DEVELOPING TEACHING SEQUENCES

Intellectual output 4

LESSON PLANS, GUIDELINES & MATERIALS FOR TEACHING ABOUT "RELIGION AND DIVERSITY"

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1. <u>Introduction</u>

This document constitutes one of the intellectual outputs of the Erasmus+ project *Religious Education and Diversity (READY): Sharing experiences of and approaches to teacher education in the context of "Education and Training 2020".* The project team come from six European institutions:

> Karlstad University, Sweden
> Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule, Wien-Krems, Austria
> Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasium), Germany
> University of Aberdeen, Scotland
> University College London, England
> Comenius Institut, Germany

Our teams' close working relationships with religious education teachers and schools in our five respective national locales has been key to the success of the project and instrumental in producing this document.

The primary intended audience for this document are teacher educators "training" religious education teachers. It may also be of interest to practising religious education teachers, student teachers, pupils, parents, and others interested in or responsible for lesson plans and materials for teaching about religion and diversity. In this document we hope that readers will find a useful set of guidelines, principles and resources related to learning and teaching about religion and diversity. As will become evident through the contents of this document, our concern in this project has not just been with inter- and intra-religious diversity, but extends to a wider range of diversities, such as those related to ethnicity, gender and sexuality. This represents the reality of the range of diversities which religion(s), and consequently religious education, encounters.

The plans and materials provided here include examples from our six European countries and, in keeping with our focus on and commitment to diversity, are occasionally presented in a language other than English, depending on their country of origin.

The document as a whole can be seen as a co-creation between us as teacher educators and our student teachers, and occasionally practising teachers which we have had the privilege to train in recent years. We are also extremely grateful for the input and reflections from teacher educators and other colleagues not directly involved in the project.

2. <u>Guidance for preparing lessons about Religion and Diversity</u>

This section draws upon some of the guidance that was given to student teachers to support them in creating their lesson sequences and plans, as well as upon student teachers' feedback following the implementation of their lessons.

Student teachers were offered a template to use in the creation of their lesson sequences. The intention was that this would also support them in the creation of the individual lessons – highlighting, for example, the importance of linking intended learning outcomes to stated learning aims. The template was also designed with the intention of making clear the expectation that student teachers explicitly consider how diversity features in lessons – given the ease with which it could be said that diversity is a constant feature, at least implicitly, when teaching about religion. We include the template below in the hope that it will be useful to others planning lesson sequences, and/or individual lessons, on diversity. As will be seen, the materials included in this document do not stick rigidly to this template – it is, we suggest, better seen as a springboard rather than a straightjacket.

Template for Lesson Sequence:

Lesson sequence title
[Consider putting the title in the form of a question as this will clarify the overall purpose of the sequence for you and your learners – to answer the question!]

Introductory information:

About the sequence
[Brief explanation of the principles underpinning the sequence. State the number of lessons. State the age range of pupils/year group.]

Aims and intended learning outcomes
[State the aims and intended learning outcomes of the sequence as a whole – aims and intended learning outcomes for individual lessons will appear in the grid below.]

Differentiation
[Indicate ways in which the lessons in the sequence will ensure accessibility and offer challenge for all learners.]

Key words
[State which words this sequence will ensure pupils are able to understand and use correctly.]

Prior learning
[Is there any prior learning that would be helpful?]

Diversity
[What aspects of diversity are intended to be covered in this sequence?]

Sequence grid:

Lesson 1: [Lesson title – preferably in the form of a key question for the lesson.]	Learning aims: [State a maximum of three aims expressing what you want the pupils to learn. You could use the language of Bloom's taxonomy, for example: By the end of the lesson pupils should: 1. ...know... 2. ...understand ... 3. ...be able to apply... 4. ...be able to reflect... 5. ...be able to evaluate... 6. ...be able to create...]	Suggested teaching activities: [This section is NOT a mini lesson plan! Here list a range of activities – perhaps divided into starter, main and plenary activities – for teachers to choose from.]	Intended learning outcomes: [These should match your learning aims. State identifiable and measurable outcomes which will inform you if you have been successful with your learning aims. For example: Pupils: 1. ...describe... 2. ...explain... 3. ...examine... 4. ...respond sensitively... 5. ...critique... 6. ...design...]	Diversity: [Indicate how diversity features in the lesson.]	Points to note: [What might the teacher using this scheme need to know?]
Lesson 2:					
Lesson 3:					
Lesson 4:					
Lesson 5:					
Lesson 6:					

The following advice, for creating religious education lessons which feature diversity, has been developed from students' reflections, following their creation, delivery and evaluation of lesson featuring diversity.

Do	Don't
• Encourage and enable pupils to recognise and critique essentialist representations. • Emphasise diverse beliefs, practices and attitudes (etc.,) within traditions and communities. • Use a range of images, in lesson resources and classroom displays, which reflect diversity. • Use authentic terms from the religion in question (rather than, say, using terms from a dominant religion as generic). • Explicitly consider diversity when devising lesson aims and intended learning outcomes. • Know your pupils and invite them to share their own experiences and understandings. • Arrange authentic encounters with diverse representations through visitors, visits and video clips – for example, invite three Buddhists	• Use essentialist language, such as "Hindus believe…". • Use stereotypical images of religious people – for example, only showing Muslim women wearing headscarves. • *Expect* pupils to be "ambassadors" or spokespeople for their religion/worldview. • Use language that reinforces stereotypes of, for example religion, gender, sexuality or ability.

rather than one to talk about what the concept of rebirth means to them. • Acknowledge the complexities of understanding religion(s) as multifarious. • Be prepared to 'pause' the lesson to discuss issues, examples and experiences of diversity. • Create a safe space for pupils to express their thoughts respectfully. • Support pupils in exploring diversity and in developing an understanding of the reasons for diversity. • Encourage and enable pupils to critique the notion of "ownership" of religions.	

3. **Suggested RE teacher education session on 'RE for All'**

In this section, we describe a session which we suggest is an effective way of enabling student teachers to consider the different kinds of diversity found in a RE classroom for all. An RE for all is an RE in which pupils from different faith traditions and none learn together. It is also one in which the teacher is sensitive to diversities other than those associated with religion.

We suggest that the session is constructed as a thought experiment. The purpose of doing so is to free students and teacher educators from being drawn into discussions concerning contextual differences and issues. We do, of course, recognise the limitations of this kind of thought experiment. However, in our view, it is important to be freed up to consider what might be possible. Grappling with contextual constraints can come later.

Thought experiment

- Imagine an ideal "RE for all" where the subject is understood as an educational endeavour
- What is education?
- What is religion?
- Therefore, what is religious education?

- Draw an image of a learner who has completed the ideal religious education at school
- List the following around your image:
    - What does the learner know?

- What does the learner understand?
- What can the learner do?
- What kinds of characteristics and qualities would you hope the learner to have?
- What kinds of concerns would you hope the learner to have

- Who are the learners in "RE for all"?
- List the range of diversities in the "classroom for all"

- Return to your image of the learner and bear in mind:
  - Diversity of learners
  - Transformation in terms of formation of the self and socialisation

- How do we get there?
- What kinds of knowledge are appropriate?
- What is the criteria for the selection of knowledge?
- What kinds of relationships with knowledge do we want to encourage in RE?

4. <u>Dialogue strategies</u>

It is clear from students' advice above that providing opportunities for dialogue is paramount in teaching and learning about diversity. Dialogue can be written or verbal. Here we offer some strategies for providing such opportunities:

1. Silent debate – Write statements on big pieces of paper and lay them around the room. Ask students to walk around the room and write on the paper in response to the statements and their peers' comments. After ten minutes, groups of students can present the 'discussions' on each piece of paper to the class.

2. Interpreting images – Students write down their responses to an image according to: a) What they see b) What they think c) What they want to know. They share their responses in groups of four and have the chance to ask each other questions to clarify their understanding of their peers' points of view. They discuss the similarities and differences in their views and reflect on the possible reasons for this. These conversations are shared with the class.

3. Ground rules & guidelines – Ask students to write down ten rules or guidelines for group or class discussions. What should and shouldn't be allowed? They should then narrow these down to five rules. They then pair up and must choose five rules between them. Two pairs should then form a group of four and decide on five rules. This process continues until the whole class can produce five rules together. Discussion around the reasons for their priorities should be encouraged and students should be allowed to 'justify

requests' for a greater number of rules. Time should also be allocated for students to reflect on the process of creating ground rules and guidelines for everyone. The question of the quality of their discussion should also be addressed by the students.

4. Pyramid discussion – A discussion question or statement is on the board or handed out. Students are in pairs and discuss the question or statement. After five minutes they join another pair and share what they discussed. After five minutes the group of four joins another group of four and they share what they discussed. They are given ten minutes for this and they are also asked to decide how to organise this discussion for themselves so that everyone is heard and there is the opportunity for response to everyone. After this stage they return to their original pairs and reflect on the process and how/if this has affected their perspectives.

5. Deluxe Think-Pair-Share – Basically, give time for students to THINK about something individually, then discuss in a PAIR and SHARE with the class. After the activity, ask students to discuss the purpose of Think-Pair-Share in an RE lesson and how it might be adapted to promote skills such as empathy or honesty.

6. Opinion line – a statement is read out or on the board. An imaginary line is indicated across the room or the wall in which one end denotes "I agree" and the other end denotes "I disagree". Students position themselves according to their opinion. The teacher puts students into groups to either reflect difference of opinion or similar opinions, depending on the teachers' intention to either highlight diversity in obvious or subtler forms. Students are asked to share their opinions and reasons in groups and then they share their discussions with the class and include if, how and why their opinions changed.

In addition to the guidance and materials in this document, on our project website (http://www.readyproject.eu), you can find a range of guidance and materials. Much of this is generic and some applies to specific settings or aspects of diversity. Similarly, much of it is English and some is presented in a language other than English, depending on the country of origin. For example, the following abstract introduces some guidance presented in German and with a specific focus on diversity. The full guidance can be found at http://www.readyproject.eu/uploads/files/1518961969IntegriertesDokumentV85.2.181.pdf.

Abstract for bespoke guidance from Germany (Diversity focus – culture and ethics)

Cultural diversity will be one of the main topics for teaching Ethics and Religious Education in the decades to come. The following framework allows teacher educators to connect the presentation of the ERASMUS plus project "READY – Religious Education and Diversity" with an introduction to the content of the issue.

The attached materials can, however, at least partly be used for teaching Ethics and Religious Education in schools, in particular in secondary and upper secondary courses.

The author proposes a teaching sequence in six steps:

• Observations and experiences of diversity in the everyday life of pupils and students
• Raising awareness for basic categories of anthropology
• Analysis of basic assumptions, beliefs and moral concepts (explicit or implicit)
• Distinction between religious-ethical and secular-ethical perspectives
• Distinction between ethical-existential and ethical-moral discourses
• Application of the categories discussed to phenomena and problems of everyday life

The didactical frame work pays special attention to

• a differentiated understanding of the term "tolerance" and the difference between "soft" and "strong" pluralism
• the distinction between ethos and ethics
• and the relationship between intercultural and interreligious learning

In addition to the guidance in this document, we suggest that those committed to taking diversity seriously in religious education might find some of the recent work on intercultural education instructive. An example of such work is 'Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education', by Robert Jackson (2014). Another example, entitled 'Beyond RE: Engaging with lived diversity – the role of intercultural education in schools' (Shaw 2014), advises that young people should be offered and exposed to the following:

• a space for the learning about non-religious beliefs (particularly important in faith schools)
• a space for asking questions around culture, belief and values, and further exploration of these
• exploring their own and others' identity
• addressing contentious issues
• working together with pupils from different backgrounds, promoting cohesion through actual experience of different communities
(Shaw 2014, 11)

Readers are also directed to our project website, which is one of our main platforms for dissemination and communication: www.readyproject.eu. Here you can find

articles about religious education and diversity across the world, as well as much else connected with our project, such as additional lesson plans and links to resources.

5. <u>Single lessons</u>

In this section, we have included a selection of lessons focusing on diversity. Where available, the resources appear after the lesson plans. These have all been developed by student teachers and former student teachers from our institutions, and we are grateful for their permission to include them. For the most part, the lessons focus explicitly on diversity in relation to religion. We have also included some plans for which the relevance might be less obvious – all plans were written for religious education classes and represent the range of diversities considered in religious education lessons. As a case in point, we begin with a religious education lesson, taught in a Church of England girls school, in London, with thanks to Elaine Cruden (UCL IOE PGCE Secondary RE and MA Religious Education Alumni):

Single lesson 1: 'How can we treat people justly?' (Diversity focus – sexuality) Lesson plan

<u>Lesson:</u> How can we treat people justly?	
<u>Key words:</u> Justice, veil of ignorance, disadvantage.	
<u>Learning aims:</u> To explore how the concept of justice can help us make decisions about how to treat people, specifically gay people. (To consider the biological basis for homosexuality, rather than as a lifestyle choice.)	
<u>Content:</u>	
Starter activity – Stand up / sit down	Stand up if you think everyone should be treated equally Stand up if you think people should be given opportunities to have the best life they can Stand up if you want to be given opportunities to have the best life you can Stand up if you think everyone should be treated with respect Ask students why they have stood up/sat down. Aim is to draw out the point that we can agree on the same principles but with different reasons behind them. Point this out to students if not clear to them. If all students stand up for one then that is ideal!
Biological Basis	Ask students to read through the information sheet 'Biology and Homosexuality', and to discuss the questions in their pairs (or small groups if you prefer). Take class feedback – what does this scientific evidence suggest about homosexuality? Is this similar or different to your view? What might be persuasive about this evidence? What issues can we see?
Main activity – Thought experiment	Explain John Rawls' Theory of Justice – aim in this theory is not to help the majority (like utilitarianism) but to help those who will be most disadvantaged to have the best life. (This can be illustrated by asking two students to stand at the front with cards which detail hypothetical information about their life – e.g. intelligent, well-off parents, well-educated, hardworking, poor background,

	caring but poorly educated parents – who will have more difficulty in life? What could be done to help them?)
	Explain the 'veil of ignorance' – to work out how to give the disadvantaged the best advantaged is to not know who we will be in society – if we knew we might have an advantage we would not be fair to others, but if we don't know who we will be we will make a decision to help the most disadvantaged, in case we were them. Be clear that this is for the discussion we will have – in this discussion they will be trying to imagine the situation from the characters' points of view, not from their own view.
	Explain that the main point of the lesson is to agree upon standards which give the best outcome for the most disadvantaged in society. We're going to focus on some case studies to help us do this and specifically consider issues around homosexuality. To help us do this we're going to focus on some possible scenarios in society: (1) homosexuality is illegal – not allowed to have homosexual sex or relationships, (2) homosexuality is legal – both sex and relationships, but it is frowned upon in society and gay people are often discriminated against, (3) people in gay relationships are accepted but there is no legal recognition of their relationship, (4) gay relationships are legally accepted, and (5) gay relationships are acknowledged in law and allowed in religious buildings?
	Put the above options on the board for students to refer to in their discussion.
	Hand out character cards and the graph template to students. In their pairs/groups ask them to discuss the characters and to decide which scenarios may disadvantage or advantage each character, placing them on the graph where appropriate.
	Take feedback from groups – who would be disadvantaged in each possible scenario?
	Ask students to imagine they are wearing the 'veil of ignorance', not knowing whether they might find themselves in any one of the characters' positions. Ask them to reflect upon who would be the most disadvantaged in each scenario and, therefore to select which scenario would be the most just. They should bear in mind that Rawls' theory advocates considering who would be the most disadvantaged in each scenario and then weighing up which scenario would lead to the least disadvantage possible.
	Take feedback from students – which scenario do they think is best? Can we come to a class agreement? What reasons make each scenario the best?
Plenary	Reflect on the thought experiment – Is it a helpful way to think about what kind of society would be most just? How has it influenced how you think gay people should be treated? What about others?

Resources:	Risk Assessment:
PowerPoint	Sensitive topic, which may upset students – issues dealt with according to school policy – remind students of this at start of the lesson
Biology and homosexuality information sheet	
Example cards	
Case studies	

Scenario sheets and character sheets (large) Reflection sheet	

Single lesson 1: PowerPoint presentation

How can we treat people justly?

Aim:

- To explore how the concept of justice can help us make decisions about how to treat people, using case studies around homosexuality

Think...

- Stand up if you think everyone should be treated equally
- Stand up if you think people should be given opportunities to have the best life they can
- Stand up if you want to be given opportunities to have the best life you can
- Stand up if you think everyone should be treated with respect

Why are some people gay?

- Read through the information sheet in your pairs.
- Discuss the questions at the bottom of the sheet in your pairs.
- Be prepared to feedback to the class.

What is justice?

- A philosopher called John Rawls came up with a theory of justice.
- He said that we need to ensure that those who are most disadvantaged in society have the best opportunities in order to have the fairest society.
- He disagreed with utilitarianism because they ignore the minority – he said we need to look after the minority so they have the best opportunities.

For example...

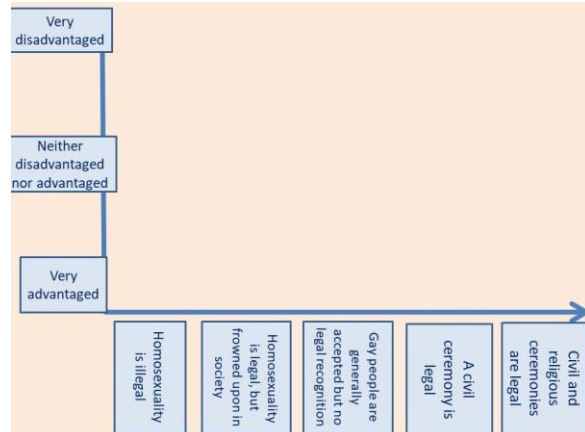| Person A	Person B
Intelligent	Hard-working
Supportive family	Poor family
Well-educated	Limited education
Well-off background	Often ill

How can we do this?

The veil of ignorance
- This is when where we imagine that we don't know any facts about ourselves
- This is because if we know things about ourselves then we will make decisions to our own advantage
- E.g. a man might decide on a rule that women shouldn't be allowed to work because he knows that would make the job market more competitive, but if he doesn't know if he will end up as a woman or a man when he takes off the *veil of ignorance*, he might say that anyone can work because if he were a woman who couldn't work then he'd be disadvantaged.

Options to discuss

(1) Homosexuality is illegal – not allowed to have homosexual sex or relationships

(2) Homosexuality is legal, but it is frowned upon in society and gay people are often discriminated against

(3) People in gay relationships are generally accepted but there is no legal recognition of their relationship

(4) Gay relationships are legally accepted through a legal civil ceremony

(5) Gay relationships are acknowledged in law and allowed in religious buildings

Task

- In your groups read through your character card.
- Discuss which of the options you think would be best for your character and why.

- Remember we are thinking about justice: which scenario gives the least disadvantage to your character? Do any of the scenarios disadvantage your character and why?

- Be prepared to feedback to the class.

Options to discuss

(1) Homosexuality is illegal – not allowed to have homosexual sex or relationships	(2) Homosexuality is legal, but it is frowned upon in society and gay people are often discriminated against	(3) People in gay relationships are generally accepted but there is no legal recognition of their relationship	(4) Gay relationships are legally accepted through a legal civil ceremony	(5) Gay relationships are acknowledged in law and allowed in religious buildings

Individually…

Put on your veil of ignorance.

Conclusion

Can we agree on a consensus as a class?
Which option is the best one overall?

Have we secured justice for all our characters?

***Single lesson 2: 'Making religious connections through art? Case study:
Muslims and art' (Diversity focus – religion and art)***

Lesson plan
Part 1:

1. Students enter the classroom and see a variety of examples of different styles
    of art eg graffiti, religious, surreal, portraits, sculpture, film posters,
    contemporary (this should remain visible throughout the starter exercise.
2. "What kinds of connections are religious ones?"

Make a list in the middle of your page.

3. "Which of these connections might be found through art?" (Highlight
    connections in your list.)
4. Give examples of these and try to fill the page.
5. What are the pros and cons of "using" art in these ways.
6. Does art help you to make any connections in your life?
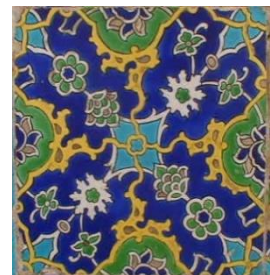
Part 2:

Geometric design   Calligraphy   Floral design

1. Students are put into small groups. They are given one of the three images
    above with a copy of the Shahada* and an explanation of the doctrine of
    Tawhid (indivisible oneness of God).
    *There is no God but Allah and Muhammed (pbh) is His messenger.
2. In groups, students are asked to present the case that their image might be a
    useful way for Muslims to connect with Allah and with respect to Tawhid.
3. Students can go on to research further information about the particular artistic
    tradition that they are presenting. This may be with the teacher's support or as
    independent work.
4. As a 'plenary', students are asked to consider the benefits and challenges that
    may result from a variety of attitudes to sacred art and to share these either
    through discussion or in writing.

Single lesson 3: 'Representations of the resurrection of Jesus' (Diversity focus – exploring Protestant and Catholic depictions of resurrection)

(With thanks to Ailsa Gray and Jess Sinclair, UCL IOE alumni.)

Lesson plan

Lesson: Representations of the resurrection of Jesus
Aim: To explore how the resurrection is portrayed through imagery in two contrasting Christian denominations.
Resources: An image of 'Resurrection of Christ' (a 14th-century Nottingham alabaster relief panel); an image of a small Christian cross necklace; A3 paper; set of cut out quotes and statements.
Differentiated Intended Learning Outcomes: ✓ To be able to describe the similarities and differences between two symbols of resurrection. ✓ To explain two contrasting views on how the resurrection should be symbolised. ✓ To be able to critique how the resurrection is understood by different denominations of Christianity, through the study of two Christian objects.
How is diversity reflected in the lesson? Diversity is reflected in the lesson because pupils will be looking at how the resurrection is represented in different objects/images and how these objects relate to different Christian denominational beliefs. The intention is that pupils reflect upon beliefs relating to salvation, resurrection, sin, and life after death. These topics are diversely understood amongst the Christian faith, and it is hoped the objects will stimulate relevant discussion, supported by input from the teacher as necessary.

Student Activity	Teacher Activity
Starter 5 mins Pupils will look at one image and answer the following question: What do you think this image represents in Christianity?	Teacher will introduce one image and prompt on what pupils should be looking for. For example, what is significant about the image? Who is involved? What is happening?
Main Activities 1. Pupils will be given an A3 piece of paper in pairs. There will be two images representing the resurrection; one a simple image of a Christian cross necklace to represent the Protestant view, and the other an image of the	Teacher will explain task to pupils and guide the discussion on the different beliefs in the representation of the resurrection.

'Resurrection of Christ' (a 14th-century Nottingham alabaster relief panel) to represent the Catholic view. They will be given a set of quotes and statements relating to these two views. Pupils will have to sort these quotes out, deciding whether they are Protestant or Catholic. 2. Class feedback and discussion guided by teacher to clarify ideas and assess evidence of pupil progress. 3. Pupils write a letter to a Catholic/Protestant explaining their view (from the perspective of the other denomination).	
Plenary Pupils create a Venn diagram showing the similarities and differences between the Catholic and Protestant understandings – and recognising the differences within as well as between the two.	Teacher encourages pupils to recognise the nuances within and between understandings.
Points for teacher to consider Make sure prior knowledge of resurrection is established in previous lesson.	

6. "Lessons" outside of the classroom

Of course, much teaching and learning in religious education is well suited to learning outside of the classroom. For this reason, this section focuses on "lessons" outside of the classroom.

Guidelines for visiting places of worship/meditation (diversity focus – connecting with the divine)

1. Focus on the experience of 'encounter' rather than simply visiting.
2. Look for opportunities to visit two or more places of worship in the same day to highlight diversity.
3. Prepare contrasting excerpts from sacred texts that relate to the place of worship.
4. Ask students to prepare questions for a member of the faith group.
5. Allow time for students to reflect individually in the different areas of the place of worship*.
6. Organise for a person of faith who is connected to the place of worship to be available for discussion with students.

Suggested activity to reflect on the environment

1. Choose a place to stand or sit on your own.
2. What can you hear?
3. What can you smell?
4. How is this different from sights and smells outside?
5. Look around you? What images and colours do you think are important to someone who is worshipping here? Why might this be?
6. How might someone who worships here feel in this place?
7. What might s/he do here?
8. What do you want to know about this place?
9. What could you ask someone who worships here?

Not all of us are in the fortunate position of being able to take young pupils to places of worship/meditation. In such cases, the internet offers opportunities for young people to "meet" people with diverse experiences and understandings of religions. The British Library's 'Understanding Sacred Texts' interactive, where pupils can choose questions to ask a panel of experts is a good example - http://www.bl.uk/learning/citizenship/sacred/sacredintro.html. In advance of accessing this, pupils might be introduced to sacred texts as sacred objects with a selection from the activities below.
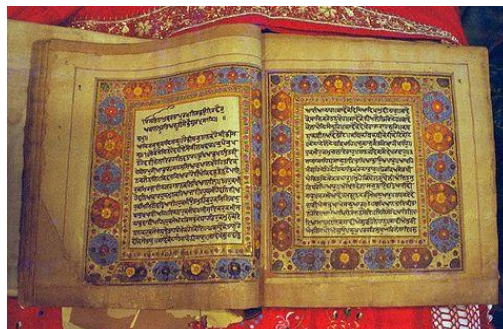
1. A photograph of an old sacred text can be used here to allow close examination.
2. What do you notice?
3. What questions do you have about this text?
4. What do you notice that someone else might not notice?
5. How does the 'writing' compare to your writing?
6. Why are sacred texts written in this way?
7. Why are the pictures and colours important?

8. What can they tell us about the text and the people who read or listen to it?
9. What is the text written on? What can you tell from the markings on the text?
10. What tools do you think were used to create this sacred text? Think about the writing, the paint, the paper or parchment.
11. Ask students to research all of these tools and materials as a class. Possible areas of interest can include bamboo calligraphy tools. Teachers might find the following video useful: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pBYFPI8gIt4
12. Compile a list of people and places involved in producing the sacred text. What does this tell us about faith?
13. Discuss the reasons for the preservation of original texts, languages and copies of sacred texts.
14. Where do these texts belong? Should they be protected or used in museums or places of worship?
15. What can we learn about faith and society?

7. Learning resources

This section includes a selection of resources for teaching and learning about diversities within, between and related to religions. For the most part, the resources speak for themselves.

Learning resource 1: 'Images of Jesus' (Diversity focus – representations of the divine)

Learning resource 2: Diwali (or Deepavali) – one festival, four religions?
(Diversity focus – festival)

Is Diwali (or Deepavali) best understood as a festival of lights celebrated by Hindus, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists? *Or* is Diwali better described as multiple festivals, with only their name in common? The range of resources below, and others, could be used to get students started on considering these questions for themselves. Students may discover, for example, diverse scriptural, historical, cultural and spiritual reasons which provoke insight into the range of practices and experiences of faith through Diwali(s).

Websites give a basic overview and images can be used to prompt discussion and inquiry. For example:

http://www.chakranews.com/shubh-deepavali-happy-diwali-celebrated-by-hindus-sikhs-buddhists-jains-november-2013/4116

http://aboutfestivalsofindia.com/community-festivals/diwali-in-buddhism-sikhism-jainism/

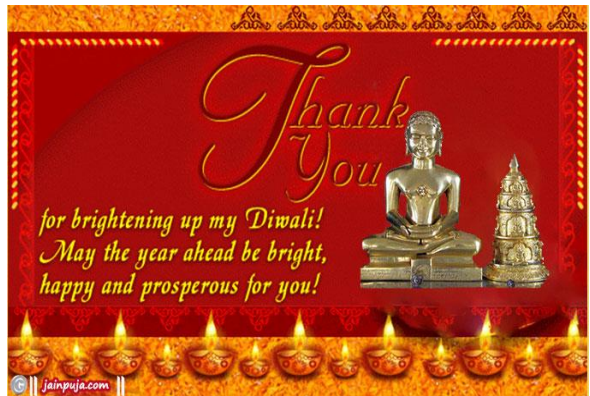Images such as the following can similarly be used to prompt discussion:

Buddhists celebrate Diwali:

Hindus celebrate Diwali:

Jains celebrate Diwali:

Sikhs celebrate Diwali:

Learning resource 3: What makes a mosque a mosque? (Diversity focus – sacred architecture)

Educators planning to create a learning experience focused on the diversity of sacred architecture may find the following article of interest: https://faithandform.com/feature/a-dialogue-on-sacred-space/. Rather than start by telling pupils what the "common features of a mosque are", Dr Farid Panjwani (Senior Lecturer, UCL Institute of Education) suggests we simply present pupils a range of mosques, such as the images which appear below. Then we can ask pupils 'what makes a mosque a mosque'? A full selection of diverse mosques with countries of origin is here:

http://www.readyproject.eu/uploads/files/150271197817diversemosques.pdf
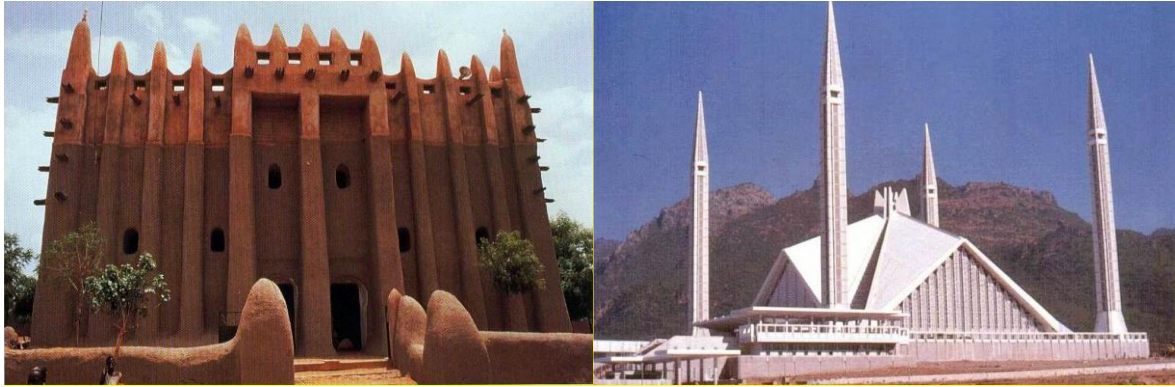
Learning resource 4: Ultimate Questions (Diversity focus – responses to ultimate questions)

The following PowerPoint is taken from a lesson which does not focus explicitly or entirely on diversity but which emphasises the diversity of responses to ultimate questions, and makes space for pupils to express and explore these. (With thanks to Harry Waddington, UCL IOE PGCE student.)

Ultimate Questions

Learning Objectives:

Can I **understand** what an ultimate question is?

Can I **create** my own ultimate question?

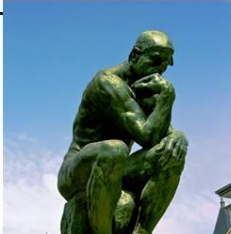Can I **reflect** on why ultimate questions are hard to answer?

Starter:

- **What** is the thing you find most confusing in life?

- **Why** do you find this confusing? This might be something you don't know the answer to.

  - **Write** this down as a question.

Mr Waddington's example: I am confused by dreams. Why do we dream?

Challenge:

Do you think you will ever understand this confusing thing? Why/why not?

What is the definition of an ultimate question?

You have just created your own ultimate questions! Well done!

Task:

Looking at the questions you created, you have 2 minutes to write a definition of what you think an ultimate question is.

Can you think of anymore ultimate questions?

Ultimate Questions = Questions about human existence that are hard to answer
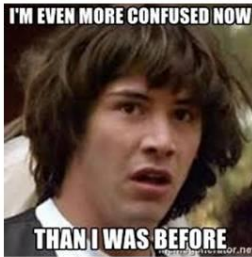
Task:
In the next two minutes I want you to think of as many ultimate questions as you can. Think back to your starter, the pictures below and my example for help!

Is thinking about ultimate questions helpful?

What are the dangers of thinking about a question too much that has no clear answer?

How can we avoid getting stressed out by difficult questions?

Time to answer some ultimate questions!

On the next slide there are 6 ultimate questions.

You have **five minutes** to examine each ultimate question and write your responses beneath it.

Success Criteria:
All responses should be written in full sentences.
You must back up your answers with an example.

Why is there evil in the world?	Why are we here?	What is time?

Do humans have a soul? If so where is it?	Where did the world come from?	Where do thoughts come from?

Compare and Despair

Compare your answers with the person next to you. Did they have any different answers? Do you disagree on any questions?

Time to reflect on an ultimate question

Written activity:
1. Pick the question you found the hardest to answer.
2. Write this question in your book.
3. Explain why you found this question hard to answer.
Challenge:
Why do people want to know the answer to these questions

Success Criteria:
Write one paragraph giving **two** reasons to explain why you found this question hard to answer.

Homework

- Your homework is to research people's responses to the question you found hardest to answer.
- Write a paragraph.
- Sentence starter for homework: "Immanuel Kant tried to answer the question 'Does God Exist' by saying that…"
- You can use anyone's opinions, just as long as they try to answer the question
- Bonus points for students who use a philosopher's opinion! (find out what a philosopher is)

8. Activities

Suggested activity 1: Design an interfaith prayer room (Diversity focus – connecting with the divine)

Depending on your context, decide which faiths, texts and relevant information will support students in their learning. We have given some examples of prayer rooms below to get students started.

Your design should include:

- lay out and decoration that allows members of different faiths to feel welcome
- your new symbol that has meaning for worshippers from different faiths
- name of the room

You should also include:

- explanation and justification of your decisions
- discoveries and challenges of this task

Reflections on teaching and learning about religion and diversity

Reflection 1: A lesson on Identity Tartans. (Diversity focus – complexities of identity[1])

Think of Scotland, and you might come up with images of misty mountains, castles, whisky, the Loch Ness Monster – and Scottish tartan. Tartans are traditionally associated with Scottish clans such as the Clan MacKenzie, MacLeod or Morrison. A tartan is a symbol of belonging, connecting a person to a name, a geographical location, a history.

My purpose in creating lessons on 'identity tartans' was to get away from narrow definitions of Scottish identity based on ethnicity and instead:

- explore the complexities of personal identity

- show how individual identities can contribute to a sense of collective identity

- foster a sense of belonging within the class group

The lessons were part of a unit on Islam for S2 classes (ages 13-14).

After showing pupils images from the Islamic Tartan (www.islamictartan.com) website, I asked them to consider the different factors that make up personal identity (for example: language; place; family; religion; beliefs; personal interests). Pupils were then tasked with creating a unique personal identity statement and writing it out

on a coloured strip of paper. The strips were woven together with ribbon to make a unique class 'tartan.'

The lessons have been a good way to encourage pupils to get to know one another better and to recognise how different their personal identities are. Some pupils were looked-after or adopted children, so it was important to stress the importance of personal interests, friends, school or community as identity markers and not to over-state the importance of ancestry. The images from the Islamic tartan website were particularly well received, challenging stereotypes and showing how cultural influences can be successfully combined.

References

Jackson, R. (2014). *Signposts – Policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious world views in intercultural education',* Strasburg: Council of Europe.

Shaw, M. (2014). '*Beyond RE: Engaging with lived diversity – the role of intercultural education in schools',* For Three Faiths Forum (3FF).