

Methodology and Pedagogy

In 2007, The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) produced the **Toledo Guiding Principles for Teaching about Religions and Beliefs**.

For a guide to developing good principles for learning and teaching in RE see, for example, <http://www.reonline.org.uk/leading/policy/>

Some of the Toledo Principles that relate to methodology and pedagogy in RE are:

- Teaching about religions and beliefs must be provided in ways that are fair, accurate and based on sound scholarship. Students should learn about religions and beliefs in an environment respectful of human rights, fundamental freedoms and civic values.
- Teaching about religions and beliefs is a major responsibility of schools, but the manner in which this teaching takes place should not undermine or ignore the role of families and religious or belief organizations in transmitting values to successive generations.
- Preparation of curricula, textbooks and educational materials for teaching about religions and beliefs should take into account religious and non-religious views in a way that is inclusive, fair, and respectful. Care should be taken to avoid inaccurate or prejudicial material, particularly when this reinforces negative stereotypes.
- Curricula focusing on teaching about religions and beliefs should give attention to key historical and contemporary developments pertaining to religion and belief, and reflect global and local issues. They should be sensitive to different local manifestations of religious and secular plurality found in schools and the communities they serve. Such sensitivities will help address the concerns of students, parents and other stakeholders in education.

Schools using this syllabus are free to employ different approaches to teaching RE and many of these are listed below. But whichever approaches are taken, the Toledo Principles above should be taken into account.

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The term 'methodology' is used here to refer to a system of teaching and learning activities used in RE.

The term 'pedagogy' refers to "a theory of teaching and learning encompassing aims, curriculum content and methodology... ..to relate the process of teaching to that of learning on the part of the child."

Grimmitt, M., 2000, *Pedagogies of Religious Education: case studies in the research and development of good pedagogic practice in RE*, Great Wakering, Essex: McCrimmonp. 16-17.

So, while all of the following approaches may be termed a 'methodology', not all are 'pedagogies' in Grimmer's full sense. The approaches here often overlap, but each has distinctive features. It will be up to schools and teachers to decide which ones may be appropriate to the enquiries in the AMV programme of study. Since different approaches may suit different preferred styles of learning it will be wise to *use a variety of approaches over time*. The key will be to build bridges between the traditions of religion and belief and the pupils' own ideas, interests and experience.

Appropriate methodologies for Awareness, Mystery and Value (AMV)

1. *Phenomenological approach*, for example:

- helping pupils know and understand some specific beliefs and teachings;
- developing pupils' ability to give accounts of the impact of some religious teachings upon believers.

2. *Experiential*, for example:

- starting with either human experience of every day life (at depth) or with human experience of religion as discerned through its 'experiential' dimension;
- using reflection, stilling, guided fantasy and experiential work to open the creative imagination;
- encouraging pupils to build conceptual bridges between their own experiences and some of the central concepts of religion.

3. *Human development: learning about / learning from*, for example:

- encouraging pupils to *develop* their own patterns of belief and behaviour through exploring religious beliefs and practices and related human experiences;
- providing opportunities for pupils to develop spiritually, morally, socially and culturally.

4. *Ethnographic / interpretative*, for example:

- encouraging pupils to relate to a way of life that is different from their own, by introducing them to material from religious traditions and helping them to connect it with their own personal knowledge and experience;
- listening to the voices of those who follow the tradition being studied;
- providing opportunities for pupils to actively interpret religious meaning making, not just passively receiving information about a tradition.

5. *Concept cracking*, for example:

- encouraging pupils to consider religious content in ways that reflect and are consistent with, the religious community's interpretation of that material;
- providing opportunities for pupils to ask their own questions about what life would be like if everyone followed the example of leaders of religion and beliefs;
- relating values and 'truth claims' to their own experiences.

6. *Literacy-centred, critical realist*, for example:

- challenging pupils to develop their own views about what might be 'true' in relation to a number of options;
- developing pupils' 'religious literacy', inviting them to develop their views about religion itself and other critical narratives drawn from philosophy, psychology, theology, history etc.

7. *Constructivist*, for example:

- encouraging pupils to develop their natural capacities for *individual storying* and *constructing meaning*;
- challenging pupils to develop their own world views by relating their own experiences and reflecting on their own patterns of belief and behaviour;
- using a process of 'identification, reflection and application' to engage pupils in exploring

religious beliefs and practices and related human experiences.