

Research Poster

Giving voice to 'the silent minority': the experience of religious students in secondary school religious education lessons

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Research focus: To find out about how teenagers of religious backgrounds experience secondary religious education (RE).

How the research was carried out: 34 teenagers were interviewed, representing Jewish and three different Christian communities.

Key findings:

- Pupils from religious backgrounds often feel that their own traditions are stereotyped as part of RE lessons.
- They feel that RE lessons often fail to take account of diversity within religious traditions.
- They say that the experience of faith is at variance with the 'facts' about faith presented through the RE curriculum.
- At the same time, religious young people are uncomfortable when used as representatives of their traditions in the classroom. It makes them a target for peer prejudice or hostility.

Relevance for RE teaching:

RE teachers must be prepared to look beyond simplified textbook accounts of religious life. This involves both critical scrutiny of resources and a readiness to discuss different experiences and points of view in the classroom. Yet teachers should be very careful not to expect individual pupils to speak up for religious traditions during lessons, nor to focus excessively on individuals. There can be a fine line between encouraging pupils to contribute to lessons and creating vulnerability.

How to obtain further information:

Moulin, D (2011) 'Giving voice to "the silent minority": the experience of religious students in secondary school religious education lessons', *British Journal of Religious Education*, 33 (3): 313-26.

There is a list of references at the end of the article that can be used to source further related reading.

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