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## **Finding a Moral Homeground: Appropriately Critical Religious Education and Transmission of Spiritual Values**

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Since the European Enlightenment, it has been considered desirable to keep truth and spirituality apart in the interests of objectivity and empiricism, which in education has rendered ‘values’ the poor handmaiden of academic knowledge. It has been widely argued that no form of education can be considered value-free (e.g. Haldane, 1986:173, Markham, 1999:vii), nonetheless, the reluctance to teach religious values has continued down to the present day (e.g. McLaughlin & Halstead, 1999, Nash, 1997, Purple, 1997). However, in the UK, current social unrest has been officially linked to a lack of values guidance in education (Ofsted, 2004:6). Issues like teenage pregnancy, misuse of drugs, football hooliganism, the spate of inner-city riots of 2001 together and the world events subsequent to 9-11 have caused education policy to return to its point of origin, with a re-emergence of personal development in British education policy (Arthur, 2005) and inspection alongside that of academic excellence (Ofsted, 2005). Although children spend relatively little of their day at school, the response to the ‘litany’ of public alarm (Arthur et al., 2006:7) has been to charge the school increasingly with the development of good character in children (Rice, 1996) and even that of society at large (HMSO, 1988) leaving an unanswered question about the leadership that might allow schools to live up to this responsibility.

### **Some Definitions**

Spiritual and moral development was first grouped as a distinct educational area in the 1944 Education Act (HMSO, 1944). Later, the development of SMSC in its entirety was seen an important part of the strategy to value cultural diversity and prevent racism (Blunkett, 2001). SMSC development is cross-curricular, unlike Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) or Citizenship Education which are curricular subjects. SMSC consists of four components – the first of which is the *spiritual* – which according to Eade, relates to ‘meaning’ (2006:11). Although spirituality has been defined in many ways, one of the most practical definitions has been: “...the developing

relationship of the individual, within community and tradition, to that which is – or is perceived to be – of ultimate concern, ultimate value and ultimate truth” (Wright, 1999:29). The *moral* and *social* components of SMSC development deal with values concerning a child’s ‘actions’ and ‘interactions’ involving spirituality. Finally, the *cultural* component of SMSC development deals with spiritual issues as they concern multiculturalism. The ‘spiritual’ is usually seen as the prime mover defining the other three components of SMSC development. The word ‘development’ usually implies movement towards some sort of pre-decided benchmark of maturity. For those who believe such a benchmark is possible, there needs to be a clear modelling of how a child moves from a less developed to a more developed state. However for those who believe that such a benchmark is not possible (McLaughlin, 2005:317) or desirable, the concept of development for SMSC might be considered misleading (Priestley, 1996, 1999) or err on the side of reductionism (White, 1994:372). Benchmarking might not be such a problem relating to Religious Education’s contribution to (say) Citizenship Education, but when issues such as moral relativism come to the fore in teaching SMSC development, assessment cannot be glossed over.

Religious Education (RE) in Britain, like SMSC development, is *compulsory* – but has its own designated curriculum time. It is likely that RE could have a leading role in the teaching of SMSC development just as English or Maths (core curriculum subjects in the National Curriculum) lead on the life skills of literacy and numeracy respectively. RE and SMSC development are thought to belong together because they share a place in the ‘affective’ curriculum, in that both rely on an epistemology of knowledge that includes *intuition* and *revelation* rather than rationale or relativism (Yates, 2001:211).

For the purposes of the article that follows, ‘subject leadership’ has been defined as ‘the ability to address issues challenging to that subject’.

## **Late Post-modern challenges in SMSC development**

There are several features of late post-modernity which complexify the question of RE's potential to lead SMSC development more than was the case in the times of confessional RE. Firstly, society has become more secular (Davie, 1994:68) and inimical to the spiritual (Slee, 1992:51) while the world has become 'fast, compressed, complex and uncertain' (Hargreaves, 1994:9). Secondly, human rights on UK (Ofsted, 2005, HMSO, 1985:6) and European level (Jackson, 2007:41) by trying to define 'impartiality', appear to be about to limit the extent of spiritual or moral *nurture* that may take place in schools – something the communitarian lobby sees as foisting individualism on educators at the expense of community values (Arthur, 1998:355). Thirdly, in connection with the issue of benchmarking mentioned above, government guidance on SMSC development is not sufficiently concrete (Grimmitt, 2000:15, Straughan, 2000:139) to be prescriptive (Wright, 2001:130) and hardly mentions the role of RE beyond assemblies and collective worship (Ofsted, 2004). Lastly, expectations of education seem to be that of one which is processed, packaged and delivered, with education often being taken in isolation from the rest of a child's life.

## **POTENTIALLY HELPFUL ASPECTS OF RE FOR SMSC DEVELOPMENT LEADERSHIP**

Unfortunately the lesson of confessionalism is that not *all* aspects of education about religion might be the parts we would *want* to lead SMSC development. Obviously it would be prudent to avoid the sort of education about religion which for Britain predated the 1988 Education Reform Act – teaching that may have been uncritical (Gates, 2002:102) or which failed to quell social unrest (Ouseley, 2001). Nonetheless, religion should not to be tarred with the brush of creedal literalism so completely as it has been by influential opinion makers like Richard Dawkins (Ashley, 2002: 270). On the contrary, if selective, RE has much to contribute to the spiritual dimension of the curriculum because religion has a special relationship with the spiritual (Slee, 1992:40). It is said to be the place where spiritual energies, organized around ritual, symbol,

narrative, doctrine and ethical code have most systematically been honed and shaped – to ignore religion is to ignore a central and enduring strand in humanity’s quest for meaning and right living (Hammond, 2002:189). Thus, the present author will not be framing this article in terms of *whether* RE can lead SMSC development but rather identifying the *parts* of RE which are key to leading SMSC development. Lack of space requires some degree of pre-selection and although the present author would have liked to deal with the full spectrum of RE models and pedagogies, discussion here will be restricted to two worldviews of the four identified by Andrew Wright (1999:29), namely the Spirituality of Individual Spiritual Traditions and Universal Pluralistic Religiosity. The article will then go on to examine two pedagogies that can help these to become critical RE. Models also interesting to this topic but which the present author has chosen to omit due to lack of evidence of successful implementation, are the Secular Atheist model (Newby, 1996) and the Post-Modernist Critique (Erricker & Erricker, 2000).

### ***The Spirituality of Individual Spiritual Traditions (SoIST)***

David Carr (1996:173) is representative of a worldview (henceforth ‘model of spirituality’) known as ‘Spirituality of Individual Spiritual Traditions’ (SoIST) which posits that spirituality can be accessed validly only from within a particular religious tradition. Support for this claim comes from psychology which suggests that the ‘peak experiences’ which characterize spiritual awareness (Maslow, 1968) are so close to drug-induced and mental illness (Clark, 1983:80) that without established tradition as witness or context to one’s experience – to allow one to know that one is not alone in one’s experience – as one might be alienated by it.

One kind of SMSC development that stems from SoIST can be termed ‘nurture with critique’. It is an approach to RE that seeks to transmit, rather than merely ‘clarify’ values in the way done in voluntary-aided schools of a particular faith. Without going into detail about *how* SMSC development is taught in voluntary-aided schools, this approach is of potential interest as a model for teaching SMSC development. Religion

can inspire faith on a deeper level in a teacher than value statement meetings – faith that can be an important asset to leadership if the role model of the teacher of spirituality is seen as key. As spirituality is a quest for meaning, meaning needs an organizing principle – something that religion can provide better than relativist world-views (Ashley, 2002:270). Religious tradition can also provide the vocabulary that is our main means of accessing transcendent truth claims (Wright, 2007:245) because language is necessary if children are able to internalize difficult concepts (Vygotsky, 1978). SoIST seems to be a relevant stance on post-modernity because it actually challenges the assumptions of the contemporary culture of rampant secularism (Hay, 1985, Wright, 1999:11). Furthermore, in spite of secular stereotypes, half of all schoolchildren *still* profess a religion (Francis, 2001).

On the other hand SoIST has been accused of promoting spiritual development in a way that keeps alive the hope to muster in religious values by the back door (obfuscation conspiracy) (Ashley, 2000) – an accusation which would be justified if critique is not provided (*see the ‘Ensuring Critical RE’ section below*).

Susanna Hookway (2002, 2004) has tried to make ‘nurture with critique’ viable for the plural classroom. She published research where SoIST, Universal Pluralistic Religiosity, secular atheism and the post-modernist critique were taught to children a comparative way. Hookway tried to remain fair to the differences of worldview by exposing the children to all of them! Hookway’s approach seems clumsy because the pedagogy of *learning* (a knowledge of the full spectrum of spiritual worldviews) ought to help teachers *plan* the pedagogy of their teaching – rather than incorporating it into the *content* of the teaching merely for the sake of fairness. Furthermore, emphasising the *comparative* aspect may relativize the spirituality at the root of SMSC development and thereby undermine ‘identity based in transcendence’ while risking moral relativism which Wright seems to find undesirable (Wright, 2008). Although Hookway’s approach does not marginalize truth or truthfulness, she seems not to step beyond Wright’s description of ‘liberal religious education... (*which transforms*) ... the subject into a

form of moral education designed merely to nurture the twin principles of freedom and tolerance (Wright, 2007:244). Although Wright sees Hookway's approach as the 'most developed pedagogy relating to his position' (Wright: pers.comm.), without moral homeground, Hookway's interpretation of Wright's work does not have built in safeguards against moral relativism.

A more promising example of implementing 'nurture with critique' in the classroom (Hella, 2007) children were given spiritual nurture in a particular spiritual tradition (Lutheran) but obtained critique from Marton's phenomenography (Marton, 1981) to provide contrasting worldviews and help the children to gain depth into their own spiritual tradition. The teaching method addressed issues of 'the truth' in RE which should help avoid the loophole of moral relativism, because within the Lutheran tradition the children are allowed to keep some sort of 'moral homeground'. Thus, SoIST does seem to have serious potential to provide the full spectrum of spiritual, moral, social and cultural development for an environment such as a voluntary-aided school where the ethos of the school and the faith of the children 'match'.

### ***Universal Pluralistic Religiosity (UPR)***

Defying Carr's and Ashley's cautions about developing SMSC outside a tradition, Ota has pointed out that a jumper can be knitted with or without a knitting pattern – one can make up a knitting pattern as one goes along, or indeed sit down and think of a pattern of one's own in advance (2001:269). There has long been a literature of universality of spiritual experience transcending religious boundaries starting with taxonomy (James, 1902), development into a psychological framework (Jung, 1981) and finding empirical proof (Hay et al., 1996). Formerly the pedagogy associated with this approach was called the 'experiential approach' – but in the narrow sense of that approach was found not to be sufficiently 'applied' to offer a complete system (Watson, 1993). UPR succeeds where the experiential approach failed by *applying* spiritual experience to tangible life values. It has derived official currency in the form of *character education*



which has been specifically mentioned in the White Paper *Schools: Achieving Success* (DfEE, 2001) to emphasize that an expected outcome of education is fostering internal principles to guide students' behaviour and decision-making for operation within a democracy (Arthur & Revell, 2004). The same issues have also been addressed through behaviour modification in the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) campaign. UPR derives a set of positive values from a locally-decided values statement, which (in the case of projects that have a clear model of spirituality), may number twenty-two values in the case of Living Values an Education Programme (Farrer, 2000:35), five in the case of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values or Education in Human Values (Auton, 1997:8) or nine 'personal dimensions of character' in the case of 'character education' (Arthur et al., 2006:109). The values are nurtured by offering an experiential dimension to curriculum areas (Arweck, 2005:325). Such values nurture can be integrated subject by subject and the success of this has been reported for the subjects of technology (Conway, 1990), arts (Goldburg, 2004) and science (Astley, 2001, Poole, 1992). Applying values in this way has been referred to as the 'indirect curricular approach'. Failing this values can be taught as a subject in their own right either outside the curriculum (indirect co-curricular approach) in a way such as chaplaincy or within (direct approach) the curriculum (Auton, 1997:21-2). However, this 'bolt-on' approach to values education can hardly be considered leadership for the purposes of this article as it falls far short of the equivalent relationship between maths and numeracy.

Values education has caught the imagination of the educational community more for its 'whole school' approach in examples like West Kidlington Primary School (Farrer, 2000, 2005). These values have direct impact on school ethos and seem to overcome moral relativism by crossing the gap between moral theory and personal conduct – because children are expected to *behave* well rather than merely *knowing about the decision structures* concerning moral behaviour. It addresses the possible conflict of value systems Eade identifies between home and at school (2006:33). It

points the way for schools to increase their social capital by *involving* parents (Palmer, 2006:223) rather than merely letting them *participate* in their child's values education (Arweck & Nesbitt, 2004:145) as parents are an acknowledged influence on childrens' spiritual attitudes (Arthur et al., 2006:118, Padilla-Walker, 2007). At least nine schools have followed the example of West Kidlington (Eaude, 2004) in offering values nurture as part of their whole-school ethos (but in the present author's estimation this number would be significantly more by the time of writing). The Penn Resiliency Project has also been incorporated in dozens of schools in Britain (Layard, 2007:20) and character education has been undertaken in pilot schools (Arthur et al., 2006).

It may still be premature to judge whether UPR-based pedagogies in schools have been effective, questions having been raised (Nesbitt & Henderson, 2003:83-4) as to how this aspect of education can be systematized. Doubts as to the issues of eclecticism and values transmission are dealt with at greater length at the end of this article. However, to address the remainder of criticisms briefly, it can be concluded firstly, that critical reflection should be as important for UPR as it is for the SoIST. Often *naming* the values is not enough, because their meaning always has to be interpreted. There is no real evidence that values are examined through critical reflection in the schools adopting UPR – a weakness noted in Australian values education work (Lickona, 1992) – especially since the values selected have been pre-selected as 'positive'. Secondly, it is unclear how the current UPR work would fare in classrooms with high degrees of ethnic plurality. Most of the pilot studies have been performed in fairly middle-class, white catchment areas. On the level of social development, SEAL has been widely applied in inner city schools both in primary and secondary schools, but the lesson content is more behaviour-based than value-based. Thirdly, on the subject of provenance, the so-called 'universal values' as presented in values education have been contested as being of debatable universality (Thatcher, 1999:45). If a scheme cannot be proven 'authentic', criteria for adoption by schools, given that there is a choice, is not clear. Often the values education materials have been

provided by (or are associated with) New Religious Movements (NRM), which might ostensibly invite unrepresentative religious input – but on the other hand, this is a problem throughout spiritual education (for example the representativeness of SACRE’s has been called into question). In balance, Nesbitt has concluded that such expert input from NRM’s with values education expertise should be welcomed (2001:141). Fourthly, the question of relevance to secondary schooling has been to some extent allayed by pilot studies in character education for 16-19 year olds (Arthur et al., 2006) and in the Penn Resiliency project which is aimed at secondary schools.

In conclusion, UPR does, like SoIST seem to have strong potential to provide the full spectrum of SMSC development but goes beyond SoIST in seeming to have overcome the need to be confined to an individual faith tradition, making it potentially more viable outside the context of voluntary-aided schools.

### **Ensuring Critical RE**

Critique is certainly necessary for the RE that informs SMSC development because without it blind faith, whether based in SoIST or UPR can be a hindrance to spiritual development (Hull, 1985). For SoIST it is certainly necessary, to prevent a pedagogy of teaching from lapsing back into the historical baggage of confessionalism. There seem to be two pedagogies of critique which have been applied successfully to SMSC development.

The first method, called ‘Variation Theory’ which means *artificially* to map out the overview of the spiritual subject matter by phenomenography before exposing the children to worldviews incrementally different from their own (Marton & Tsui, 2004).

The second method called the ‘dialogical’ approach, the ‘interpretive approach’ or ‘contextual religious education’ encourages a depth of understanding that is forged through dialogue between pupils and insiders belonging to other spiritual worldviews (Jackson, 1997). It is intended to provide a primer to SMSC development that can be effective especially for those who profess no religion. However, it has received

somewhat merciless criticism from educators basing their theories within particular spiritual traditions, whenever suggested as a viable alternative to spiritual nurture because although claimed to be ‘epistemologically open’ (Jackson, 2004:92) it seems utilitarian and to derive its learning from Yates epistemology of ‘relativism’. Indeed, it does not seem to be the intention of critical pedagogies to try to present the essence of the ‘spiritual’, and hence critique cannot be regarded as a comprehensive solution for SMSC development. If advocated as a total solution to SMSC development, it would be incompatible with the model of virtue ethics (Steutel, 1997) where the inspiration for one’s spirituality and morality comes from virtue intrinsic to a person (Carr, 1991:87) and such inner virtue may be ineffable in dialogue.

Critical dialogue coming out of SMSC development has been shown to help a pupil’s social development by building empathy, a sense of neighbourliness, stretching horizons and loyalties beyond those nearest at hand, in appreciation of the depth and power of language and promoting critical thinking and pursuing the question ‘why’ (Gates, 2002:108) while debating on RE topics has also been shown (Skeie, 1995) to help the child to develop their own sense of identity. Critique, when learning through one of the models of SMSC development mentioned above, can help *moderate* aspects of spiritual values anti-social in a multicultural context such as ‘ethics of obligation’ – resolving conflicts in points of view therein. By itself, success in the dialogical approach is generally seen to originate *from* spiritual ‘awe and wonder’ in the students rather than being a process that can *produce* it (Siejck, 1995).

There is also a risk, however that if critique arising in dialogue is too severe, it can *undermine* SMSC development – a point which Wright seems to be trying to address in his ongoing dialogue with Jackson (Wright, 2008) – which might leave a question for further research of *how* critical ‘critical reflection’ should be. Ipgrave (2004:117) has suggested ‘rules of engagement’ and Wright suggests that critique of religious values should not seek definitive proof for truth claims but should encourage reasoned and responsible judgement between conflicting truth claims (2007:245) –

especially for children who already bring some degree of faith with them to school from their home religious background – that sceptical dialogue in RE classes not undermine the ‘awe and wonder’ they might previously have had. In practice it should be pointed out that Ipgrave’s work within the dialogical pedagogy has shown it possible both to reinforce home-derived faith while promoting mutual tolerance. In conclusion, of the pedagogies of teaching within RE analyzed here, the dialogical approach in isolation can lead cultural and possibly social development, but in tandem with SoIST and especially UPR, has evidence to suggest potential for leadership of SMSC development across its full spectrum, with the proviso that boundaries are defined for the extent of critique.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

There are certain issues arising from the discussion above of SoIST, UPR and critique which may shed light on how RE can lead SMSC development.

### ***Role of non-curricular learning***

SMSC development seems to concern *more* than what is explicitly taught. Spirituality can be learned from many aspects of experience. Thusfar in the article it has been assumed that children develop spiritually because of what they are taught – but Hay suggests evidence for the alternative view that learning happens by itself, facilitated by conditions (2006:9) – conditions which a skilful teacher may contribute to, but which may equally well arise at home. RE may provide school-ethos based integration that has shown to be particularly important for moral development (Jackson et al., 1993). What seems to be important is that ethics in school are demonstrated from a foundation in virtue rather than merely as obligations. Such a ‘whole school perspective’ on values means that head teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils and governors all need to establish a shared understanding of their own values and visions (Burns & Lamont, 1995:211). HMI also recognizes the importance of ethos but seems to lack a model of why certain aspects are important. Perhaps RE could provide a model for this? Apart from ethos,

assemblies and collective worship of a religious character were shown to be major success factors employed by both SoIST (Loukes, 1961:33-34) and UPR (Farrer, 2000:80ff.). Although assemblies could be considered artificial (people of different faiths worshipping together) such activities have been portrayed as offering a type of spiritual inspiration unparalleled in other aspects of a child's spiritual education (Marshall-Taylor, 2002). Regrettably, daily assemblies, although legally required, from the present author's observations, are skipped in many secondary schools. Lastly, involvement of parents and hence compatibility of values at home and school seemed also to come to the fore as one of the success factors in both SoIST and UPR.

### ***Role of the Teacher***

Even in this age of 'believe but not belong' QCA remained optimistic that children might assimilate values by teachers merely being aware "...of the existence of shared values" (1998:23). It may however be more practical for teachers to engage with SMSC development values through RE, especially if it helps them conceptualize how the values might fit with some sort of commitment. Since HMI guidance is not prescriptive (be this deliberately or otherwise) it leaves room for educative engagement with a broad range of spiritual traditions – individual teachers need to have the 'moral homeground' to enable them to discern values issues clearly (Wright, 2001:130). Such faith would give a teacher confidence as to whether "...the established aspiration is appropriate as a willed intention that can provide spiritual progress if pursued in a disciplined way" (Erricker & Erricker, 1999:133). To express the concept more educationally, RE may put the teacher 'on the spot' to help them become more 'reflective' – helping the teacher not to become complacent and to recognize they are still a learner themselves – if they were a healer, they would be a 'wounded healer' (Nouwen, 1979). Teachers are pointed to as a necessary source of expertise (in Marton's terminology, a 'zone of proximal development') to lead children to fulfil their potential. UPR has been accused of eclecticism – teachers tend to mix and match values education techniques according to

their own perception of what is appropriate – but on reflection, this seems understandable and not undesirable because of nature of values is to some extent embodied in the person teaching it – in educational jargon, the teacher is part of the “space of learning” (Marton & Tsui, 2004) namely “the architect of the pedagogical milieu, the midwife of experience and the sculptor of thought” (Marton & Booth, 1997:69) even for secular subjects. Three things – the role of the teacher, school ethos and the home liaison – point to a need to ‘deschool’ ourselves from the packaged and delivered model of education for SMSC development and it is highly likely that RE would be the best ally in helping to achieve this.

### ***Role of values nurture***

For RE to lead SMSC development it needs to find a way to justify freedom to transmit values rather than merely clarify them (Wright, 2001:133). For SoIST in the present day, SMSC development needs to justify values in terms of an ethics of *virtue* rather than an ethics of *obligation* – which are no longer intelligible outside a framework of divine law which everyone accepts (Anscombe, 1958). At the moment, for a child to develop positive values is seen as a good thing – but such values have to be transmitted from the teacher in a way that looks ‘unintentional’ for it to be acceptable! If you ask a child to do stilling exercises, or they pick up values from the school ethos or the teacher’s unspoken example, or the children discuss amongst themselves or answer open questions and it changes their views on life, that is acceptable because the teacher seems not to have intervened. In fact no education is value free. Teachers always have to decide what is worth learning. Moral relativism is supposed to be held in check by ‘awareness of the existence of shared values’ (QCA, 1998:23) but where ‘street culture’ can be the norm, teachers do need the leeway to make value judgements. Teachers need to be in a situation where they are able to challenge students whose ‘moral homeground’ is a wasteland or whose assumptions are internally inconsistent.

***Ability to assess SMSC development quantitatively.***

For whatever reason, assessment of SMSC development has been left vague. If we really want to use SMSC development to elevate quality of society we need longitudinal studies to back up policy because to establish the real outcomes of RE teaching toward SMSC development, such as the eight-year long study conducted on young British Hindus' perception of their religious tradition (Nesbitt, 2004) or a six-year long study conducted on Swiss and German childrens' view of the relationship between science and religion (Reich, 1990) to find out the long-term impact of RE teaching on those students' lives rather than merely their examination results. Satisfactory assessment is hard to implement – but without assessable models, SMSC development will not be taken seriously in the curriculum. One reason this article has emphasised the difference between pedagogy of teaching and pedagogy of learning is that spirituality has to have an internal model if it is to be measured – otherwise it is like counting up the total number of values the teacher has taught – the equivalent to measuring the quality of a child's writing by the quantity written!

***Can RE meet SMSC development requirements?***

This article has identified the key challenges of late post-modernity which SMSC development has to address such as decline in religious adherence, human rights constraints, lack of clear official guidance and product delivery paradigm of efficient education. It has attempted to identify aspects of RE which can lead SMSC development to address these issues paying particular attention to the aspects deemed most promising. Of these, school ethos, the role of the teacher, attitude towards values nurture and facility for assessment were identified as key issues in SMSC development highlighted by the aspects examined. RE is found unique in being able to address these issues and hence qualifies as SMSC development leadership material with ways to overcome its 'historical baggage' (Ashley, 2002:268) to deal straightforwardly with spiritual issues. RE can help SMSC development to be holistic – recognizing a community aspect rather than abandoning it to artificiality. RE can offer antidote to the



'me-culture' (Grosch, 1999:183, MacIntyre, 1990) and the misconception that the main goal of education is human autonomy (Gates, 2002:109). Implemented examples of RE successfully leading SMSC development have been discussed above in schools of a particular religious character (Hella 2007) and in schools of plural religious character (Gates 2002; Ipgrave 2004; Skeie 1995). It is therefore realistic to expect that RE may lead on SMSC development as a teacher would lead on a pupil – challenging with the right questions, lending expertise, providing the historical context. RE with critique can provide a safe environment to transmit spiritual values without having to pretend it is unintentional. RE can provide a pedagogy of learning, rather than just a pedagogy of teaching. It is easy enough for us to take SMSC development apart but perhaps RE can help us to put the pieces back together again. *(4,874 words – 6,775 incl. refs)*

**Abstract**

Values-inspired issues remain an important part of the British school curriculum. Avoiding moral relativism while fostering enthusiasm for spiritual values and applying them to non-curricular learning such as school ethos or the childrens' home life are challenges where Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development might benefit from leadership by critical Religious Education (RE). Whether the school's model of spirituality is that of an individual spiritual tradition (schools of a particular religious character) or universal pluralistic religiosity (schools of plural religious character) the pedagogy of RE thought capable of leading SMSC development would be the Dialogical Approach with examples of successful implementation described by Gates, Ipgrave and Skeie. Marton's phenomenography, is thought to provide a valuable framework to allow the teacher to be appropriately critical in the transmission of spiritual values in schools of a particular religious character as evidenced by Hella's work in Lutheran schools.

**Keywords**

Religious education, spiritual development, moral development, spirituality

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