practice:

One religious education teacher starts an exercise... as soon as pupils enter the room and checks the register whilst they are working, thus making full use of the time available.. (Ofsted, 1999, 30-31)

The first 15 minutes of the first lesson introduced theory and belief. This was a change of order from a viewed lesson and, after a review of an observed lesson, involved an "Upwords" board game. This had children coming out to spell technical words and understand that Brahman overlays Atman (the H tile is put on top of the T), and linked the Upanishads and the Gita, as indeed the words were connected (see Appendix collection of lesson plans, some resources and examples of pupils' work). This was "a bit of fun" but was also literacy and visual learning. This latter point relates to Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences (in Moon and Mayes, 1995, 38-49) providing a logical puzzle, a linguistic task and spatial relationships (41-42).

Then there followed what did become to a large extent a lecture about Britain in India. The presentation moved to the work on Gandhi himself. Assisted by an overhead projector transparency, this consisted of a series of bullet points on Gandhi's motivating beliefs. It was supported by a frequently paused and spoken over Gandhi video of less than 20 minutes combined with some written questions. Effective video use involved pausing and talking over. The concluding summary was rather rushed, however.

What impacted afterwards was the sense of not knowing what had been learnt around the room, especially when a boy questioned did not know what Ahimsa meant, despite going over this several times. Yet the class teacher sitting at the back reported that a boy near her retained strong interest throughout. There were of course directed questions and pupils' answers. A positive sign was receiving questions from pupils, but these still gave a slight indication of learning at this time.

The second lesson had the objectives:

This lesson I learn that Hindus (and others) effectively opposed racism and oppression because:

- The violence of the British authorities eventually failed against the principles of Satyagraha and Ahimsa.
- Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had offered these religious principles towards successful political application.

In both lessons (see Appendix), these objectives were the most reliable piece of the writing in exercise books for the purposes of revision. They were not necessarily the best way to learn and remember, for which there were the exercises. It was necessary therefore to check that the better learning exercises produced valid and reliable text for revision. The quiz, which followed the objectives, perhaps could have been set for this end (instead of using wipeboards), but the quiz was an excellent learning task as it generated enthusiasm and the marks were generally high on a show of hands. It also showed retention from the previous week.

Timing was tight, especially with the need to get the relationship with the class right. My strategy was to decide from the beginning not to shout. It was interesting to see how quickly in both lessons the "steam trains" came into action. The children tell each other to shut up by their shushing, and was followed by a soft voiced "Thank you" from me. At the same time the objectives, on the board in the first lesson and by overhead projector transparency in the second lesson, meant that they had work to do anyway from the start. In later lessons (particularly the lesson on Christianity and relations with other faiths) there was more generous timing, a more central focus, and one focussed interesting piece of work, and this less cluttered approach may itself allow for more depth and gives space for a longer summary. Classroom management is thus assisted.

When during observations a pupil was followed across the school day, I asked a number of them about their different subjects. One comment was that in RE they are "always writing". Not all comments were negative, and this is hardly the worst that might be said, and RE was well regarded. It showed that the children are kept busy. The best solution for good classroom management is plenty of interesting work. This is helped by clear signposting, smooth transitions, and variety.

At the start of the first lesson of the unit the children, seeing someone else taking the lesson, changed their places, but their teacher picked this up immediately

and ordered them to their given places. The seating plan and use of their names would have shown this up but retaining names needs further attention. Such a transgression should not be allowed. It is always important not to sacrifice behaviour on the altar of the lesson plan and its timings, otherwise future lessons are put in jeopardy. One tactic used taking the registration was to ask, "Where are you?" This was to suggest names and places will be remembered.

The school is firm on classroom management. Lining up before entering and standing behind seats before leaving column by column are examples of strong management techniques (see Cowley, 2001, 4-6).

Video is a good classroom management tool, varied, attractive and usually retaining attention. The use of clips of the film *Gandhi*, directed by Richard Attenborough (1982), was also to reinforce the evidence of the oppression of the British Empire and opposition to racism resulting therewith. The Ahimsa portrayed was connected to the Atman-Brahman belief element against racism.

It was in the second lesson that I gave homework of a differentiated nature (discussed below).

This was the framework of both lessons, but then there is the nature of the intellectual content itself. The complexity of Hinduism represents a pedagogical challenge and is a danger for communication in that, without great simplification,

youngsters finding the faith unfamiliar may understand little. To large extent the RE teacher is reclassifying Hinduism to become comprehensible. Even academics do this, yet the danger is that the process of categorising becomes a process of distortion.

Hinduism is an area for subject knowledge upgrading given its varieties and levels, from philosophical Hinduism and scriptural elements to a related subcontinental Paganism that constitutes many varied religious practices and forms. Hindus have many beliefs and no doubt prejudices, which has a relationship (if not exactly) to caste. The Brahmin class especially has a more philosophical approach, being eligible by birth to priesthood, although Gandhi was of a middle ranking vaishyas caste. The technique of the teacher is to be able to apply such complex subject knowledge effectively in a teaching and communication situation, something which I find particularly difficult to do. The teacher also states that not all adherents (whatever religion) agree, something quite easy to state and worth repeating from time to time.

The teaching gave me opportunity to turn to little used books, like Brown (1989), as well as returning to Richard Attenborough's book of sayings associated with his the film *Gandhi* (Attenborough, 1982) as used in Unitarian church services. I update my website religions area on Hinduism along with other religions. There is additional reading and purchases.

Both lessons were resourced, and experienced opinion was that the second lesson was over resourced and over prepared. The strategy has to be more economic and effective for the future, especially given a teacher's workload (the following multi-faith and pluralism lesson defied this strategy, but the Christianity and other religions lesson accepted it). Nevertheless these over prepared lessons were following on from high standard of teaching:

Teaching, which is most effective in all years, was good in over 90 per cent of lessons and very good in over 40 per cent. Expectations are very high, illustrated by the good results achieved in the short [GCSE] course. Teachers use their extensive subject knowledge to give clear explanations to pupils, which link religious ideas to relevant events, so that students consolidate what they know before receiving new information. Very good relationships are established, students knowing exactly what is expected of them, leading to a productive working environment. Planning is thorough and objectives are clearly thought out, but not always shared with pupils at the beginning of the lesson. (Ofsted, 1999, 76-77)

In year 7-9 teaching was classified as "good" and most effective in English, Design and Technology, and Religious Education. (Ofsted, 1999, 10)

Some three hundred pupils a year pass through this compulsory subject with lessons reintroduced by each teacher according to the scheme of work, although not necessarily in the given order (see portfolio). The handful of specialist teachers in the department discuss together their focus and concerns immediately after lessons.

The department is very well managed. All the staff advise, help and support each other... (Ofsted, 1999, 77)

This is where I checked the detail of the teaching. The course unit on Hinduism and racism was being taught to the examination requirement, which calls for argument and evidences. The objectives of the lessons therefore were framed around the requirement for evidence; indeed the whole of the approach to GCSE seems to be placed in terms of statements of evidence and then some argument.

This initially seems restrictive to what can be the wide variety of approaches within Religious Education, but never quite happens if only because of the East Riding of Yorkshire Agreed Syllabus Attainment Targets, shared with other ex-Humberside area authorities (Kingston upon Hull SACRE, 1999). Here, AT1 focusses on reflection and response (in general), beliefs and values, and reflecting on and evaluating life, and AT2 focusses on knowledge and understanding, and beliefs and practices, as found in Christianity, other principal religions and non-theistic traditions found in Great Britain. This, incidentally, has the effect of relegating Buddhism in a region where the Madhyamaka branch (a Tibetan offshoot) has become relatively important, and humanism even more so in a comparatively secularist area of the United Kingdom (see SACRE in Kingston upon Hull, 13). The AT1 and AT2 arrangement is a reversal of models of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (if towards Model 1 in general), drawn up for the National Curriculum Council (NCC) and the School Curriculum and Assessment Authority (SCAA) from August 1993.

Model 1 is structured around the knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a member of a faith community.

Model 2 is structured around the knowledge and understanding of the teachings of religions and how these relate to shared human experience. (QCA, 2002b, 1)

Clearly there are a number of ways of presenting the complexities of Hinduism, with AT1 and AT2 implications.

One could be highly descriptive phenomenology (towards more AT2 than AT1), which is to be empathetic with the faith as if coming from the inside. There is a rejection of claims to objectivity from some outside neutral space.

Any RE should be faithful to such belief contours. This is why, in discussing the concepts of Atman-Brahman, and Gandhi, there was reference to diversity, scriptural sources, and more than the minimum of the relevant concepts of faith. Phenomenology, then, is rather like learning from within the faith dictionary, with explanations, so that one concept is understood by relating to others within the same dictionary. It is not like using a foreign language dictionary. To take the analogy further, it is like learning a language through use, and so is internally relational.

Focussing on Gandhi is to look at a practitioner. He is an example of a Hindu believer and this approach might lead to the ethnographic or Jacksonian approach (after Robert Jackson's interpretive approach at Warwick, see Wright and Brandon, 2000, 79-80, which leans further to AT1 than phenomenology). To give a biography of Gandhi demonstrating plurality in his sources - the Jains

(particularly Rajchandra Ravjibhai Mehta, whom Gandhi called Raychandbhai), the transcendentalist civil disobedience of Thoreau, and even Tolstoy - is to give a first hand account of the world-importing breadth of a modernist believer. Ethnography usually looks at ordinary believers in the community, but Gandhi, a leader, is still a believer in community. The video (Attenborough, 1982), however, tells more about the director's view and Briley's severe reordering and rewriting of events, although there was additionally a small book of Gandhi's direct sayings (Attenborough, 1982). The interesting exercise would be to research about how Hindus regard the one who was called Bapu (Father) as well as Mahatma (Great Soul), especially Hindu nationalists.

Nevertheless, presenting Ahimsa so centrally, and dealing with concepts such as Atman and Brahman, is the approach of concept cracking, as initially promoted by Trevor and Margaret Cooling (Cooling, 2000, 81-84). The approach in the Year 9 scheme of work is issue based (social harmony) and so sets up an external space for conceptual comparisons (Christian and Hindu), only implicitly comparing one way of being anti-racist with another because comparisons and contrasts are not made within the lessons. A revision might do this for greater conceptual understanding. This is all clearly AT2 (SACRE in Kingston upon Hull, 1999, 5). Of course a phenomenologist and likely ethnographer would see such comparison between religions as false, just as the deepest essayist among social anthropologists might refuse to make comparisons between cultures.

By writing new homework questions relating to Ahimsa and either Thoreau or the Jains, a concept cracking element was introduced on a comparative basis across religions and cultures to reinforce level 5 and reach up to level 7 in turn. On the matter of complexity, using Ralph Waldo Emerson (1982) about Thoreau, with significant subsequent relevance to Gandhi, for a homework question (Emerson, 1982, 410) was abandoned. The level of language was just too difficult for this age group, even with subsequent explanation.

From a postmodernist stance, a location for conceptual objectivity cannot exist in some neutral space; however, comparative work across religions and cultures (e.g. Transcendentalism to modernist Hinduism under occupation) does expose concepts for examination and builds up cognitive learning processes.

There was a question available to discuss the validity of Ahimsa as cowardly or otherwise. This suggested an experiential approach (clearly AT1 in the syllabus). Pupils might have related it to bullying or indeed racist attacks. This was not explicit although it could have been made so. As with all so called subjective experiential writing, getting close to how Gandhi used it might have been lost. The standard given homework question focussed more on assessing Gandhi. The textbook (1999) itself has "Factfiles" rather than, say, "Experiences".

So the dominant style is concept cracking. The Atman-Brahman is a belief element, from the Aitereya Upanishad (linked to the Rig-Veda's microcosm to

macrocosm in the universe), the Katha Upanishad, and in the Bhagavad Gita as a duty of karmic improvement. Whilst it is safe to generalise that Hinduism is about improving one's karma, it cannot be said that all Hindus believe in Brahman. Against such complexity, the advice has been to accept sweeping statements regarding concepts for these teenagers. This is difficult for someone with an academic background to do. Indeed the unit on the scheme of work (RE Department, 2002) is called "The Hindu teaching on racism" compared with, above it, "Christian teachings on racial harmony". The reality is more likely to be a reversal of singular and plural for these religions. Concept cracking can be deceptive when restricted by the need to be simpler than the material presents for the purposes of communication.

As an RE teacher, my overall approach is that of a humaniser (see Rudge on humanisation, 2000, 22), particularly in terms of motivation for doing RE. It is also that of Open RE (Hughes, 2000, 36-38), which has, in part, humanist origins. Although opposed to confessional RE, its privilege outside faith communities, and to certain Church-state school relationships, this humaniser position is close to my Unitarian-friendly pluralism (see Hewett, 1985, 100-101, on Unitarianism and Religious Education). Unitarian Sunday Schools, and indeed adult courses, are not unlike affective and experiential RE in State Schools, and draw on many faiths. The next unit was on religious pluralism, so there were many resources at hand. However, religions do present themselves as packages requiring some short term suspension of pluralism, whereas the humaniser approach is pluralist,

across the board, critical, philosophical and grand. It is still largely AT2 because it is the world of ideas in competition and co-operation. It is when the whole of RE is justified and done that the humaniser approach is found.

As a side point, analysing Gandhi's pluralism and action is a means of achieving Level 8 AT1 and AT2 in the suggestions of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (RE PGCE Handbook, 2002, 119). Pluralism raises thinking.

One area of the conceptual evidence based approach became very difficult, arguably demonstrating a consequence of conceptual inadequacy when setting out for simplicity and communication. The idea that because a people experience racism, as apparently under the British Empire, they should then become opposed to it seems highly problematic as evidence. It is more arguable, as for example in Israel, or indeed in individual cases of child abuse, that the receiver of oppressive behaviour goes on to be oppressive in turn. Hindutva (Sarvakar, 1923, in Beckerlegge, 2001) is a strong feature of the other side (from Gandhi) of contemporary Hinduism, and involves control over a land where once the British denied control. Secondly, the racism that did exist from the British occupying State was not directed at Hinduism alone, and was probably more about control over administrative power than race. A better argument, or further argument, would have been British and European Christian culture then regarding itself as superior, expressed in a class structure, leading to a by product of racist values abroad.

The whole message of the lesson was simple oppression. Yet British imperialism, not unlike the Romans, was about ruling at a certain level. It should be possible to suggest the improvement in education and welfare as well as the oppression, and the village near-starvations happened not because of British intervention but whilst there was none.

Then the Hindu and subcontinental problem of caste was virtually ignored. An observed teacher of this unit did refer briefly to the caste system as being once useful for deciding jobs people did. Indeed, Radhakrishnan wrote (Radhakrishnan, 1927, 318) that work was not about doing something beneficial for others but self-fulfilment within caste assignments. Such can indeed be stated within RE, but critically. Gandhi had to call the untouchables Harijans (people of God) in only a partial revision of their status. As throughout Hinduism's history, there was varied modernist resistance to caste by Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Aurobindo and the Brahmo Samaj (the latter with connections to Unitarian Universalism and the village Unitarianism of north east India). This internal problem was identified with Buddhism and Sikhism two thousand years apart. The caste system arguably was born in the racism of the Vedic peoples oppressing the local population starting at the Indus valley. It must be relevant.

It is relevant because even today, despite legal abolition of caste, the 240 million Dalits of South Asia are subject to unofficial segregation about where they live,

they get the worst jobs, they suffer physical and sexual violence, and are the most likely to convert to other religions like Buddhism, Sikhism and Christianity. 60% of Indian Christians are Dalits. This situation should not be glossed over in RE (Asia Today, BBC News 24, November 1, 2002).

Ethnographic method is always a check to the potential idealism of a conceptual approach. Wright sees this general area as the difference between "Idealism and Realism" (Wright, 1993, 57).

Another key source of ambiguity is that of the relationship between an idealistic description of a belief system and the way it actually operates. Thus within any particular belief system we are likely to encounter a broad variety of levels of commitment, all of which probably fall short of the 'ideal believer'. (Wright, 1993, 57).

This point is made further (though in this specific case moves from Christianity to a wider point):

To offer a picture of believers as those deeply committed to their faith, continuously putting that faith into practice, and united in a 'common denominator' set of universally accepted beliefs is surely to offer the idealistic lie in the face of realistic evidence. It is popular in classrooms to study the 'heroes' and 'heroines' of faith: we may now avoid David Livingstone on ideological grounds but Mother Teresa, Gandhi, Martin Luther King and even, believe it or not, Bob Geldorf [sic], remain popular figures. These idealized portraits do little justice to the complex realities of religious belief, and have of necessity to be carefully filtered... (Wright, 1993, 58)

That David Livingstone is excluded on grounds of ideology does not mean the others are not an ideology. Concepts get idealised and uprooted.

The approach of evidence for anti-racism is arguably "ideology", being an intended viewpoint preached, and a distortion of all the information at hand. I felt some guilt of misrepresentation. Whilst framing can suggest that Hinduism *like this* opposes racism, it will bring discredit to RE if the topic is subsequently found to be partial, such as when a pupil watches television news covering Hindu nationalism. Anti-racism, discovered as so important in the school's RE when observed pupils erupted into tabloid comments against asylum seekers, can only be tackled by a rounded approach.

Here we have an important function of RE: a place to provide multicultural education. Ofsted stated this in 1999:

Multicultural education, however, is still a relative area of weakness, as it was in the last inspection. Religious education makes a very valuable and important contribution; one or two subjects deal with specific issues, but other subjects make little or no contribution. (Ofsted, 1999, 37)

The solution to the problem of misrepresentation is tackling openly all the nasty bits as well as the good intentions of religion (*RE PGCE Handbook 2002-2003*, 70-71). Having anti-racist education is indeed important; the reflection here is about how to achieve it. There is no special criticism of Hinduism here either, as all religions have shadow sides as well as ideal intentions, and every religion is a label for nationalist aspirations. However, this religion and others offer opportunities to have anti-racist education by tackling the nasty bits as well as the good bits.

The lesson on Bosnia-Herzegovina taught that nationalism uses religion for ethnic identity, used instead of Nazi Germany (thus a conscious and deliberate departure from other teachers' examples). Bosnia was evidence of plurality (including a broad form of Islam – very relevant to tell children this) and its decline, and in the next lesson it was important to say that some Christians will refuse to take part in interfaith gatherings as well as be positive about them. RE must find its parallel to the balanced and informed approach that takes place, for example, in drugs education.

This ideal-real contrast also impacted in the use of the video within both lessons, if in a slightly different manner.

The edited video of the film *Gandhi* (1982) played a large part in both lessons. Every teacher used the film's clips, two using the same re-edited version as in my lessons and one using different examples from the original video. The worksheet focussed on the requirement for evidence. This worksheet was delayed until the second lesson, so its content stretched back to the first, supported by the quiz to remind and reinforce the first lesson.

The video tape is a good classroom management tool. It has the attraction of passive watching of television just like at home, involving even the most disruptive pupil. Loud volume can swamp the room and interesting images may excite the senses. One teacher observed uses a video of comedy programmes

which, in the television watching age, gives pupils a treat while continuing to do (usually artistic) work already set, occasionally looking up at the screen. Most video use is for active watching when the video has teaching material.

The use of the video is problematic. As with some Moses teaching to Year 7, which used a cartoon video that seriously minimised the role of Aaron, and so was explained as “a story of a story”, the film Gandhi is an heroic personalised account (see Cannon, 1997, and Elf, 1997-2002). Subject knowledge study suggested that the film reordered and rearranged history. It added considerable casualty numbers to an event at Amritsar and put it after the civil disobedience of Gandhi and his imprisonment. It also seemed to combine a possible resistance of Muslims and the end of the March to the Sea, which was Gandhi's finest hour (and yet, in the film, absent from this event of 92,000 arrests).

Does this matter? It is important to have historical accuracy and balance, to support another purpose. The work back suggested that the video's contents, and the rehistoricised commentary, were absorbed in largely accurate answers. Interruption, commentary and shortening is important; a video which lasts for 20 minutes in an unguided fashion may see important points being lost to learning.

The next unit using Bosnia had no video. Instead there was a resource sheet. This itself had a commentary (not reading the sheet out) to give historical order, the kind of Islam which settled there, a history of empire conflicts at their

boundaries, and the descent from communism into ethnic nationalism with a loss of confidence vital to maintain pluralism.

Yet here was complication, and in the short term this complexity did not seem to be absorbed well by the pupils. It called for simplification yet without distortion. In the following lesson on Christian attitudes to other religions, compromises were made (maintaining three sweeping statements of evidence), focus was greater, and this seemed to work.

All this about complexity then is driven by the desire to educate and simplicity to communicate. It has arguably become more fashionable now to consider the gifted and talented, certainly, but also to challenge all pupils and offer potential within the work. It is not a case of handing out more work to the fastest, but having broader supporting areas, like Thoreau and the Jains, and deeper work, perhaps on another occasion to put in more about Hinduism and caste.

The potential of thinking that goes on in RE is about comparison and relationship, and subtlety with complexity. It is how belief relates to culture, identity, and history with geography, and idealised argument set alongside human experiential realities. RE should not be simply evidential lists, and reductionism, but about its potential for leading the student very quickly into abstract thinking. RE is therefore useful across the curriculum.

Cognitively Accelerated Science education (CASE) focuses on the reasoning and thinking behind experiment rather than simply knowledge of the result. It is about pushing abstract thinking over concrete thinking. Mathematics picked this up too emphasising method (CAME). Mathematics and Science intend to improve the ability to learn not just in their own subjects but across the board. Brian Simon decades back expressed this viewpoint to state:

If all children are to be assisted to learn, to master increasingly complex cognitive tasks, to develop increasingly complex skills or abilities or mental operations, then this is an objective that all schools must have in common; their task becomes the deliberate development of such skills and abilities in all their children. (Simon, 1971, quoted in Bourne, Moon, 1995, in Moon, Mayes, 1995, 33).

This challenges Froebel's (1782-1852) ground breaking stance of an optimistic divine unity, modelled on the tendered garden and guided environment, a stimulating yet unforced view of individual cognitive development (Simon, 1995, in Moon, Mayes, 1995, 17; Morrish, 1970, 195-212). The Plowden Report's individualism (Morrish, 1970, 33-37) links to Piaget and Froebel. So differentiation can be more passive, or relate to "natural growth" (Morrish, 1970, 205), and so match the pupil's individual needs; however, cognitive acceleration is more like forcing the plants than a tendered garden, where pupils are brought to abstraction as soon as possible.

Of all subjects it must be the case that RE can perform this curriculum-wide cognitive boosting function. Religions exist in the arena of the abstract and mysterious, and in the comparative and cultural, and to engage in these

successfully is to engage in thinking. So, at the very least (and not against Froebel here), the necessity is to produce a rich intellectual environment from which children can benefit, and also to try to bring them forward to think.

Nevertheless the danger is going too quickly. The communication still has to be effective. Complexity that baffles is not learning, as discovered. It is also possible to become too information rich when basic information is useful for later expansion. The material on Gandhi for fifth and sixth formers in Cole (ed.), outlined by David Baldwin (1983, 206-211), would need breaking down into manageable parts.

The balance has to be found between the bullet points of learning and going into the challenging realm of the varied, relative and not so straightforward.

A teacher referred to the "hoops" of the exam which, if taken without the open ended questions all teachers use, might encourage a flat bullet points type education and lead to no further cognitive challenges. As well as having these knowledge points to pass an exam, based on the objectives of the lessons and scheme of work, RE can so readily add the tools of argument. This way pupils gain the confidence that, sat in front of an examination paper, they can produce argument based work at higher cognitive levels, towards which the QCA suggested levels (*RE PGCE Handbook 2002-2003*, 2002, 118-119) point.

Differentiation then should always be at that edge of the language communicated and language complicated for greater abstraction.

The basis of this thinking is a desire to have high expectations of pupils. I have been disappointed when their work has not been at a hoped for standard. Balance in the work content also demands sensitivity to them. Comment has been made about my calm style, which values individuals and works closely with them (developed with adult and post-16 teaching). A style of engagement is developing, apparently. A refusal to shout, and added patience, is part of this approach, and it encourages good behaviour back. When a pupil indicated she found the homework difficult, she was told that I am learning too and her contribution is valuable to me (and her mark was compensated). It is also important that students have confidence in the teacher's intellectual ability, so they feel there is a world to learn about, and can have confidence in being stretched. At the conclusion of the Bosnia lesson behavioural issues led to a short address on the value and purpose of RE to the wider curriculum, such as History and Geography, and that their task is to learn. Perhaps this had a positive effect for the next lesson. Awareness is growing of the variety of work handed in, and clearly there are people who have considerable difficulty in engaging and writing. Poor writing does not necessarily mean poor understanding, or course, nor neat writing good understanding.

An area of concern is ICT but there have been two strategies. One has been to use it in preparation and present via the overhead projector what is obviously ICT created work, and then the other side of this is encouraging their home use of computers.

If classroom is a difficult place for certain tasks, homework can make up the shortfall. In the school, RE homework has several functions. One is to finish off a lesson, and this is quite important when RE occupies such a small percentage of the weekly pupils' timetable, of an hour a week. The homework is also a place for ICT, although this does raise issues of inequality of access to ICT. ICT in the classroom could transform the delivery of lessons.

Several subjects, for example music and religious education, have little or very limited access to information technology facilities; others, such as art, have the hardware but no suitable programs yet. (Ofsted, 1999, 69)

As well as using ICT, homework is also the place where differentiation can be most effective. Pupils in relative autonomy and privacy from peer pressures can receive cognitive development through choice and differentiation. The homework set in the second lesson had a basic question which still allowed open content and an expanded answer for a maximum 15 marks, and alternative questions to use ICT and the Internet to generate comparisons between Thoreau and Gandhi or Jainism and Gandhi for a maximum of 20 marks. It was an experiment to see what the pupils could achieve. Just one person chose and achieved without previous lesson content (thus a start towards research and self organisation)

some good work on Thoreau and Gandhi (see Appendix and homework examples). The experiment was repeated (before knowing this response) for Bosnia and the movement from toleration to ethnic cleansing. The basic question was a diary entry as if living in Sarajevo during the siege, which meets AT1 requirements, whereas other work is more AT2 involving additional knowledge and connections. The diary work itself has great depth potential.

The theme here has been how the complexity of Hinduism sets up a challenge for effective learning. Simplicity can distort the faithfulness of the conceptual material presented, and alone could be limiting. Equally, however, being too complex with the subject can lose effective learning especially where a religion is received as unfamiliar. Previous pupils' experience was with Judaism and Islam, so this is new. The complex end demonstrated problems, and my teaching style is towards the complex. The solution is to differentiate, to find accurate headlining of points to be retained, and then to provide opportunities for development by depth and breadth and even some new material to support what has begun elsewhere. RE offers such potential for fast cognitive development. Homework offers the best opportunity for high level differentiation, along with use of ICT.

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