

An analysis and critical evaluation of an assessment task produced or adapted by me for use with pupils in my School Experience school. This assessment should be related to departmental, school, local and national assessment guidance for the pupils assessed.

Whilst discussion continues about theories of learning, assessment is being done at school and individual pupil levels on a visible input and output basis (something like behaviourism) linking curriculum requirements to syllabus design (East Riding, 1999) to schemes of work and finally to lesson objectives in which are the basis of assessments out. Such visible, recordable, written assessments take place on the assumption that recordable testing itself is a method of generating recordable improvement with some apparent if debatable success (Torrance, 1997, 322-325). Publishing the results leads to an incentive to improve, as well as producing more income, but the improvement incentive is on this narrow basis of assessment.

Assessment was not and should not be as narrow as this. The origin of the word is to settle, and has come to mean collecting, measuring and interpreting the data of student responses (Curzon, 1997, 387). Interpretation is important. It does, though, intend to be objective, unlike evaluation. However, evaluation usually refers to what the teacher does to enhance students' learning and so evaluation of a pupil therefore is included in assessment. The main areas of assessment considered here are marking, formative, ipsative (the purpose of assessment, ultimately), profiling and the impact of Qualifications and Curriculum Authority suggested Levels of Attainment with the Local Education Authority variant (East Riding, 1999).

Although there are different assessments by different people for institutions and individuals - Standard Assessment Tasks (SATs) are still taken by individuals, and OFSTED (Office of Standards in Education) make their own assessments using checklists, accountability at all levels joins assessment (Capel, Leask, Turner, 2001, 305), and the assessments of pupils produces the overall result of the school. The point about these assessments is that they intend to have future impact both for pupils and the direction of the school: that is, formative for both.

Levels are now commonplace. It may well be that across many levels that there is a clear rise in the measurement of the quality of both work set and work returned, but this will not do. Teaching works at the margins of ability and the differences say between levels 4, 5 and 6 are arguably more in variety than depth.

Levels do not come from some absolute source of divine certainty, but are committees produced. Sometimes, using the descriptors, the proper process seems to be to go down to the level where the description first becomes reasonably accurate to the work set. Or the work seems to justify going upwards. One is working with the awkward nature of language here and the sense that there is much to do to make these levels watertight (and this has been the focus of conversation in the school).

What soon became obvious, and was an early warning sign about problems ahead in using them, was the inability to do much with them other than

reproduce the words verbatim. Putting them into their thirds for use (Appendix 1) does not actually find their essences but how the specific descriptions were constructed. With such descriptors the "hand" of any pupil's work is forced to fit the glove of the descriptors.

An initial question is whether this is much different for levels in other subjects that come under the National Curriculum. Other humanities deal with how people change in time or space with higher order thinking relating to reflective work in RE. There is some equivalence between scriptures and primary research of historical documents or geographical field data. Each have controversies, parties, groupings, comparisons and transforming individuals.

The caveat to the following extractions table, where essences are attempted, must be in how much is left out. Verbatim text is avoided, however:

| RE | History | Geography |
|---|---|--|
| Level 4 (should be achieved at conclusion of primary school) | | |
| Describe key Connecting accurately Some comparisons Show understanding Show how Giving... for some Using Ask questions Suggest answers Making reference Showing understanding | Show Understanding Describe Identify Give Show some understanding Beginning to select and combine Beginning to produce structured | Show Begin to recognise and describe Recognise and describe Begin to understand How Understand Explain Suggest Use Communicate their findings |
| Level 5 (Key Stage 3) | | |
| Explain how Showing how Make informed responses | Show increasing depth Understanding Describe Know Beginning to evaluate | Show... a range Describe and begin to explain Describe Recognise |

| | | |
|--|--|---|
| | Identify Select and organise Produce structured Appropriate use | Suggest explanations Explain Select and use appropriate Select Present |
| Level 6 | | |
| Use Explain how Respond Relating | Use Describe Make links Examine and explain Describe, and begin to analyse Identify and evaluate Use critically Select, organise and deploy Appropriate use | Show... a wide range Describe and explain a range Recognise Describe ways Appreciate Recognise Suggest relevant Select a range Present Reach conclusions |
| Level 7 | | |
| Relate Evaluate Using appropriate | Make links Use these links Analyse relationships Analyse reasons for and results of Explain how Show some independence Sometimes reach substantiated... independently Select, organise and use Produce well-structured Making appropriate use | Show... a wide range Describe interactions Show how Understand Use this understanding Appreciate Recognise With growing independence... draw Establish their own sequence Select and use accurately Evaluate critically Present well argued summaries Reach substantiated conclusions |
| Level 8 | | |
| Analyse and account Using Give an informed and well-argued account | Use Analyse relationships Explanations and reasons for Analyse and explain Use critically Carry out enquiries Reach substantiated conclusions independently | Show in a wide range Offer explanations Explain changes Begin to account for Recognise causes and consequences Understand a range Understand how Use examples to illustrate |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>Select, organise and deploy relevant information</p> <p>Produce consistently well-structured</p> <p>Making appropriate use</p> | <p>Show independence in identifying appropriate</p> <p>Using an effective sequence of identification</p> <p>Select a wide range of skills</p> <p>Use them effectively and accurately</p> <p>Evaluate critically</p> <p>Present full and coherently argued summaries</p> <p>Reach substantiated conclusions</p> |
| Exceptional | | |
| <p>Distinguish and investigate</p> <p>Balanced analysis</p> <p>Meaning of</p> <p>Place within</p> <p>Make independent, well informed and reasoned judgements</p> | <p>Use extensive and detailed factual knowledge and understanding</p> <p>Analyse relationships... wide range</p> <p>Explanations and analyses of... well substantiated</p> <p>Analysed links</p> <p>Balanced judgements</p> <p>Use... critically</p> <p>Carry out... develop, maintain and support</p> <p>Sustain substantiated and balanced... independently</p> <p>Select, organise and deploy</p> <p>Produce consistently well structured</p> <p>Making appropriate use</p> | <p>Show... a wide range... a full range</p> <p>Explain complex interactions</p> <p>Refer to a wide range</p> <p>Explain and predict</p> <p>Understand alternative approaches</p> <p>Assess the relative merits</p> <p>Justify their views</p> <p>Understand how</p> <p>Illustrate</p> <p>Draw selectively</p> <p>Use accurately a wide range of appropriate skills and sources</p> <p>Carry out investigations independently</p> <p>Evaluate critically</p> <p>Present coherent arguments and effective, accurate and well substantiated conclusions</p> <p>They evaluate</p> <p>Suggesting improvements</p> |

(Above using *RE PGCE Handbook 2002-2003*, 168-173)

The most striking difference comparing RE and other humanities is the substantial nature of QCA levels in the other subjects in terms of work demands. It is arguable that they follow progression better than in RE.

The solution to the problem of varieties of tasks versus levels is to rewrite descriptors so that once a topic area (e.g. comparison of religions) is introduced, it should appear up the scale at each level from then on, and the language of activity should become unambiguously more demanding. This way the topic areas would follow educational progression rather than appear and disappear and reappear later.

Yet the subject of Religious Education in particular demands more than columns of figures and checkpoints. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c) suggests not simply knowledge (Attainment Targets 1) but some pupil absorbed reflection of the impact of religious understanding (Attainment Targets 2). This is equivalent to the higher order and lower order skills in other subjects (Capel, Leask, Turner, 2001, 305). Assessing this in RE must be problematic, needing to be more sensitive, fuller and rounded, and relating to the human relationships in the classroom.

AT2 is:

| |
|---|
| concerned with the active response of pupils to what they are learning about about helping pupils to apply the meaning and significance of religious ideas to their own lives |
|---|

about valuing pupils' own ideas and concerns

sometimes about challenging pupils' own ideas and putting forward alternative views for consideration

about developing skills, e.g. the skill of living in a plural society, and attitudes, e.g. empathy

raising questions from religious teaching that speak to pupils' personal experience

(QCA, 2000c)

The practice is concerned almost wholly with carrying out formative assessment. Because the school carries out formal assessment tasks, and there have been none up to the time of writing, the formative assessment has been marking. Marking includes giving a grade, which is a school requirement, although comments only may have been a strategy. However, it would be wrong to see this as the only formative assessment taking place. Just as the objectives of a lesson are carried out by events other than through writing (questions and answers, pairs work, group discussion, creative individual or group work) so does the assessment to the pupils which leads from the objectives. The greatest area of formative assessment is in verbal comments. Many of these comments are by the teacher; however when a lesson has generated a strong dynamic of interest pupils make assessment comments to each other. As has been said by experienced teachers in the practice, not everything contributed and assessed is written down.

The assessment areas examined here (Appendix 7) are from Year 7 and one class, but there is illustrative material from other Year 7 classes (Appendix 6).

There was the theme of God, moving between religions each week, being, in order, Hinduism (polytheism, monotheism, and Hindu atheism), the Apostles Creed (the Trinity in the scheme of work, taught as towards it), Sikhism (the Name of God) and the origins of the Jewish One God (Appendix 3).

There were examples of pupil self-assessment. A lesson on the Jewish origins of monotheism was delivered with comparisons and contrasts with the Sikh origins of monotheism. However, the pupils produced themselves from the location of Abraham's origins a relationship with the US and UK with Iraq conflict. The possession of overhead transfer maps, and additional ones available, allowed teacher response in the way of location, and extended discussion on the cradle of civilisation and comparison of the location of Baghdad and Babylon, Ur, and pupil reference to the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. The quality of this lesson, and the assessment of the pupils, is not exposed in the written work.

In teaching the Sikh understanding of God the pupils' own prior knowledge of Christianity and Apostles Creed (and after) came forward when discussing God as not born and not dying. This is because the Apostles Creed and its subsequent development lesson led to comment that God was born and did die. This was a good point in which to tackle the difficult topic of manifestation of God (like a Guru) and incarnation of God (like Jesus Christ).

Later there will be opportunities to compare Isaac and Ishmael in the mythic understanding of Semites and comparing Judaism and Islam. Discussing

Abraham, the children knew about the song *By the Rivers of Babylon*, which was another lead in to teaching, reinforcing and own pupil own assessment.

Part of the teacher assessment derived from this was that many have not yet grasped the idea of religions as separate languages. Some thought that because God was incarnated in Christ then the Sikh leader must have got it wrong. RE is a single subject and pupils expect its knowledge to be universal. So this instant assessment led to some teaching to explain religions as each being their own logic of language, their own reflection, just as we reflect.

This change in lesson emphasis to accommodate assessment is exactly what should happen from a more formal method. A test of some sort takes place, an assessment is made of understanding, and the scheme of work is made more flexible. In other Years the scheme has been extended in a time sense and for reinforcement, but this is about altering content too in response to pupils. Nevertheless marking did perform a more formal type of assessment.

Appendix material shows some selected high performing student work on Deity-people and own Mool Mantras. In some cases comments are designed to add some praise and encouragement, helped by the standard of the work. What is disappointing is that the demand to mark rapidly has reduced what could be longer written teacher commentaries to add to verbal comments. The work shows high levels of creative engagement and therefore self-reflection. There is also work showing variable classroom standards.

The marks given are high, but there are also mark sheets where QCA levels are considered regarding the work out and work in. This concerns homework in particular. What emerged from this experiment was that the levels did not reflect marks given in many cases and QCA levels tended to be low, down to 4 but up to 8 in one case (Appendix 5). This difference is because the levels work according to descriptors. If the pupil selected an area for a deity-friend or Mool Mantra, which matched higher descriptors, the level rose. The levels have so far been private to the teachers, as has homework monitoring.

The levels are anyway supposed to operate over ranges of work. Given the short time, the experimental nature of noting these, training and unfamiliarity, they have been applied to pieces of work only for some possible future aggregation. All the difficulty of application and uneven results is therefore exposed. It all looks very unreliable and haphazard, but nevertheless provides a starting point for some limited analysis and self-evaluation.

The levels were applied simply by looking at the QCA levels divided into their thirds (Appendix 1).

There has been some discussion in the school that the levels assess types of work rather than simply progression of work. The discussion has been of the nature that these are early days for them and that more work is needed.

The school itself within the RE department has made a number of attempts at producing levels-like texts including one called *Report Statements* (Appendix

2) where, for each number category, (a) is the most advanced, then (b) and (c) is the weakest. 3 and 4 are QCA AT1 (former Humberside area AT2 Core Objectives Knowledge & Understanding), whilst 5 and 6 are QCA AT2 (former Humberside area AT1 Core Objectives Reflections and Response), but these are not perfect matches (QCA, 2000a, QCA, 2000b; East Riding Agreed Syllabus Conference, 1999). The Report statements include some scheme of work statements, for example:

He knows that Jesus was a good man but asks the question why was he crucified?

This is one of the difficulties with using descriptors. They continue a problem already in existence with textbooks: assumptions and shortcuts treated like facts, myth or claims presented as history, and in general a near bullet points approach to education. RE needs more abstraction. So in this case there are perhaps several practical, historical and theological reasons why Jesus was crucified, and the issue of Jesus as a good man (a humanistic value) is not so secure as morality is bound up with theology. The general point is descriptors turning syllabus into ideology, and RE into Religious Instruction by default.

A different approach is to use strictly neutral descriptive language, the language of “they” even if it is probably we, and a separation of subject descriptive content and educational achievements. The other options should always be offered when there are normative statements being made.

So the alternative in this case is that:

The pupil knows about Jesus as a rabbi (teacher). The pupil is yet to grasp more difficult concepts of atonement connected with crucifixion.

One task of assessment is to check for ideological drift in terms of QCA AT1. It is also important that QCA AT2 reflection by the pupil can be in the negative as well as positive, and include an engaged don't know. RE is often mistaken by pupils, parents, sometimes teachers, and government, as being approval of religion or this road to a moral framework (see QCA, 2000c). RE is of course confessional in some faith schools, and they have their own agendas, but schools following the local Standing Advisory Council for Religious Education (SACRE) syllabus (East Riding, 1999) are not producing commitment. Conclusions are the pupils' own.

The samples (Appendix 7) are reviewed for content, marking and levels.

To some extent, the ability to produce neat work is important but it must never be a replacement for content. There is a virtue of putting neat work in the front of RE writing books and rough work in the back (where some "starters" are placed). This may be repeated in some other subjects. Of course this tries to avoid rushed and roughshod work, so that a map becomes distorted (7A) and the work is weak and short cutting, where pupils make less effort in class. Shoddy work inevitably means difficulty in finding a level even over a long period and will rely on more occasional pieces which indicate understanding (the map in 7A is clearly a clue, as is the absence of sentences). The Mool Mantra work in 7A shows only a few seconds of effort for the homework and

received a level 3 to 4 - although the use of the words “self-believing” for his mother is interesting. There is at least some reflection there.

7B’s apparent untidiness however hides a very strong performer in class and in homework. Although a copied map is well distorted in scale, it has not made fundamental errors. Written and verbal answers come swiftly in class and always additional work is needed. He has been given comments (not included) on the pre-origins of Sikhism in the mystic Kabir. In the sample, it can be seen that he wrote two answers, not one, for why Abraham might be 175, both in favour and against. Therefore he knows the importance of different views considered. His deity-person is very Hindu and incredibly complex. His Mool Mantra also soared in terms of levels yet this was because he chose a religious topic and it relates to the descriptors even though a religious topic was not required as reflection. He has a fascination with Zen Buddhism (he claims to other staff to know 500 Zen readings) and the mark was at maximum because he did generate an actual calligraphic script (even) and carried out the repetitive structure.

The work of 7C shows how a Mool Mantra task becomes a couple of minutes’ effort. Nevertheless superlatives were used, repetition was obeyed and all that was lacking was a script form. He cannot be criticised for choosing football as the main passion of his life, although the result is dull and the level cannot be high according to descriptors. The god-person before this may have been rushed too, but there is still quite a reasonable result and curiously is another example where someone has done the homework twice (is this

enthusiasm?). Class work is generally slow and incomplete. In terms of levels it would be key pieces of work again which suggest understanding.

Most comments go to the homework, and yet class work is important where too often it gets ticks and little else because of many books and the demands of time (see 7D). This is why it is important to go around in class during activities and make comments there and then. Also there is a tendency at times to mark too high (because weak work may achieve the minimum of what is required and pass, and so other work must get higher marks). A preference would be for making comments and have no mark only; school policy dictates otherwise on the basis that children appreciate a mark. It does no harm to mark on the high side if it is likely to encourage for the future.

ICT makes a presentational difference, and was an expressed option in giving the homework. 7G shows an effort in ICT, artistic script and mainly repetition in the Mool Mantra. This was marked too low, which raises the problem of consistency across different times of marking. The homework was late. The classwork is quite good and shows some understanding of technical terms like manifestation.

An example of good class work receiving verbal comment is shown with answer to question 2 regarding Abraham (7E). The weaker answer to the question when Abraham changed his name from Abram was when he was 99 whilst the stronger answer was that his name changed when he entered the Covenant with God. This is because this lesson introduced and reinforced the

point that is it the Covenant by which Jews still understand their faith today. When the weaker answer was put down, this was an opportunity for corrective comment; when the stronger answer was put down this was a chance for praise, encouragement and reinforcement of this factual AT1 type comment.

An example of work that shows points of understanding but needs more clarity and assistance is 7F. But as so often there is a subjective element in producing objective criteria, and a haphazard element in connecting with descriptors of the levels.

So when it comes to assigning a level to a student, the teacher must remember classroom occasions and give a level from that arena of exchange.

As well as inability and laziness, one reason that work can come back that is not as good as it could be is because a pupil did not know what was wanted. "Write this in your homework diaries" followed by verbal description is as haphazard a method of setting homework. Children produce varied work in class despite being open to the same information and potential, so they may understand the homework task with as much variety. So assessing the work may also include assessing the reception of the question.

There is a problem with marking books in terms of formative assessment: it comes after the event. Telling a pupil to provide more examples or expand a little next to incomplete material (7D) is too late. The deed was done (or not done). So the real assessment should be done there and then, especially

considering ipsative assessment (Capel, Leask, Turner, 2001, 291), and it is of course. One advantage of assessing on the spot is the opportunity for negotiation and agreement, a good basis for making willing improvement.

Pupils' verbal questions in class also show more is going on than in books. The issue of "founders" like Abraham and Moses, and the origins of Abraham from the cradle of civilisation, brought about the questions like, "Did he exist then?" and "Is it true?" Here we have the levels becoming significant because here are the religious comparisons, historical references, and cultural settings.

The locality of Abraham's origin led to the question of Adam and Eve, given the mythic setting of the Garden of Eden. Again the assessment of them is of their literalisms and compartmentalism. Just as they find it difficult to understand the relativity of religious views, so Adam and Eve were understood as real historical events. As a response, pupils around one table were asked if they had been watching *Walking with Cavemen* (BBC). This interactive television programme shows Professor Robert Winston, himself an Orthodox Jew, observing and sitting with early human species. They had. Thus they were told that at one time there were possibly fifteen species of emergent human living at once and now there is only one species left - us. They were asked among which they would place Adam and Eve as real people. No one is denying their right to believe in the actuality of Adam and Eve in this, but they are being challenged to think at higher levels of comparison and without compartmentalising knowledge.

With good classroom verbal contact, low marks with words of encouragement and understanding are not so low. Equally, high marks with detached attitudes by the teacher lack impact. Marks rarely have absolute value.

Every time a lesson ends in the school practice quiet is required under the incentive of a quicker getaway. In that moment pupils can be told how they have worked. This is given to the whole class as a form of summary. During the lesson, individuals contributing hear the responses of the teacher. The best way to respond is not simply to say, "Yes, well done", but to show how the answer just given moves the argument on. It may take some creative bending by the teacher, but then the pupil sees a real contribution made. The task is to get the pupil engaged, and once involved, active and contributing, the real assessment can take place.

Education is a long-range series of deposits, some of which cannot be known for a long time. Sometimes these rich interactions are called spiritual education, although OFSTED with its checklist at the school defined spiritual education as containing the word "God" (the Headteacher), rather in the same narrow manner as the Charity Commission defines religion. Spiritual Education weaves in and out of formal education, and formal education is multi-layered well beyond the checklists of formal assessments.

Moving towards a more activity-based learning in the practice has enhanced the QCA AT2 side and indeed spiritual education. Most homework (because they do not have knowledge material in the home) has been of the QCA AT2

variety by taking the form of something out of its religious shell and asking pupils produce their own reflection and version. Yet evaluation might suggest that because the QCA levels became wildly variant there is a strong argument for limiting the scope of these exercises. The deity-friend could have specified some area of religious reflection. The most common use of religious imagery was four or more arms given personal meaning. The Mool Mantra allowed too much scope and usually failed to produce religious reflection. Better assessment needs boundaries.

To design an actual assessment free of the hierarchy of syllabus and grades, there could be a move away from formal assessments and tests modelled on GCSE type questions in most cases. The department does experiment, for example with the use of multiple choice, which, with its memory prompts, framing and chance, helps some children to better results than creative essay type construction.

The idea here however is to assess in the manner of work already set. Why cannot an assessment include a piece of creative work like the deity-friend? It would access all levels of ability with differentiation by outcome. Or alternatively:

Write a Mool Mantra of your own. This mantra should have a repetitive opening structure, line by line, of at least six lines. It is on a subject, topic or activity of your choosing but should express what is important to you in the choice of words and contain some religious content. The text should be in an artistic typescript or the writing made attractive by immediately surrounding artwork.

The resistance to this approach would be on the lines of how it can be marked. The answer is simply in the way that such work is marked for homework. The question can be turned around into a set of objectives to be achieved and so how the work is marked.

An original Mool Mantra is written.

It has a repetitive opening structure, line by line, of at least six lines. It is on a subject, topic or activity of significance (with use of superlatives or other indicator) with some religious content.

The text has an artistic typescript and/ or the writing is made attractive by immediately surrounding artwork.

Some questions would clearly have to be AT1 based, reviewing knowledge, but creative work like this can be part of an assessment, and it can be original rather than repeat what has already been done.

This can still be consistent with the SACRE based syllabus. The creative activity would have to be evaluated first by the RE teachers for effectiveness. There is an argument for them doing the test first (they involve original and creative activities) and mark then as an up front evaluation just as research is tested first.

As for AT1 type questions, one important aim of an assessment would be to extend the way children construct arguments. The usual way this is tackled in assessment terms is with this phrase or similar:

Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have considered another point of view.

Actually, as one goes into methods of arguing, giving another point of view is not necessarily evidence of good technique. There may be several other points of view, and religion is creatively wide open to more than several. Because of this another just as valid technique is to argue one point of view with logical consistency like an unbroken chain. Religions are like chains of meaning too so accurate linking description and critique is useful. Many arguments are artificial techniques. Perhaps giving another point of view is a coded way at the pupils' stage of development (particularly middle teens on) to suggest that all this religion so often presented in the language of history is not so certain after all. If so, this purpose is not clear.

Expressing other points of view are often limited to issues rather than say doctrinal disputes or schools within faiths (unless there is obvious institutional expression, as with Judaism). The result of this approach is not about argument but, following on from the near bullet points, summaries and pictures of the double page spread textbook, it turns out to be another memory game:

Give reasons for your answer, showing that you can remember a different answer and indicating why you do not like it.

Memory is important, but argument is something different. Whilst Religious Education might be interpreted as a support for religion in society, it is the least affected by instrumental economics and getting a job, and one of the closest to ideals of liberal education. A little mild religious scepticism does no harm if getting pupils to think is the most important and educational aim.

Describe and give your view of the Abraham story, particularly discussing your view about how old he was at key events of his travel from Mesopotamia in developing the Covenant.

The above gives focus particularly to his longevity: pupils are entitled to say he was special to God and so was as old as the biblical text states, or suggest instead that age is a way that the writer promoted his importance (age equals wisdom), or argue that it is doubtful whether Abraham even existed. Although quite demanding, such a thinking question is accessible and thus is open to different levels of ability.

An assessment work produced by me and free of the official line would move to something like the City and Guilds teacher training approach (and used elsewhere in Further Education: Reece, Walker, 2000, 458-467), which is to state what was achieved by each pupil. This would still be through critical questions and reflection activities. Profile statements come primarily from the pupil's work achieved, rather than trying to match levels descriptors.

Pupil A wrote a Mool Mantra of her own. It had a repetitive opening structure, line by line, of eight lines (more than the minimum 6). It spoke about netball in terms of it being the most exciting of sports. The text was presented closely surrounded by netballs and every loop was a netball. There were two goals either side of the text block. Therefore this answer achieved what was required except a specific religious reflection.

Pupil A took the view that Abraham did not exist in reality. It was too long ago. The ages were inventions to suggest the person who started the Covenant must have been important. The argument presented was consistent and logical and therefore had validity.

There is no mark. Like a reference for an employer, this just states the positives and achievements. Like a career history, there is what the pupil did and not primarily focussed on what a bigger picture (syllabus) may or may not be about. The problem however is that the profile can be around the length of the given questions or even answers. There may still be a statement of passing or failing, which then needs a clear minimal descriptive achievement following assessment objectives and so does introduce a pass/ fail mark.

Sadly, the world we are in is one that has become set down. The National Curriculum has arguably taken away teachers' creativity for curriculum design in favour of activity to meet preset standards. RE teachers may have more freedom than most, but the SACREs still declare intentions above them. The actual educational world is one of objectives to be achieved according to preset descriptors and measures.

It is strange that for a compulsory subject, where both pupils and teachers can withdraw from involvement, there are levels at all. One argument for similarity in the system of assessment is to give pupils some incentive to work rather than have them treat RE like a rest period or a setting for simple pleasant activities (a second Personal and Social Education).

Yet, in one sense, the question "why not?" may be asked, in this example (about drawing) that might apply to RE:

The gradual development of technical skill must, of course, be looked for, but it is surprising how much progress children make in this direction, even

without specific instruction, when their work is inspired by intense interest and when they themselves are free from petty fears. (Hughes, Hughes, 1946, 235)

The work produced might be like that which appeared in part during the lessons illustrated (especially Appendix 6).

The suspicion is that RE has experienced an extension of curriculum reform as elsewhere using structural change that is also really about intensified bureaucratic control, if in this case more in local area hands, in certain religious practitioners' hands but still less so in teachers' hands, whereas what is required is cultural reform at the centre of teaching expertise and its relationships (Hargreaves, 1994). So the radical cultural solution is to enhance relationships at school level, to cease to make RE compulsory, to scrap the levels altogether, to let the SACREs give the most general guidance only if they should exist at all, and therefore to give back creativity to the teachers and pupils. Then pupils could be profiled for what they do, to move away from assessments by memory tests and focus more on argument and reflection. It is a non-instrumental approach:

He will not always do things for the sake of some extrinsic end. He will, first of all, enjoy performing well according to the standards required. He will have an attitude of care in other words. But this care will be related to the point of the activity. He will feel humility towards the givenness of the features of this activity, towards the impersonal demands of its standards. And he will have a sense of its connection with other things in life, a wary consciousness of the past and the future and the place of what is being done in the passage through the present. Indeed, as Spinoza put it, he should be capable of viewing what he does 'under a certain aspect of eternity'. (Peters, 1973a, 264).

This is a manifesto for RE. Whether RE would survive such a shift to freedom is debatable, but visibly meeting preset descriptors is not the same in assessment quality as engaging with religion including broad spirituality, being creative and being educational.

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Body of the essay

Total Words: 5794

Total Characters: 35895

Total Paragraphs/ tables: 79

Different words/ items: 1491

Total Punctuation: 552

Total Other Text: 100

Flesch Reading Ease 49.2

Flesch Kincaid Grade Level 11.4

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