



## RE REVIEW DISSEMINATION EVENT: London

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'The journey is the reward'- this is a Taoist proverb and it is one I used a couple of weeks ago to explain the importance of continuing to learn as a teacher when speaking at the Learn, Teach, Lead Conference in the South West.

The journey that this review has begun, and I say *begun* quite deliberately, has been one of much learning. I believe the journey that has already been taken, and the one we are about to begin, has already brought reward and will bring even greater reward...

The journey so far, that Mike has outlined has involved many people from diverse belief and faith communities, from many phases of education, and from many professional organisations.

The Review, which includes the National Curriculum framework for RE, presents much to consider for those who must now continue the journey, hopefully as a result of this document, working much more closely together.

The purpose of RE outlined in the NCFRE speaks of engaging young people in challenging questions, encouraging an aptitude for dialogue and enabling them to learn about and from religion and belief. In many senses we might say there is nothing new here, but it is clearly defined and articulated here and brings many views about the nature of RE together. However, the little phrase which caught my eye was that children and young people are to learn to weigh up the value of wisdom in different traditions. Wisdom...Wisdom is the synthesis of knowledge and experiences into insights that deepen one's understanding of relationships and the meaning of life.

Albert Einstein once said, 'Wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the lifelong attempt to acquire it.' Such a process is a lengthy and arduous journey, which teaches the pursuer patience and humility.

Yes, if only our children and young people were seeking wisdom.... What a great purpose for RE... To help children see the best in the wisdom of others, but also to seek their own understanding of wisdom...what greater educational aim could there be?

*I made reference here to the St Bede's young people presentation and their reference to 'still finding out'.*

For me this is the heart of what RE is about.

As Einstein suggest, to become wise is a journey... One in which I am definitely still on And the way in which the NCFRE sets this 'wisdom journey' out is clearly defined and goes some way to ensuring a progression of understanding. To me there is a deepening insight into religion and belief through the key stages and an enriching through reflection on life itself as the subject makes links with other curriculum areas.

The three aims of RE are expounded clearly and refer to knowledge and understanding, expressing ideas and insights, and gaining and deploying skills. These aims move away from the traditional 'learning about' and 'learning from' and begin to forge a new pathway. I see this as a positive move. The second of these aims picks up in particular on one of the issues raised in the recent Ofsted report- that children and young people do not understand the impact of religion and world views on people's lives. This is something which we identified as a issue in Norfolk some time ago and we have been working on this area already. It is great to see that we are on the right track.

The third area, also highlights the importance of enquiry, an approach to teaching and learning highlighted as best practice in the recent Ofsted report. So there is much to celebrate here, and local Diocese like my own would do well to ensure that they are promoting these aims in all their schools.

The purpose and aims, and the more detailed subject content, in my view are broad enough to be embraced by both local SACREs, academy providers and Diocese. The subject content which is outlined in NC style makes requirements for different key stages clear, and provides some useful examples. If I was to criticise one thing It would be the over use of the word respond and not enough use of the words analyse, reason, evaluate and enquire. This probably betrays my own pedagogical approach more than anything else, but I think this is a missed opportunity to embed best practice that Ofsted have highlighted recently. However, on the whole, I love the emphasis on the difference faith and belief make to people, the focus on meanings behind rituals and actions, and the focus at Key Stage Three on using a range of philosophical and theological disciplines- although it would be even better if this was at Key Stage One and Two as well To me this focuses RE back on the heart of the matter- beliefs- and avoids a superficial tour of religious practice which has neither relevance or meaning for children and young people.

The phasing of the requirements and the examples given will provide much useful material for those of us working with schools in developing coherent curriculums, as well as supplementing agreed syllabus documentation. In the future, it will help support the review of the Norfolk AS, although having only just launched the last one this is a few years away

So for me, the first part of the document provides clear signposts for the next stage of the

journey, there may be particular things I will want to pack on my 'wisdom journey' that are not emphasised here like the enquiry approach and more focus on reasoning, but the essential items for a journey that can take place together with other RE professionals are here.

My belief that the journey of the review has been the reward, is particularly evident in the second half of the document. Here important recommendations are made which potentially could transform religious education teaching and CPD for teachers nationally.

From my perspective the wider context section is as important, if not more important than the first part of the document and in my role at CSTG along with colleagues from the REC CPD group and NATRE we are already beginning to consider ways forward, especially in relation to recommendations 1 and 4. To me research must connect with teachers, and vica versa. These two recommendations are intrinsically linked. *(I referred back to Mike hear and agreed with his observations on research)* In a recent Think Piece for RE Online I talked about the value of research based CPD unknown to me that this would be in the review! AT CSTG we are already looking at developing regional collaboration more strategically. So watch this space!

In my Diocesan role, we have recently encouraged three new NATRE networks to start, with a view that they may in the future join for more local and regional collaboration. I am in discussions with the a local university about it becoming a hub for CPD- negotiations in early stages but potentially could have a big impact in the eastern region. We are also piloting an action research approach linked to the REQM and creating hubs of best practice across three counties.... All these little developments now need to come together more strategically and this document provides a framework for this to happen. I have questions like, Who will pay for this? How will it work? But the review asks, Is it viable? and my answer to this is - oh yes I think it is and I am excited...

*(I ran out of time to present this conclusion, but include it here for reference)*

So to come back to my journey metaphor....and to wisdom.

I believe it is time for the RE Community to come together more effectively....to be wise in the constantly changing educational climate. I think that perhaps we have been on parallel journeys, or sometimes on different journeys altogether in the last few years. If we - researchers, advisers, teachers, Faith communities are wise, then we will see the huge importance of this review and it's implications. Personally, I think that the importance of research and regional collaboration are the key next steps on our journey together as an RE community. I will be endeavouring to promote both these in my role as a Diocesan adviser and as lead consultant for CPD for CSTG, as well as using the NC framework to support teachers understanding of the purpose and aims of the subject.

I believe, the next steps on our journey will be the greatest reward....