

Council of Europe Policy and 'Safe Space' for Dialogue in Religious Education

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1. Religion and Schools in Europe

There are various approaches to the study of religion(s) in schools in European countries, resulting partly from diverse histories of religion and state, and a range of cultural differences.¹ Today, all states are influenced by factors such as secularisation, and supra-national or global influences, including the migration of people, and many have gone through processes of change in recent decades.²

1 Davis, D.H./Miroshnikova E. (Eds.): The Routledge international Handbook of Religious Education, Routledge–London–New York 2012; Jackson, R./Miedema, S./Weisse, W./Willaime, J.-P. (Eds.): Religion and Education in Europe. Developments, Contexts and Debates, Münster 2007; Jäggle, M./Rothgangel, M./Schlag, T. (Eds.): Religiöse Bildung an Schulen in Europa, Teil 1: Mitteleuropa (Wiener Forum für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft 5.1), Göttingen 2013; Kuyk, E./Jensen, R./Landshear, D.W./Löh Manna E./Schreiner, P. (Eds.): Religious Education in Europe, Oslo 2007; Rothgangel, M./Jackson, R./Jäggle, M. (Eds.): Religious Education at Schools in Europe, Vol. 2: Western Europe (Wiener Forum für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft 10.2), Göttingen 2014; Rothgangel, M./Skeie, G./Jäggle, M. (Eds.): Religious Education at Schools in Europe, Vol. 3: Northern Europe (Wiener Forum für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft 10.3), Göttingen 2014.

2 Bråten, O.M.H.: Are oranges the only fruit? A discus-

In addition to questions about the aims of studies of religion in schools, whether through a separate religion subject or other fields, are interrelated questions about didactics and the agency of students. If students are encouraged to express and exchange their own personal views, then a number of issues are raised, including that of providing 'safe space' for dialogue. 'Safe space' has become a shorthand term for a desired classroom atmosphere. In a safe classroom space, students are able to express their views and positions openly, even if these differ from those of the teachers or peers.

2. Council of Europe Policy on Religion and Education

At the European level, there has been an interest in the place of studies of religion within public education from a number of intergovernmental organisations.³ Here I will focus on recent work

of comparative studies in Religious Education in relation to the plural nature of the field internationally. In: Rothgangel/Skeie/Jäggle 2014 [Anm. 1].

3 Jackson, R.: The European Dimension. Perspectives on Religious Education from European Institutions, Professional Organisations and Research Networks. In: Rothgangel/Jackson/Jäggle 2014 [Anm. 1].

from the Council of Europe, founded in 1949 and based in Strasbourg. It comprises 47 member states currently and its aims include protecting human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law. The Council's work leads to European conventions and agreements in the light of which member states may choose to adapt their policies or amend legislation. The Committee of Ministers (the Foreign Ministers of member states) may make Recommendations to member states on the basis of projects conducted within the Council of Europe.⁴

Before 2002, there were no specific Council of Europe projects about religion and public education, religion being regarded as a private matter. Various aspects of globalisation, including the migration of peoples, and greatly improved communication via the internet, together with dramatic and widely reported events such as 9/11, account for the current view that religion should be part of discussion within the public sphere. The Council of Europe's first major project concerning religion and education started in 2002, focusing on religions as an aspect of intercultural education. At a later stage (2008), 'non-religious convictions' were added for reasons of inclusivity.

The Council of Europe has avoided direct involvement in 'religious education' since this is often understood to denote nurture within a particular faith. Rather, work on religions and non-religious convictions is linked to the Council's ongoing work in intercultural dialogue, considered as 'an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals, groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage on the basis of mutual understanding and respect'.⁵

In 2008, the Council of Europe published an important Recommendation from the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.⁶ The Recommendation aims to provide an education about religions and non-religious convictions which is distinct from forms of religious education which aim *specifically* to nurture young people in a particular faith. However, the form of intercultural education suggested is *complementary* to many forms of faith-based education, and could be adapted to various faith-based contexts.

In 2011, the Council of Europe, in partnership with the European Wergeland Centre (<http://www.theewc.org/>), set up a committee of experts to produce advice on using the Recommendation in member states. The result is the document *Signposts: Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*, intended as a tool for use by policy makers, schools and teacher trainers in member states, including those involved in various forms of religious education.⁷

The Council of Europe Recommendation suggests, *provision of a safe learning space to encourage expression without fear of being judged or held to ridicule*.⁸ This is consistent with the Council's work on human rights, education for democratic citizenship and intercultural dialogue, all of which emphasise active learning methods involving participation by students.⁹

4 Ibid.

5 *Council of Europe: White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. Living Together as Equals with Dignity*, Strasbourg 2008.

6 *Council of Europe: Recommendation CM/Rec (2008) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education.*

7 *Jackson, R.: Signposts. Policy and Practice for Teaching about Religions and Non-Religious Worldviews in Intercultural Education*, Strasbourg 2014.

8 *Council of Europe 2008 [Anm. 6], 7.1.*

9 *Council of Europe 2008 [Anm. 5]; Council of Europe: Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*,

3. Research on the Classroom as 'Safe Space'

As stated earlier, 'safe space' is a shorthand term for a desired classroom atmosphere in which students are able to express their views and positions openly, even if they differ from those of the teachers or peers. Some research relevant to providing classroom safe space, in the context of exchanges about religion, will be summarised.

3.1 The REDCo Project

The European Commission REDCo Project¹⁰ researched the opinions of 14 to 16-year-old school students in eight different European countries (England, Estonia, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, the Russian Federation and Spain) on teaching and learning about religious diversity. Despite the fact that the studies were conducted in nations and states having some different policies on religion and education in schools, some common general themes emerged from responses across the eight countries:

- Students wish for peaceful coexistence across differences, and believe this to be possible;
- For students peaceful coexistence depends on knowledge about each other's religions and worldviews and sharing common interests as well as doing things together;
- Students who learn about religious diversity in school are more willing to have conversa-

tions about religions / beliefs with students of other backgrounds than those who do not;

- Students wish to avoid conflict: some of the religiously committed students feel vulnerable;
- Students want learning to take place in a safe classroom environment where there are agreed procedures for expression and discussion;
- Most students would like the state-funded school to be a place for learning *about* different religions / worldviews, rather than for instruction *into* a particular religion / worldview.¹¹

REDCo research found that the majority of young people surveyed identified the school as a *potential* safe space for dialogue about religions. Students expressed their wish that learning about religions should take place in a safe classroom environment governed by agreed procedures for expression and discussion. They did not consider that the peer group or the family would be appropriate or likely spaces for this kind of interchange. They were eager to avoid religion becoming an issue of conflict. As a criterion of 'safe space' students particularly mentioned not being ridiculed or marginalized because of one's religion or belief.¹²

REDCo studies included analysis of classroom interactions (mostly videotaped lessons)¹³ in the eight countries. Discussions focused on issues of religion and conflict. The research shows that students tended to support opportunities for sustained classroom dialogue when studying religions.

Adopted in the framework of Recommendation CM/Rec (2010) 7 of the Committee of Ministers, downloaded from http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/edc/Source/Charter/Charterpocket_EN.pdf (8.8.2014).

10 The full title is 'Religion in Education. A Contribution to Dialogue or a Factor of Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries?' – Jackson R. (Ed.): Religion, Education, Dialogue and Conflict. Perspectives on Religious Education Research, London 2012; <http://www.redco.uni-hamburg.de/web/3480/3481/index.html> (8.8.2014).

11 Jackson, R.: Religion, Education, Dialogue and Conflict. Perspectives on Religious Education Research, London 2012, 3–9, 7f.

12 Ter Avest, I./Jozsa, D.-P./Knauth, T. u.a. (Eds.): Dialogue and Conflict on Religion. Studies of Classroom Interaction in European Countries, Münster 2009.

13 In schools in two of the countries it was not possible to videotape classroom interactions for various ethical reasons. In these cases classroom interactions were audiotaped and the transcripts were analysed.

Teachers' views on how to approach the diverse religious education classroom were shown to be dependent on interrelated factors including:

- Their personal teaching style;
- Their interests and values;¹⁴
- Their subject knowledge: this can play a significant role in classroom interaction on religion and values. Well-informed teachers are better able to deal with student interventions.¹⁵

Von der Lippe's research in Norwegian schools also shows the negative impact media representations of some religious material can have on classroom dynamics, and suggests ways of dealing with this.¹⁶

Von der Lippe records that some religiously committed students, especially those of a Muslim and charismatic Christian background, were anxious that conversations about religion might lead to conflict, especially fearing that their own beliefs might be criticised or that they personally would have to respond to stereotypical representations of their faith.¹⁷ The finding reinforces the need for a high degree of sensitivity in developing approaches in which students reveal their own personal positions.

Despite students' wish to avoid conflict, an overview of REDCo research suggests that issues involving conflict can be used constructively

in teaching and learning.¹⁸ For example, O'Grady's classroom approach in the north of England, using drama and role play, shows successful engagement with conflict issues in the classroom,¹⁹ and Kozyrev's research in St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, found that conflict usually came first in the interplay of dialogue and conflict, with dialogue functioning as a means to resolve or avoid conflict. The teacher's role, in facilitating dialogue, was crucial.²⁰ Schihalejev's research in Estonia shows the subtlety of approach required by teachers in promoting dialogue. Her examples show that positive reinforcement of student responses *without discussion* does not contribute to dialogue; rather, it gives the impression that the 'right' answer has already been given. Also, students are deterred from exploring a subject more deeply *if the teacher takes too strong a role as a facilitator*; in such cases, students tend to rely on the teacher's arguments or simply do not participate.²¹

In research in schools in Hamburg,²² a number of key principles became clear regarding

14 Van der Want, A./Bakker, C./Ter Avest I. u.a. (Eds.): Teachers Responding to Religions Diversity in Europe. Researching Biography and Pedagogy, Münster 2009.

15 Lippe, M. von der: Youth, Religion and Diversity. A qualitative study of young people's talk about religion in a secular and plural society. A Norwegian case, unpublished PhD thesis, University of Stavanger, 2010.

16 Jackson 2014 [Anm. 7], Chapter 6, for more on her research on media.

17 Lippe, M. von der: Young People's Talk about Religion and Diversity. A qualitative study of Norwegian students aged 13–15. In: Jackson 2012 [Anm. 11], 25–39.

18 Skeie, G.: Dialogue and Conflict in the Religious Education Classroom. Some Intermediate Reflections from a Research Project. In: Streib, H./Dinter, A./Söderblom, K.: Lived Religion. Conceptual, Empirical and Practical-Theological Approaches. Essays in Honour of Hans-Günther Heimbrock, Leiden 2008, 337–348

19 O'Grady, K.: Action Research and the Interpretive Approach to Religious Education. In: Miller, J./O'Grady, K./McKenna, U. (Eds.): Religion in Education. Innovation in International Research, New York–London 2013, 134–148.

20 Kozyrev, F.: Dialogues about Religion – Incident Analysis of Classroom Interaction in St. Petersburg. In: Ter Avest, I./Jozsa, D.-P./Knauth, T. u.a. 2009 [Anm. 12], 194–224, 215.

21 Schihalejev, O.: From Indifference to Dialogue? Estonian Young People, the School and Religious Diversity, Münster 2010, 166f.

22 Knauth, T.: Dialogue on a Grassroots-Level. Analysing Dialogue-oriented Classroom Interaction in Hamburg RE. In: Ter Avest, I./Jozsa, D.-P./Knauth, T. u.a. 2009 [Anm. 12].

the classroom as a potential 'safe space' for dialogue.

- Discussions worked best when the teacher presented a topic as an open question, rather than taking a particular stand.
- Having ground rules was important, especially allowing each student to speak without interruption.
- A non-judgmental attitude from the teacher was important.
- Allowing students from different backgrounds to participate gave them the possibility to test, change or to affirm or restate particular positions, or to place themselves in 'between' positions.

Dialogue was challenging and had elements of risk; it required competent and sensitive moderation by teachers.

The Hamburg research was conducted in different schools. Some discussions included religiously committed students. There was also a secular but multicultural setting, including pupils more distanced from religion. In this context, students maintained an 'interested outsider' perspective producing a dialogue *about* religions, rather than 'inter religious dialogue' which occurred in some other settings.

Students mainly participated very openly, sharing a broad interest in religious diversity, and being especially involved when religions were related to ethical and political issues. The dialogues showed a need to develop religious literacy among students as well as competence to analyse the role of religion in social life, including media representations of religions.

The research revealed some different patterns which shaped the relation between dialogue and conflict: There was a tendency to avoid conflict in order to preserve harmony within the group. There were sometimes 'hidden conflicts' related to power-structures in the classroom. These were associated with students' different levels of ability to communicate and their level

of self-confidence. Self-confidence was related to acceptance and recognition in the class. The relation between majority and minority groups could also be related to communication skills and self-confidence. Knauth notes that teachers need to try to ensure that dialogue is not dominated by the more confident and eloquent students.

In summary, success depends on:

- a communicative atmosphere in class in which ground rules are clearly understood,
- the competence of the teacher to moderate the discussion effectively and
- student confidence, which has to be developed patiently during sustained practice of dialogue.

Data from various REDCo studies, including those from Estonia, England, Norway, France and the Netherlands, show a low level of motivation for many 'secular' students to engage directly with religious vocabulary. However, *tolerance* emerged as an important value to the majority of students, across the project as a whole. Since most young people felt that learning about religions in schools was necessary to promote tolerance in plural societies, policy makers, schools and teacher trainers might consider developing discussions of tolerance of religious difference as a bridge – not an alternative – to engaging with others' religious language.

3.2 Other European Research

Qualitative research conducted in Sweden on teaching about religions has shown that some teachers try to avoid dialogue by students concerning beliefs and values since they cannot *guarantee* a respectful classroom atmosphere.²³ Moreover, qualitative studies in Norway and

23 Osbeck, C.: Religionskunskapslärare. In: *Schüllerqvist, B./Osbeck, C. (Eds.): Ämnesdidaktiska insikter och strategier. Berättelser från gymnasielärare i samhällskunskap, geografi, historik och religionskunskap*, Karlstad 2009, 157–204.

England have showed how intentions of dialogue about beliefs and values in the classroom can turn into disrespectful discussions with a degree of victimisation of religious minorities.²⁴

There can also be cases of *intra*-religious disrespect, and even bullying, in which young people from one social group *within* a particular religious tradition might behave negatively towards students from a different social group within the same religion, especially if the teacher is unaware of particular issues and is reliant on oversimplified classroom texts for information.²⁵

With regard to teaching about religions specifically, Ipgrave and McKenna's research in England with older primary school children gave examples of how respect, tolerance, increased interactions and social cohesion may develop when students of different beliefs are given the opportunity for dialogue.²⁶ Ipgrave's action research shows how certain methods and strategies can enable pupil dialogue to take place in the classroom. This is one of the few pieces of international research on pupil to pupil dialo-

gue conducted with older *primary* school children (aged 9–11) rather than adolescents.²⁷

The need to develop a sound educational and theoretical basis for addressing highly contentious issues, including religious extremism, in classrooms is emphasised in Joyce Miller's work. She suggests two possible bases: the promotion of pupils' moral development through human rights issues;²⁸ and the use of dialogic and hermeneutic pedagogies to develop students' understanding of and engagement with text, symbol and ritual.²⁹

4. Observations

The findings are consistent with research on student to student dialogue and on the classroom as safe space in other fields. For example, Deakin Crick's review of research on citizenship education in Europe shows that participative, conversational activity sustains achievement and that students become engaged when the experience is challenging, attainable and relevant to their own lives.³⁰ Holley and Steiner's research on social work students makes the point that seating in rows is not conducive to open discussion and dialogue. It also notes the positive effect of involving students directly in producing guidelines for class discussion, helping them directly to learn what behaviours and

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- 24 *Lied, S.*: The Dialogical RE Classroom. A Safe Forum and a Risky Business. Comments to Robert Jackson. In: *Schüllerqvist, B.* (Ed.): *Patterns of Research in Civics, History, Geography and Religious Education*, Karlstad 2011, 165–174; *Moulin, D.*: Giving Voice to 'the Silent Minority'. The experience of religious students in secondary school religious education lessons, *British Journal of Religious Education*, 33 (3), 2011, 313–326.
- 25 *Nesbitt, E.*: Ethnography, Religious Education, and The Fifth Cup. In: *Miller, J./O'Grady, K./McKenna, U.* (Eds.): *Religion in Education. Innovation in International Research*, New York – London 2013, 11–25.
- 26 *Ipgrave, J./McKenna, U.*: Values and Purposes. Teacher perspectives on the 'building e-bridges' project for inter faith dialogue between children across the UK. In: *Heimbrock, H.-G./Bakker, C.* (Eds.): *Researching RE Teachers as Researchers. Religious Diversity and Education in Europe Series*, Münster 2007, 215–234.

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- 27 *Ipgrave, J.*: The language of inter faith encounter among inner city primary school children. In: *Miller, J./O'Grady, K./McKenna, U.* (Eds.) 2013 [Anm. 25], 90–104.
- 28 *Miller, J.*: 'Resilience', violent extremism and religious education. In: *British Journal of Religious Education* 35 (2013) 188–200.
- 29 *Miller, J.*: Religious extremism, religious education and the interpretive approach. In: *Miller, J./O'Grady, K./McKenna, U.* (Eds.) 2013 [Anm. 25], 121–133.
- 30 *Deakin Crick, R.*: Citizenship Education and the Provision of Schooling. A systematic review of evidence. In: *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education* 1 (2005) 56–75.

attitudes were desirable for positive classroom interaction.³¹

4.1 Diversity is complex

REDCo and other findings on research on religion and education exemplify *the complexity of diversity* in late modernity, which provides a context for dialogue. Traditional ideas of plurality interact with a wider context of modern or postmodern plurality.³² In terms of religion, some students hold traditional views; others, who identify with a particular religious tradition, may not adhere to all or even many of its fundamental traditional tenets; others may draw on a variety of religious and humanistic sources in formulating their personal worldviews; others may articulate a variety of non-religious perspectives.

4.2 Locality

Local geography is also a factor, often governing the ethnic and religious composition of classes, and influencing some attitudes expressed in the classroom. This was reflected in REDCo research and subsequent research on young people's attitudes to religious diversity.³³

31 Holley, L.C./Steiner, S.: Safe space. Student perspectives on classroom environment. In: *Journal of Social Work Education* 41 (2005) 49–64.

32 Jackson, R.: *Rethinking Religious Education and Plurality. Issues in Diversity and Pedagogy*, London 2004; Skeie, G.: Nationalism, religiosity and citizenship in Norwegian majority and minority discourses. In: Jackson, R. (Ed.): *International Perspectives on Citizenship, Education and Religious Diversity*, London 2003, 51–66.

33 Ipgrave, J.: Relationships between local patterns of religious practice and young people's attitudes to the religiosity of their peers. In: Arweck, E./Jackson, R. (Eds.): *Religion, Education and Society. Young People, Religious Identity, Socialisation and Diversity*, New York – London 2014, 13–25.

4.3 Students

Students are more likely to discuss issues relating to religious and worldview diversity in school rather than anywhere else. The personalities of students are very relevant to the safe space issue, as are numbers of students constituting particular subgroups within a class, and the quality of relationship between students and the teacher. Initially discussing issues at a distance from the personal experience of students can help to establish an atmosphere of safety in which students can draw directly on their personal experience. Some teachers have found that dividing classes into smaller groups encourages more diffident pupils to express their views. Several research studies showed the self-perceived vulnerability of student minorities, and various studies report students wishing to avoid conflict; however, some successful lessons making direct use of conflict issues were observed in the REDCo project. The age of students is also important. The REDCo research covered 14 to 16-year-olds. Ipgrave's research with 10 and 11-year-olds used didactical methods more suited to younger students. Students are likely to gain in confidence and ability to participate competently in classroom dialogue with practice. Discussion of 'tolerance' can act as bridge to studying religious language.

4.4 Teachers

The role of the teacher is crucial. Teachers need to be aware of their own beliefs and values in relation to their professional role, and to be able to adopt an impartial procedural position.³⁴ They need facilitation and moderation skills *and* knowledge of the field of religions and beliefs *and* awareness of the backgrounds of young people, and of power relations within classes. The personality and professionalism

34 Jackson, R.: Commitment and the Teaching of World Religions. In: Jackson, R. (Ed.): *Approaching World Religions*, London 1982, 89–100.

of the teacher is important, as is the personal relationship between teacher and students. If teachers take a too directive role, students may rely on the teacher's arguments or not to participate in discussion. All of this puts particular demands on the initial and in-service training of teachers, and on individual teachers to inform themselves. The general ethos of the school also needs to be consistent with dialogical learning. In acting as a facilitator, the teacher's role is often that of *'impartial chairperson'*, ensuring that all points of view are represented, and sometimes as *'objective informant'*, explaining a range of viewpoints without stating her or his own. In their role as moderators, teachers need to try to ensure that dialogue is not dominated by the more confident and eloquent students (or indeed by the teacher her/himself), so that those less able or less willing to express themselves in a group context can have a voice.

4.5 Truth and Meaning

Teachers need to be able, impartially, to facilitate and moderate discussions of meaning and truth in relation to beliefs expressed during discussions. Expressing views involves attempting to explain the meaning of language used and attempting to formulate claims to truth. Discussion may involve clarifying and restating such positions, through considering the relationship of *'meaning'* and *'truth'* and clarifying the use of language (for example, when language is used metaphorically or literally).

4.6 Freedom of Religion or Belief

Students need to understand that the principle of freedom of religion or belief gives individuals the right to hold a particular belief, even if others do not share it. Participants need to understand that they should respect the right of others to hold particular beliefs. In terms of evaluating others' views and practices that are different from their own (and in clarifying their own views), students might be encouraged to

consider possible responses to views and beliefs they do not share:

- TOLERANCE (I do not agree with your view/accept the truth of your claim, but I respect your right to hold that view).
- RESPECT (even though I do not accept the truth of your claim, I respect the positive effects it brings to personal and social life)
- RECOGNITION (I do not agree with your view/accept the truth of your claim, yet your position/way of life has some very positive moral and social effects which should be recognised by society).

4.7 Risk

It is unrealistic to expect any classroom to be *entirely 'safe'* for all students all of the time. Providing opportunities for student dialogue and exchange inevitably holds some element of risk, which can be minimised through suitable preparation and training.

4.8 Ground Rules and Democratic Principles

Research studies refer to the need for agreed *ground rules* (and the direct involvement of students in the preparation of such ground rules has been mentioned). However, it is desirable that such rules are not simply agreed, but are understood as exemplifying liberal democratic principles which underpin the public and political life of the school and society, whether these are considered to be *implicit* in public political culture³⁵ or justified by reference to wider principles, such as human rights.

The following ground rules have been developed by various groups of students in collaboration with their teachers:

- Appropriate language should be used.
- While respecting the principle of freedom of expression, it should be acknowledged that

35 Rawls, J.: *Political Liberalism*, New York 1993, 223.

there are limits; for example, there should be no expression of racist or sexist language or any form of 'hate speech' (<http://www.no-hate-speech-movement.org/>).

- Only one person should speak at a time, without interruption.
- Respect should be shown for the right of others to express views and beliefs different from one's own.
- *Ideas* should be challenged, not the individuals who express them.
- Students should be encouraged to give reasons for their views.
- Exchanges should be inclusive: Everyone should be given the opportunity to express his/her view.

5. Conclusion

The Council of Europe Recommendation on the dimension of religions and non-religious convictions within intercultural education advocates *'provision of a safe learning space to encourage expression without fear of being judged or held to ridicule'* as a precondition for student dialogue.

The image of 'safe space' for civil and well ordered classroom interaction when discussing controversial issues such as religions has been considered. Insights from research on the study of religions in schools, especially recording young people's views and classroom interactions, have been reviewed. The general conclusion is that there are suitable methods and

procedures for making classrooms safer spaces, but all classroom interaction involves *some* degree of risk, especially when controversial issues are discussed and different claims to truth are made. This can be minimised by increasing teachers' awareness of power relations within classes, their knowledge of the backgrounds of students, and their awareness of relevant research findings. Moreover, there is evidence that young people's confidence and ability to participate competently in classroom dialogue improves with practice. Regarding freedom of expression, the view is taken that controversial issues should be covered, but that all views expressed should be sensitive to the plurality of viewpoints within the school, to minority groups represented in the school, and to the principles of democracy and human rights.

It is hoped that the Council of Europe Recommendation together with the *Signposts* document will be a useful tool for a wide range of stakeholders in member states, including teachers, teacher trainers and policy makers, in discussing issues such as 'safe space for dialogue' in relation to religious education and related fields.

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