Study visit
of the READY - “Learning Community”
Tübingen & Münster
to the School of Education Aberdeen / Scotland
November 28th – December 2nd, 2016
Introduction

This documentation describes the order of events and provisional results of a five day study visit of teacher educators and teacher trainees of the “Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasien)” to the Aberdeen School of Education. This “learning activity” was part of a three year Erasmus plus project titled “READY – Religion and Diversity. Sharing experiences of, and approaches to, teacher education in the context of ‘Education and Training 2020’”. For detailed information about this project please visit: www.readyproject.eu.

The study visit documented took place from November 28th to December 2nd, 2016 and had been prepared by intensive online communication, also using eTwinning (“READY 1”), between teacher trainees in Tübingen and Aberdeen.

The Tübingen traveling group consisted of three teacher trainees and three teacher educators:

From left to right: Gabi Weber, Lydia Hüsemann, Meike Sprecher; all are teacher trainees with the subjects Protestant Religious Education & English

From left to right: Uta Hauf, Birgit Maisch-Zimmermann, Peter Kliemann

Uta Hauf Teacher educator for Catholic Religious Education

Birgit Maisch-Zimmermann Teacher Educator for Protestant Religious Education

Peter Kliemann Head of the department „Religion – Ethics – Philosophy & Music“ and coordinator of the READY project

Jörg Lohrer, Staff member at the Comenius Institute Münster and – inter alia – in charge of the online platform www.rpi-virtuell.net, joined staff and learners of the Tübingen group.
The Scottish project group will come to Tübingen for a return visit from May 28th to June 3rd 2017. A group of teacher educators and teacher trainees from London visited the Kirchliche Pädagogische Hochschule (KPH) in Vienna from November 21st to 26th, 2016. The Viennese group will, together with teacher educators and teacher students from Sweden, spend a study week at the University College London (UCL) from March 19th to 25th. And finally an international group from different partner countries will study Swedish RE teacher education at the University of Karlstad from April 23rd to 29th, 2017.

In the following the order of events of the Tübingen study visit to Aberdeen University will first of all be documented chronologically: From Day to Day. The second part of the documentation (Reflections, pp. 36ff) attempts to summarize the interim insights and discussions more systematically. Furthermore it offers materials and references which might help to better understand the study visit and the Scottish situation. Questions that are still open will be important for the return visit of the group from Aberdeen visiting Tübingen and they will also help to structure and plan the program of this study visit.

At some points of this documentation there will be references to other papers and files of the READY project. Insofar as these are not available on the READY website or in case they were written for more internal use, colleagues interested should write to: kliemann@semgym.uni-tuebingen.de. Furthermore please see also postings about the READY project and in particular the learning activity at the Aberdeen School of education under: www.facebook.com/EuropeanReadyProject

It might also be interesting to have a look at sequence of short video reports produced by Jörg Lohrer. He tried to review the individual days of the study week in Aberdeen.

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLqtFb7ZWVk6_64iVGC-luatIIQXKg02yp

And: Thank you so much to our Scottish colleagues, first of all to Dr Graeme Nixon and David Smith for the warm welcome to Scotland and the careful preparation of this interesting and inspiring week!
From day to day ...

From left to right:
Uta Hauf, Peter Kliemann, Meike Sprecher, Birgit Maisch-Zimmermann, Gabi Weber, Lydia Hüsemann, Jörg Lohrer
Sunday, November 27th, 2016

The Tübingen group, staying together in Arkaig Guest House [www.arkaig.co.uk/index.html], close to the University campus, arrived on Sunday and started exploring Aberdeen. Aberdeen is a quite secularized city and we noticed that numerous church buildings are nowadays used for non-religious purposes. The reallocation of a former church to a gambling casino named “Soul” might be for some people rather provoking.

But we also had the opportunity to attend an intriguing [Advent service of the Church of Scotland](#) which impressed us all by its clarity and straightness, a very well planned and atmospherically dense liturgy and the warm hospitality of the parish community.
Monday, November 28th, 2016

After a kind welcome in the building of the Aberdeen School of Education, our hosts, Graeme Nixon and David Smith, gave us an initial introduction to the Scottish educational system, their way of teacher education and concepts of Religious Education (RME: Religious and Moral Education / RMPS: Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (upper secondary level)).

https://prezi.com/gf1tziujly_n/rmps-session-1-the-personal-search-approach/

After this meeting we participated in a 60 minute workshop in which teacher students of all subjects and all types of schools evaluated their experiences during placements in schools. Here, for the first time, we observed how strongly the Scottish educational system is defined by very clear standards and success criteria. The permanent use of digital portfolio folders was taken for granted.

For the professional standards of the “General Teaching Council for Scotland”, visit:

www.gtcs.org.uk/professional-standards/the-standards/standards-for-registration.aspx
Next we had a **guided tour through “Old Aberdeen”**, the Campus of Aberdeen University, founded in 1495 and characterized by quite a number of historic buildings. Some interesting examples include institutions as a “Multifaith Chaplaincy”

www.abdn.ac.uk/chaplaincy/what/who/inter-faith/

or the stunning architecture of a modern library building in a cuboid shape

www.abdn.ac.uk/library/about/main/.

On the Campus there is also a **Starbuck’s Café** where we had lunch.

From 1 to 2 p.m. we listened, together with several hundreds of teacher students, to a lecture on “**Partnership and Interpartnership Working**”. A headmistress explained the working structure of her school, the different responsibilities of their staff members and ways of cooperating with external stakeholders.

The diversity of the audience was interesting. The lecture again addressed teacher students of all subjects and types of school. And we were able to get an impression of the diversity in the schools, regarding the pupils, the staff and the network which Scottish schools are supposed to be embedded in. The students became sensitized to possible mental problems of their pupils and existing support facilities, for example.
In the afternoon we had a closer look at the Scottish educational system, at the framework for Religious Education in Scottish schools, at the Scottish competency based “Curriculum for Excellence” and the specific curriculum for “Religious and Moral Education (RME)”. Please see:

www.educationscotland.gov.uk/Images/rme_experiences_outcomes_tcm4-539887.pdf

A short and quite pleasant presentation of the Scottish RMPS curriculum (upper secondary courses) offers:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4xPTCYIyj8&sns=em

The first day ended with informal talks in a pub, also located on the University Campus: The St Machar Bar.

http://www.adamsfamilypubs.com
In the evening our traveling group met, just as during the following days, for an internal interim reflection. Some important insights of the first day were:

- Future Scottish RE teachers have not necessarily studied theology. It could also have been e.g. religious studies, ethnology, philosophy or sociology.

- The students are admitted to the one year PGDE (Professional Graduate Diploma in Education) programme on the base of documents and an entrance interview. Churches and other faith communities don’t have any influence. Only the expertise is relevant, not the affiliation to a religion nor the personal belief of the future RE teachers.

- Our Aberdeen partner course is small and consists only of six “teacher students”. The year before no course in RME was offered.

- There is a fairly large number of lateral entrants to the teaching profession. Some teacher students have been working in other professions for many years, e.g. in banks or in oil companies.

- The PGDE year is part of the academic studies and the students therefore don’t get a salary. The PGDE year is followed by an “induction year” as “probationer” and a teaching workload of 70%. After the induction year the probationers can apply for a permanent position as “registered teacher”. For teaching positions in remote areas of Scotland one can get a significant bonus pay which might lead to the difficult decision “Shall I tick the box?”

- Registered teachers also have to reflect their continuous professional development (CPT) by using portfolios. They are obliged to attend in-service training and must get their registration renewed from time to time.

- During the PGDE year student teachers go to schools for placements and teaching experiments twice. These placements last 18 weeks and are accompanied by school based mentoring and visits of the academic teacher educators.
• State funded Scottish schools are comprehensive schools. There are no more state funded grammar schools.

• During the first ten school years, pupils usually are taught one RME lesson a week. Although this religious education is non-confessional, there is the possibility of opting out for reasons of conscience, a case which very seldomly occurs. Our READY partner Graeme Nixon analyzed and discussed the issue of this somehow anachronistic clause in an article recently published in the British Journal of Religious Education (May 2016): Conscientious withdrawal from Religious education in Scotland: anachronism or necessary right? (See also the prezi presentation on Thursday of this study week!)


• During this first day we noticed the hectic atmosphere on the Aberdeen Campus. The time schedule is very tight, everybody seems to be in a hurry to reach the next lecture or workshop on time. Is it the same in our schools and universities?

• Religion and Diversity? Dealing with diversity well is one of the declared goals of Scottish education on all levels of schooling and this is highlighted in all official documents. The academic background future RME teachers bring along seems very diverse. And a high degree of diversity is enhanced by a very open curriculum focusing on the personal development of pupils and students. It would be interesting to compare the freedom given by such a competency based framework with the reality and necessity of being graded and passing tests.

• We were surprised by the clarity and unanimity in which all students and colleagues explained their educational system to us. It seemed, everybody knew, what the goals and objectives were and why it was decided to proceed in this way and not in another.
While Mondays are dedicated to general educational issues at the Aberdeen School of Education, Tuesdays are focused on subject didactics. When the student teachers aren’t in placements, they can then use the rest of the week for writing papers and essays.

On the second day of our study week we got acquainted more intensively with the Scottish model of Religious and Moral Education (RME). This day we were together all day with the Scottish partner group.

Graeme Nixon introduced us to his concept of Philosophy with and for Children (P4C) and we also had the opportunity to try out this method by ourselves. We were impressed by the very clearly structured procedure which also allows newly qualified teachers to work with this tool. And so it was no surprise that our teacher trainees tried out the method as soon as they came back to Tübingen.

In many regards the approach is similar to our ways of philosophising or accordingly theologising with children and youth. It would be worthwhile to analyse commonalities and differences. In the evening one could read on Jörg Lohrer’s Facebook blog the following dialogue. Andreas Ziemer, staff member of the "Pädagogisch-Theologisches Institut der Evangelischen Kirche in Mitteldeutschland", wrote:

"Question to the colleagues: Do you use ‘God’ in your scenarios? Or only when the children bring it in? – Graeme Nixon answered: “Hi Andreas, the topics for discussion emerge from the childrens’ questions. God may or may be not an area for discussion.” – Andreas Ziemer: “Hi Graeme, thank you very much. I understand that you deal in the first place with the children’s questions and the teachers opens spaces for resonance and understanding. With the background of my Eastern German biography I wonder, if and how you would challenge the children with the hypothesis “God”.

https://prezi.com/m/5dmnarewitc/-philosophy-with-and-for-children/
During the second part of the morning we got to know the master programme of mindfulness provided by Aberdeen University. Graeme Nixon again used a prezi presentation, which, as many materials at Aberdeen University, is accessible for all students.

https://prezi.com/mk7casd1dwbs/mindfulness-for-empowerment/

https://prezi.com/mrrhdoppdt3g/mindfulness-medical-humanities/

The daily use of digital media seems to be much more a matter of course than in our institution. So we were no longer amazed by the fact that even the mindfulness programme is conceptualised as a course alternating between E-learning and practicing mindfulness in real life situations and group settings. This kind of blended learning enables persons from very different professional backgrounds to participate in the programme.

Graeme Nixon also recently published an academic article about the Aberdeen mindfulness programme with colleagues:

**Studies in mindfulness: widening the field for all involved in pastoral care**

Graeme Nixon, David McMurray, Linda Craig, Annick Nevejan & Heather Regan-Addis

Since 2010, the University of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK, has offered an MSc in studies in mindfulness degree programme within its School of Education. The programme has attracted over 200 students from multiple professional contexts, providing the authors with the opportunity to gather and analyse demographic data, as well as data regarding student motivations and expectations, both personal and professional. The paper initially creates a picture of the current UK studies in mindfulness landscape by describing the established programmes at UK universities. Data from an entry questionnaire completed by three cohorts of students on the ‘Aberdeen’ programme and data collected from students throughout their studies is then presented, analysed and discussed. The authors argue that, in their professional roles, graduates from programmes and courses at Universities in the UK are introducing an ever-increasing number of people to mindfulness. They are implementing and integrating mindfulness into diverse social, business contexts as well as into all sectors of education. The University of Aberdeen’s programme, based in the School of Education, perhaps represents a move towards more holistic, pastoral and multi-professional applications of mindfulness. This contrasts with the clinical, pathological settings for mindfulness to date.

**Abstract**


Graeme also did a practical mindfulness exercise with us and we learnt that many British schools try to make mindfulness part of their school life.

[https://mindfulnessinschools.org/](https://mindfulnessinschools.org/)

After lunch the Scottish teacher trainees had prepared a **Field Trip to St Machar Cathedral** for us. On Sunday we were already in this church building taking part in a service celebrating the First Advent. Today we explored the church and the surrounding grave yard guided by didactical work sheets which our Scottish partners had prepared for us very carefully. The method was similar to our German “*Kirchraumpädagogik*” and met the goal set by the Scottish “Curriculum for excellence”: "recognising the place of Christianity in the Scottish Context". We learnt quite a lot about Scottish culture and ecclesiastical history.

The detailed planning of this field trip is available. The consequent consideration of different learning levels, the use of “success criteria” and a “lesson plan checklist” (which obviously is required for every lesson plan) were very interesting to us:
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<td>DISCUSS BEHAVIOUR / CLASS DYNAMIC WITH TEACHER / PT</td>
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<td>CONSIDER ENTRY AND EXIT</td>
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<td>CONSIDER TIMING OF LESSON – NEED TO INCORPORATE MIND BREAK?</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>CHECK LESSON PLAN WITH TEACHER / PRINCIPAL TEACHER</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>IS THERE ENOUGH MATERIAL?</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>IS IT RELEVANT</td>
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<td>17</td>
<td>PERSONAL SEARCH ELEMENT</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>OBTAIN FEEDBACK</td>
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<td>- PEERS / COLLEAGUES</td>
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End of the day in the “Braided Fig”: http://www.thebraidedfig.co.uk/
Wednesday, November 30th, 2016

This day our Tübingen traveling group, together with the Scottish teacher educators and student teachers, drove in a minibus to Fochabers, a town 80 km north of Aberdeen, for a visit to Milne’s High School (http://www.milneshighschool.org.uk/), a small country school with around 500 pupils.

The head of the RME department and a RME class of about 13 year old pupils welcomed us very warmly and seemed very interested in us. They introduced their school and what they learnt in Religious Education and asked us questions about Germany. This welcome was followed by two rounds of discussion with older pupils. Talking to them in small groups, we learnt a lot about RME which obviously enjoyed a very good reputation at Milne’s High School. Again we were questioned about Germany, about the immigration of refugees, about political reactions and also what Germans think about Brexit.

What struck us in particular was that in all class rooms were quite a number of posters and quotations inviting reflection and discussion and drawing attention to the structure and organization of learning processes:
Quote of the Week:

What then is time? If no one asks me, I know what it is. If I wish to explain it to him who asks, I do not know.

-St Augustine

Interesting Fact:
The 'Great Smog' in London was responsible for ~12,000 deaths over the 5 days of 5-9 December, 1952.

Spiritual Quote:

Wherever your treasure is, there will be your heart also.

-Jesus

Festivals and Special Days:

Nov 27: Advent begins - 4 week preparation for the birth of Jesus at Christmas

Nov 30: St. Andrews Day - Patron Saint of Scotland celebrated today

Thinking about Learning:

Engages

Challenges

Contributes

Creates

Thinks

Explores

Remembering

Understanding

Applying

Analyzing

Knowing

Thinking
Important insights

- The pupils we talked to underlined that RME is very important for articulating and debating “the big questions” of life. Also, ethical issues seemed to be very significant for them.

- Only a minority of the pupils we talked to called themselves “Christians” or “religious”. Some did, however, and they did it with particular emphasis.

- One pupil positively highlighted the open discussions RME offered for a large variety of topics. She explained in Scottish culture there was a general interest for each other’s opinion and that Scottish wouldn’t have difficulties accepting diverse convictions and standpoints. Furthermore, she said for her it was this openness of RME which made her choose this subject as a major.

- On the two year upper secondary level one can register for only five majors, the “national five”. They are taught five lessons a week and undergo a written exam. The five lesson course is called RMPS: Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies. For this level very ambitious textbooks, which could also be interesting for German RE, in particular for teaching world religions, have been published:

  https://global.oup.com/education/content/secondary/series/aqa-gcse-religious-studies/?view=ProductList&region=international
• In addition to the RMPS course, Scottish pupils could attend a five lesson course in philosophy – an interesting point of reference for a new Erasmus plus project about different forms of teaching philosophy in Europe.

• Scottish RME teachers are continuously exchanging experiences, information and material on Facebook. One can become a member of this blog by invitation, for example by one of the persons listed below:

The afternoon we spent in Findhorn, a New Age community founded in the sixties of the last century: [http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/findhorn/findhorn/](http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/findhorn/findhorn/).
We were offered a guided tour by the retired head of Findhorn-College.

http://www.findhorncollege.org/
The German edition of wikipedia gives a good introduction the "Weltanschauung" of the Findhorn community. It invites us to deal with Findhorn in Religious Education lessons. In other languages the – less neutral – website of the Findhorn Foundation or other resources might provide the necessary information.

https://www.findhorn.org/aboutus/vision/history/

"Das Selbstverständnis der Gemeinschaft umfasst drei Kernbereiche: Gemeinschaftsleben, Nachhaltigkeit und Spiritualität. Ihre Ziele benennt sie als "Hilfe, ein neues menschliches Bewusstsein zu entfalten und eine positive, nachhaltige Zukunft zu kreieren".


Die Nachhaltigkeit in der Lebensweise ist gekennzeichnet durch die oben erwähnte ökologische Bauweise, energiebewusste Bewirtschaftung, ökologischen Landbau, Nutzung regenerativer Energie durch Windräder, Abfallvermeidung, biologische Abwasserbehandlung und andere Punkte.


Opening questions

- What could be the learning intentions for RE lessons about Findhorn?

- Findhorn pretends to be a good example for living religious diversity. With which categories would you describe this diversity? Is there something like a neutral description without bias?

- Can the principles of common life, sustainability and spirituality also be found in Christian traditions? Could / should convinced Christians be part of the Findhorn project?

- Define the term “spirituality” and note the difference to “religiosity” and “belief”.

- Would you / should you call Findhorn a “sect”?

- Did you have experiences of “tuning in” yourself?

- What could be the role of intuition in life? To what degree do you follow your intuition? Examples?

- Discuss advantages and disadvantages of the principle of “deep inner listening”. Is there a way to express these inner voices in words or what would be the alternative?

- Imagine you would teach a RE class attended by a child who grew up in Findhorn. Would this change anything in your teaching? In which way are your Religious Education classes “safe spaces” for young people.

- For advanced learners: Research about the Weltanschauung of Rudolf Steiner and the pedagogy founded by him. Try to find out about connections between Findhorn and the Rudolf Steiner movement.
Thursday, December 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2016

On Thursday we attended a lecture by Graeme Nixon. For teacher students of all subjects and all types of schools, he explained the history, purpose and challenges of the phenomenon Religious Observance (RO) already mentioned above.

https://prezi.com/jqrw5uhrhgaj/religious-observance/

After the lecture we followed the students into their “tutorials”, 60 minute workshops for about 25 students, organized in parallel tracks, all groups using the same materials and assignments. As always we were welcomed very openly. Aberdeen students are used to foreign visitors and they like to meeting them.
Interesting observations / comments during the tutorials

- All students took part in religious observance assemblies, as pupils or as teacher students during the school placements.
- Some see no problem in RO and they perceived even the role of chaplain shown in a video recording as positive. They appreciated his interest in the pupils and the outcomes of the lessons.
- Some are concerned about their own role, when RO assemblies start to resemble a worship service. Pupils are allowed to withdraw from RO, teachers not …
- One student tells about a situation where children of Jehovah’s witness had to leave the assembly at a certain point of the liturgy, in order to "protect" them from delicate content. In one of the video sequences shown in the tutorial there was a comparable situation in which a Muslim boy said this time he would attend the assembly because he was invited as an expert for a Muslim holiday; in all other cases he would prefer to stay away from the more Christian centered assembly.
- Some teacher students said they were not religious, but they would support Religious Observance for cultural and educational reasons. Singing would be good for everybody, the social cohesion of the school community would be strengthened. Every child should know why Christians celebrate Christmas or Easter: “The reason for the season!”
- Many Scottish schools have school assemblies without religious colouring. One student said for her the assemblies helped to preserve Scottish culture and values. Furthermore, the pupils were given a stage where they could present what they learnt in front of a larger audience.

In the afternoon we went to Robert Gordon’s College, a prestigious private school in the city centre of Aberdeen:

http://www.rgc.aberdeen.sch.uk/

Again we were warmly greeted welcomed and this time equipped with visitors badges. A guided tour through the impressive school buildings showed us that Robert Gordon’s College is not a school like any other.

After this we were allowed to attend a 90 minute lesson in a lower secondary class about Buddhism. Here the minutes of Uta Hauf, the way she does it as a teacher educator in Germany, too:
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Steps</th>
<th>Observations – Questions – Valuations</th>
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<td>14:10</td>
<td><strong>Starter:</strong> Teacher distributes handout about Buddhism (&quot;The Basics of Buddhism&quot;) and draws attention to page 1 explaining the goals of the learning process. <strong>Assignment in pairs:</strong> Pupils are supposed to write down five things connected to Buddhism. Teacher asks who remembers 5, 4, 3, 2 or only one fact and where their knowledge comes from. Pupils raise their hands and answer in short sentences. <strong>Class discussion:</strong> Teacher names categories (belief, practice, history and geography); pupils have to sort their terms according to these categories. The Teacher asks: <em>What do you mean by that? Where do you know this from?</em> Then he <strong>summarizes</strong> and explains that in the following lesson the <strong>topic</strong> would be what Buddhists believe and how they view the world.</td>
<td>Transparency of the teaching sequence due to naming of goals Handout instead of textbook Key questions and assignments successively presented by Power Point slides which structure the lesson. High “teaching speed” Series of teacher questions, teacher centred, little space for pupils’ voices Teacher attaches importance to disciplined classroom situation</td>
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<td>14:20</td>
<td><strong>Guiding question:</strong> <em>If Buddhism is the solution, then what is the problem?</em> Teacher asks pupils who was confused by this question. Pupils raise hands. Teacher explains that religions want to solve problems of life. Pupils name possible problems (e.g.: war, conflicts, depression). Short interactions about the meaning. Teacher explains that Buddhism wants to clarify the question <em>Why do I suffer?</em></td>
<td>Guiding question introduced by teacher, is not an outcome of the starter Pupils’ questions are given little space, no in-depth discussion</td>
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<td>Time</td>
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<td>Observations – Questions - Valuations</td>
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<td>14:25</td>
<td><strong>Elaboration I</strong></td>
<td>Narrow questions to find out what pupils know already</td>
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<td>Teacher explains that today’s lesson will deal with the founder of the Buddhist religion.</td>
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<td>Teacher shows on Power Point slide a map of the world and ask where Buddhists live. Pupils guess and</td>
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<td>teacher gives explanations about the main distribution of Buddhism and the three Buddhist schools.</td>
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<td>Short information about the origin of Buddhism and first information about Siddharta Gautama.</td>
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<td>Assignment: Pupils are to answer the first three questions on page 3 of handout. Teacher gives</td>
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<td>answers by using Power Point slides</td>
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<td>14:32</td>
<td><strong>Elaboration II</strong></td>
<td>Individual work / work in pairs using Ipads</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pupils use Ipads to get information about early stages of Siddharta Gautama’s life</td>
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<tr>
<td>14:36</td>
<td><strong>Evaluation I</strong></td>
<td>Lively exchange between pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils evaluate themselves: Each one writes down a question on a post note and the answer on the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>backside of it. Pupils stick the post its to their foreheads, leave their chairs and interview three</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>different partners.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14:44</td>
<td><strong>Evaluation II</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Class room discussion: Teacher asks what the pupils learnt and summarizes. In the next step the class</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>is supposed to find out why Siddharta Gautama founded a new religion.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>14:46</td>
<td><strong>Elaboration III</strong></td>
<td>Me going around, watching the pupils:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils “research”, using their Ipads, about questions on pages 3-4 on Buddhist practice, beliefs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and festivals.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two boys enter questions directly into internet search engine, write the answers on their worksheets,</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>but can’t explain the meaning in their own words.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Two girls say that lessons are always like today’s lesson, that they like it, because the teaching</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>is well structured and they like to answer questions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Steps</td>
<td>Observations – Questions - Valuations</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>15:06</td>
<td><strong>Evaluation III</strong></td>
<td>Almost all pupils use wikipedia articles. One boy using another internet resource says that they are not allowed to use Wikipedia.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher asks for answers, some pupils take notes, at some points teacher gives additional information</td>
<td>Narrow questioning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:15</td>
<td><strong>Intensification</strong></td>
<td>Can pupils answer this in two minutes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher asks what the word “enlightenment” means and how it could be reached.</td>
<td>Issues are only touched very superficially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After pupils’ short answers teacher gives explanation via Power Point slides.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Continuation with handout, page 4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15:25</td>
<td><strong>Outlook</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pupils note on post its what else they would like to learn about Buddhism</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher reads aloud some slips and asks questions about the meaning and background</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15:30</td>
<td><strong>End of the lesson</strong></td>
<td>Altogether: an additive approach, narrow guidance by the teacher. Teaching to the test with emphasis on cognitive learning?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It was interesting that the teacher would often use **material of the Tony Blair Faith Foundation**: http://www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/projects/education/education-teaching-resources

Next day, during a bus trip, David Smith driving, **Jörg Lohrer interviewed David** on his opinion about teaching Buddhism the way we saw it. And moreover David gave us an insight into his **pedagogical approach and his approach to lesson planning**.

![Image of a teacher and a student](image)

2:45  
**Jörg Lohrer**  
There was one moment which was somehow philosophical, when the teacher asked: *“What is enlightenment?”* And then the pupils started to guess …

![Image of Jörg Lohrer](image)

That’s quite rich!

3:00  
**David Smith**  
One pupil said: *“It’s silence.”* …[…] *“Thinking nothing”* […]

![Image of Jörg Lohrer](image)
That sounds to me like enough ... that question alone could structure the whole lesson. It is a very rich question ...

David Smith

And how would you structure the lesson with this question?

Jörg Lohrer

I mean you could start with that. Start off with that question and then build in how others might answer that question. For example Buddhism explores the answer to that. [...] Why would you need to desire enlightenment? What is it? What is it and why do we desire it? In a sense Buddhism speaks to that question. You could set the context. [...] So was it in terms of the learning about and the learning from or through? At this stage it was essentially learning about.

David Smith

Yes ... And after the lesson we were asking the teacher about this: from? about? through? I think he was not quite familiar with the concept of learning from and through. [...]
5.15

David Smith

[... ] I don’t think he was trained in Scotland. He was trained in England. And the public schools, the private state schools tend to have a very different approach regardless of the subject area you are in. [ ... ] Everything tends to be focused around examinations. The examinations are always structured around knowledge and understanding and not analysis and evaluation. They take a very cognitive type of approach which essentially is an efficiency curriculum. What is taught is what you need by the exam. The pedagogy is often structured around the way the exam questions are marked. [ ... ] You don’t get any points at all for things like reflection or personal search. Only to the extent which can contribute to knowledge and understanding [...]

7.00

Gabi Weber

In a typical lesson plan is there a special phase where you would give room to this? [...]

For example (in Germany) our last phase is called “transfer phase” / “reflection”

7.10

Graeme and I we have our own particular ways of doing things. There is not a standardised approach. Graeme and I would have both a philosophical enquiry approach to lessons, where everything is built around that. I particularly would take a learner centered approach. So you actually start of and build in reflection into the very heart of the lesson.

For example if I would be doing a lesson like that I would probably want to build the whole lesson around the concept of enlightenment. I would start off with what enlightenment ... what the young people might mean to that. And start there and try to make connections there and then build in the religious dimension on top of that. So the connection is made immediately with their own personal lives into the unknown. So from the familiar to the unfamiliar and then back again.

So rather than being a sectional lesson plan, I would advocate a full pedagogical approach to planning. To have the young person and their experience in the very centre. So it wouldn’t be an adult around whom the whole lesson would be build.

So we may start with a stimulus. Something to activate the curiosity. Could be a video clip. Could be a piece of poetry read. Anything like that. You would start getting them think about the idea of enlightenment. For example, what it might mean to them. What it might mean to be enlightened. Then they could generate their own questions. Why would you want to be enlightened? All that kind of things. And then build in and say: Ok. We considered this and we will
constantly return to this and reflect on it. Let us have a look and see how others answered that in the religious tradition of Buddhism. Buddhism speaks to this question as well. And then introduce that. It is like a layering. But is all build around the learners and their experience. It wouldn't be that compartmental. Does this make sense? So we try to weave some sense of reflection and evaluation right from the very outset. But there are other ways of doing it and other people prefer to do it in other ways.

9:40 Jörg Lohrer

[...] The school system wants you to grade the children. How do you grade the children?

9:55 David Smith

Yes absolutely. [...] This is the absolute tension. The new curriculum is trying to get away from this. I mean, if you don't have a lot of time the approach I just mentioned is not the approach you need. But it leads to a better education and leads to an ability to think on a deeper level. But the examination system still examines what is essentially more superficial. So there is a definite tension in there and I hope you understand why people teach to the test. It is a real temptation. [...] 

10:55 Jörg Lohrer

Can you examine the growth of competence, the individual progress?

11:00 David Smith

[...] We are not supposed to just assessing knowledge and understanding, but also skills. And these skills in the thinking area are like ability to evaluate, ability to analyse, ability to be creative with ideas [...] ability to get to forge connections between unfamiliar pieces of information, concepts, ideas. And I mean the knowledge and understanding stuff in terms of cognitivism or in terms of taxonomy of learning is actually always considered to be low order. It is not that it is not important. It’s just that it is not that challenging to thinking. And personally Graeme and I would both say that we are very committed to a subject which provides challenge. Which challenges thinking, which
helps you to develop your ability to think, to reason, to argue and analyse and so forth. But unfortunately there is a lot of teaching to the test, because development takes a lot longer than road learning. [...] And that’s the real tension between what teachers believe what is good quality education and what the system requires.

15:10

Jörg Lohrer

[…] The question is how to make assignments […] Do you have absolute standards or can you measure progress individually?

15:15

David Smith

In form of assessment there are formative assessment approaches where you look for relative progress as well. Certainly in terms of making things formative. So looking where an individual, a young person is at and then looking at the next steps to move there then forward. The danger comes when you have the absolute levels as well. People start panicking and they certainly say: Ok, you should be here. But they don’t give the time to get for an individual to there. So they simply move on. And so some of the foundation of stuff, some of the concepts get lost.

[…]

So that is the enquiry based approach of pedagogy where you get enquiry, questioning at the very heart of the lesson. That would lean very much towards a pedagogy of discussion. So in terms of the teacher’s role with those kinds of pedagogy you have less what we call “talk and talk” from the front. Because it is much less teacher focused and much more learner focused, around their questions and trying to develop their thinking skills and getting their philosophical reasoning up.
Friday, December 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2016

The last day of the study week, we and our Scottish colleagues were again en route in a minibus. In the morning time we visited a Whiskey distillery, an essential institution in the context of Scottish culture: The Glen Garioch Distillery in Oldmeldrum: http://glengarioch.com/

We spent the afternoon at Daviot Stone Circle, a religious monument erected around 4000 years ago.

http://www.undiscoveredscotland.co.uk/oldmeldrum/daviotstone/
Our expert guide Dr Liz Curtis, a colleague of David and Graeme, wrote her dissertation about the reception of the stone circle by tourists.

http://www.abdn.ac.uk/the-north/people/elizabeth.curtis/

Dr Elizabeth Curtis


This approach provides very valuable suggestions for spatial experiments with religious monuments in general. Graeme Nixon had therefore included the David Stone Circle in his teaching programme about the religious history of Scotland.
After the field trips we met in a Pub at Kintore, a small place 20 kilometers north of Aberdeen, for a final look back and evaluation.

Jörg Lohrer’s magnificent mini camera managed to filter out background noise and we got an amazingly good recording of the discussion. The transcript of the main contributions will be the beginning of the chapter “Reflections” …
Reflections
Final Round of Reflection at Kintore Square Pub

Here we go again, live from the pub. No, not live, it’s a recording (laughter).

So this is the last round we are going to have. Afterwards we have to say goodbye. So we want to have some reflection on the whole week, and perhaps we can start with some key questions. The first of them goes to the students: What kind of diversity do students perceive in this context? So let’s have a look back over the week, lessons we visited, readings we heard, places we visited and the talks we had on the bus, to each other, in couples, or in the group and perhaps you can give us some insights on what you discovered, what’s the same or what’s different. […] Where did you discover diversity?

I expected to find a different kind of diversity, I think. Since we talked about diversity so much, I expected to see a lot more religious diversity than I did, in terms of more Muslim people or other religions, and I think what it boils down to, though, is more of religious / non-religious, and I was surprised to see that.

Thank you very much for this week. It was very interesting and inspiring. For me it was a diverse system of teacher education, the different way of doing RE, and nevertheless, I discovered a lot of commonalities, and I think approaching the same situation we would find a consensus very quickly … Diversity as far as the pupils are concerned, I didn’t see a lot of differences, at least in terms of religion. So actually I would ask if this system of doing RE allows to show diversity and to bring it into the classroom or if it tries to eliminate diversity. That’s important to me, and I am thinking about it, and then obviously we saw two different schools, one in the countryside, one private school with a fee of 12,000 pounds a month [David and Graeme interrupt: “a year!” Laughter]. So there are different types of schools.

I was especially impressed by one of the students we were talking to, from the first school we went to, and she told us that in the classroom actually there are so many different ideas in pupils’ heads, and they have the chance to share them, and this is what I thought was impressive to me and something I would want to take home, as well – something I think we learn as well in Germany in our teachers’ education, but actually here … this student told me that it works.
I also found it very interesting to see the two different types of schools, the private and the countryside one, and I was surprised that the pupils don’t really know about their own religion and the religion of their classmates, that you talk about religion but you don’t talk about your own … what you practice in religion. I just had that impression at the first school that on the one hand it is open, you can say what you think, but I think it’s also … that the practice of religion doesn’t play a big role in class.

A question we thought about yesterday was – after viewing a lesson in school – when you (pointing to David and Graeme) go to the student teachers, is it a big discussion afterwards? …that you reflect a lot when you have seen the lesson, or is it more like having a check list, and they have done what you wanted to see, and then they pass …

A bit of both. There are criteria we ought to meet. And after the lesson we get to sit down, and we get to discuss what we thought went well and what we think didn’t go so well, and we get feedback on that and maybe also get some ideas for the next steps to take. So there is a checklist to meet, but it’s not the case of “do this, do that,” you do get to develop […]

So you reflect all the time with the teachers you are working with in the school. So immediately after a lesson you can have a conversation with them as long as another class is not coming in, even just during lunch or […] or after school. So say there is a lot of reflection just all the time. You always want to improve, so you always say […] or you can just tell me what you’re thinking, so I’d say there is a good amount of space to reflect …

If you think of the most important criteria for a good RE lesson, what would that be?
7:54 Matthew Carle  
*Valueing the pupils and that the pupils being able to feel free to express themselves in a safe environment.*

8:39 Neil Hemfrey  
*I think one of the pupils we saw in Milne’s High School. She said it is like a family. I think if you can make every classroom like that, then learning would benefit completely. So it is very much about that safe environment really.*

8:10 Gabi Weber  
*How could you create this safe environment?*

8:11 Matthew Carle  
*Establish it quite early on, you know, kind of creating an environment of trust and respect for those that you not only value, but you want to hear, their opinion, and also that you want them surely show some way of justifying their position, as well. You want them to explain why they feel that way, and maybe reflect on why they feel a certain way.*
8:38

I think it will take a lot of time to develop […] It may take several months, and I think you definitely have to model the behaviour you want to see in them, and that might be quite difficult, especially in classes where behaviour is a bit troubling…trouble…. troublesome. So I do think it would be a long, hard process, but it’s worth doing.

Neil Hemfrey

9:20

I would like to ask about yesterday’s lesson. You say giving pupils a voice and a space to express themselves. Yesterday we saw an introduction to Buddhism which was very much learning about. It was the introduction to the unit, and I think there was very little of experience of the pupils. It was very scaffolded, and I would like to ask you: I learnt from your university teaching that you put emphasis on philosophy with children and on life perspectives, personal search. How do you connect this, learning about, learning from? Facts and biographies?

Peter Kliemann

10:10

I don’t think there is only one answer to that, and we (pointing to Graeme) might also have a slightly different way of answering that but I think what you saw yesterday maybe reflected a more exam-driven system, and I think in those kinds of contexts, whereby the knowledge and understanding in the examination context has points attached to it and the analysis and evaluation has points attached to it – that can sometimes have the effect of crowding out other aspects of the learning which we might both consider to be really valuable, and you kind of end up with a narrowing of the curriculum simply to that which is going to come up in the examination. And the school you went to yesterday certainly does have a […] The head of department has a very long tradition of learning about what they would admit themselves that they don’t do so much learning from, and that is principally connected to the examination system. So unless something were coming up in the evaluation that was going to need to be the learning from, then they would be… it would be focused on getting the exam results.

So in terms of how you get the… I think there is no one answer to it, but certainly an approach that I would take is focusing very much on… taking maybe a learner centered approach, and starting… in a sense maybe sometimes going with the ‘from’ seeing that it’s a reflexive thing between the ‘from’ to the ‘about’. So starting with something that’s a human theme coming out of what you are going to learn about and then making the connection with the unfamiliar. For example the lesson you saw on ‘What is enlightenment?’ [in the context of Buddhism]. […] So what we are doing, we start actually with the children: Have you heard of this term? What does it mean to you? How does it seem to you? Why is it a big idea? What are your questions?… trying to start there […] and then say, well,
then building up to the unfamiliar, saying, well, there is… Buddhism has a lot to say to this, as well, and then you build into this, so making the connection that when you are learning about Buddhism, then you are learning about, but that reflexively goes back to the former, as well, because you can link that back to your own experience at the same time. So it is a dialectical match and it is closely linked. I don’t think it has to be about, about, about. It can start with your own experience, you can build to the unfamiliar, and then you can have a reflexive process.

I would agree with everything David said and to be fair it is patchy across Scotland in terms of provision, and some teachers do place too much emphasis I think on […] understanding not enough of this evaluation and analysis, and even sometimes with the co-analysis evaluation it is still learning about because it is often, in particular national examination level, very rehearsed and very transmitted to them, and it doesn’t seem too much freedom for children to develop their own views as much as I would like that. Otherwise the process that David describes, what we described this week, is the approach that we very much advocate, and it is the core of the Scottish curriculum, as well.

And maybe what we see as fundamental, too, is: What is a good education opposed to having a really good grade. Sometimes the two don’t necessarily acquaint. You can end up with a young person getting a very good grade and still not having a good education […]

One of the things that’s happened in the Scottish curriculum is that it has become standardized across assessment in written subject areas, so words like evaluation analysis have become to have very solid definitions [which result in] pupils’ responses [that] are very rehearsed and limiting and standardized, and you lose individuality, you lose the individual voice, as well.

Another topic that I found really interesting was the assemblies. I didn’t know before that you still have on the one hand neutrality, RMPS, then on the other hand the worship in some schools and others trying to open that up to do something differently. And the idea of philosophy for children I think it is very interesting for the assemblies, but I still didn’t really understand how you can do it with a whole school, or wasn’t that the idea of this concept of assembly?
Graeme Nixon

It was an opportunity for me to showcase with philosophy for children an open exploratory of […] with the use of a stimulus which is what you could do with a corporate event of a school, with the whole school population. You couldn’t have the round table discussion just for a practical point of view. I would hope that school assemblies would adopt the spirit of philosophy for children if not the methodology.

Meike Sprecher

I started with explaining that obviously I had a very preset idea of what diversity is. What do you understand diversity to be, or what kind of diversity do you find in your classrooms, or what have you found so far …

Matthew Carle

I think the diversity you seem to have expected is just different backgrounds, ethnicities […] The majority does seem to be, as previously said, Christian or non-Christian or non-religious. But I spent some time in schools with Islamic children, with Hindu children…but I would also see diversity in terms of just individual backgrounds. That can have an impact on what a child can learn, just their own personal history, cause it can be so varied, just in that sense.

Neil Hemfrey

Yes, I see diversity in their backgrounds, in their own views and opinions, really. I’d say in the classes I’ve had there has not been a lot of diverse religious views. I’d say most of them are non-religious, either they don’t believe or they don’t care. I find a lot pupils just don’t care. I think not caring is still a diverse viewpoint in itself, and if you get them to understand why they don’t care, the indifference can […] a powerful viewpoint. So again diversity is just important in terms of what they view, and to explore why they think something is right or wrong, giving space for that and then show them how you can have diverse viewpoints that can work together, or they don’t need to work together, but you respect each other’s faith and you don’t need to create a massive conflict over it.

Peter Kliemann

I was impressed by your system of reflecting and evaluating. You’re doing this on all levels, for the pupils, for the students. You ask: What did you learn? Did you learn enough? How do we want to continue? … And I talked to Liz on the bus, and we said, there might be a point where you overdo with reflecting because it gets somehow mechanical. I tick the box, and I say “I did this and I did that” and there might be no deeper reflection. Sometimes – I got the impression – some kind of subversive thought or doing something against the mainstream is not really expected to be articulated. Is this true?
Yes. (Laughter) [Graeme and David are both reaching for the microphone.]

I think it is a problem… I think it’s… You undervalue slow thinking. Fast thinking is [...], and that has got mechanistic tools for reflection which are quick, which are superficial and don’t actually address the deeper priming that might be taking place in people’s minds about all sorts of questions, including ‘Is teaching right for me?’ for example, which is when you are doing a training a pretty important question.

...and perhaps also disruptive ideas, as well, as you were saying because, well, we may be suffering in Scotland a little bit… We are a small country and some sets of some thinking can be quite homogenous, and there is quite a substantial consensus, for example, around social justice and inclusion, and that comes through in a lot of the discourse that comes through in government discourse, but there is not always a prising openness, or a teasing openness as to the tensions… Whose social justice and how are we defining this, and what do we mean by that and all the competing ideas within that. Somehow, there is this ability to use a term that everybody won’t question and to move on from it as if we were having a common foundation. Perhaps more reflection around that, thinking more divergently would be more valuable. There is not always a value in the divergence, it’s more convergent in terms of direction...

Maybe a more general question, a difficult one: How do you see the future of RE in the context of diversity?

I wouldn’t want to predict that to be honest. I think that very much is down to the pedagogical approach of the individual teachers, and I think what we’ll find as we are looking at this true moment is that in some contexts where there is an open pedagogical approach, where there is… where things are provisional, knowledge is provisional, an enquiry approach is taken, and it’s very much structured around discovery and personal search and so forth. I think in those contexts, it will flourish and will support diverse thinking and it will support diverse communities within school contexts. I think that’s one particular feature, but I think in other contexts not every practitioner takes that approach. I think the majority probably do, but I think in the other instances where there is a more closed pedagogical approach, where we have this approach where there is this convergent thinking, you just get the right answers for the exam, then I think perhaps it will be cease to be marginal, and perhaps just will continue to be marginal.
…and may actually contribute to the problems we have in society: There is value in engagement, in personal search as we are calling it. There is no empathetic thinking, there is no more imagination about the other. So diversity becomes separateness, and multiculturalism begins to fail, and, in fact, bad religious education will hasten that process, unless you get people thinking… what they think about diversity.

22:20

David Smith

[…] and valueing thinking in schools. Thinking is not always valued in an educational context, which is really worrying, but it isn’t.

22:54

Peter Kliemann

I’d like to say thank you for the whole week, for organizing all this. We noticed that you a very busy people. Thank you so much, and we are looking forward to you coming to Tübingen at the end of May … [gift exchange]

24:20

Graeme Nixon

It was an absolute pleasure having you here. It has been absolutely interesting […] It improves my thinking to have the mirror of your experiences back and to reflect my own practice, and I am really looking forward to deepening this experience when we go to Germany next year. It will be warm as well (Laughter)
Five key questions

In preparation for the Aberdeen journey we carefully studied the READY guidelines for study visits (cf. READY intellectual output 2, version 14-06-2016)) in which our Viennese colleague Heinz Ivkovits highlighted the following key questions:

1. What diversity do students perceive in this context?
2. How is diversity perceived to be addressed in the school(s) they visit?
3. How does this influence the pedagogical practice of teachers there?
4. What do they actually observe in that RE lesson in the context of diversity and plurality?
5. How might these experiences influence their approach to the handling of diversity and plurality back in their own country?

Furthermore, a vignette “while packing the suitcase” tried to recall some issues and questions which had been raised during the previous READY process:

![Image of Peter Kliemann]

Peter Kliemann

Reflections and Notes
While Packing the Suitcase for the Study Visit to Aberdeen

Dealing with diversity is one of the main challenges of modern life. Schools and Religious and Ethical Education are to prepare children and youth for living together in an increasingly pluralistic society. The competence to deal with plurality (“Pluralitätssfähigkeit”) is therefore a key term of an official document on RE recently published by the Protestant Council of Churches in Germany (EKD): https://www.ekd.de/download/religioese_orientierung_gewinnen.pdf (English Version in preparation)

Another basic document of the Protestant Council of Churches in Germany “Christlicher Glaube und religiöse Vielfalt in evangelischer Perspektive” (“Christian Faith and Religious Diversity in Protestant Perspective”) also highlights “living together with members of other religions and world views” as a “theological and practical challenge”: https://www.ekd.de/download/christlicher_glaube.pdf
“Diversity” – just as other educational terms – is a working term, with a certain vagueness and obvious ambiguities. The READY guidelines for study visits, version 2017, pp. 22ff) include a helpful glossary with working definitions considering the semantic and factual context of the word “diversity”, e.g. ‘difference’, ‘heterogeneity’, ‘intersectionality’, ‘plurality’, ‘pluralism’.

In German language see also: Rainer Möller, Von Diversität bis Pluralität. In: CI-Informationen 2/2016, pp.5-6. https://comenius.de/Comenius-Institut/ci-informationen.php

In the context of the READY project "diversity" should be discussed under at least three aspects:

1. Regarding different forms of Religious and Ethical Education in different European countries, including the issue of an appropriate approach to RE teacher education.

2. Regarding communication and interaction in concrete school and class room situations.

3. Regarding the curriculum and the content of what is being taught in Religious and Ethical Education.

One of the key issues which came out of the discussions within the READY project is the role of the RE teacher, their own religiousness and the didactical possibility or necessity to bring in personal convictions and “truth claims” (see the working paper by Heinz Ivkovits / Vienna: “Now tell us please, what you believe! Do RE teachers have to be religious or believers?” and the READY document “Vignettes, Spots & Short reflections”, vignettes 3 & 4).

A second key issue seems to be the question, whether neutrality in terms of religions and world views is something which is possible and desirable in RE classrooms. See for this the discussion between teacher students from Tübingen / Germany and Karlstad / Sweden.

A third interesting issue turned out to be the relationship between intercultural and interreligious learning. Which of the two categories should have the lead? See the teaching module developed in Tübingen “Cultural Diversity in Ethics and Religious Education”.

Finally it would be worthwhile to have a closer look at concepts such as “safe space” or “othering”, up to now little known in German discourse: For whom the RE classroom should be a “safe space”? Which conditions are to be met? What kind of qualifications do teachers need to moderate a safe space? – Who are “we”? Who are “the others”? See vignette Nr. 15 and the teaching module “La Cour de Babel”.
1. **What kind of diversity do students perceive in this context?**

First of all, I perceived diversity in regard to the student teachers, which have all studied different subjects. In contrast to Germany it is not an obligation to study theology or philosophy to be a teacher for RMPS.

Secondly, I perceived diversity in regard to the curriculum. Due to the fact that there is the teacher’s agency, every teacher is allowed to choose his/her topics depending on the class situation, his/her knowledge about the topic and the cultural background related to the topic. Thirdly, topics like e.g. animal ethics, which we have saw in one of the classes, are approached from different religious perspectives. However, this seemed to be more of an information-based approach than a way to give the students the possibility to experience a situation from another point of view. I think the ability to take other perspectives is important when talking to other people of different religions.

Lastly, I have not perceived diversity concerning the students in an RE class. I had expected to meet pupils from different religious backgrounds like in the model “Religionsunterricht für alle” in Hamburg. However, most of the students we spoke to did not even have a religious background. In addition, the religious practice of the students was not a topic of the RE lesson.

2. **How is diversity perceived to be addressed in the school(s) they visit?**

I did not perceive great diversity in the two schools we visited. The first school was very small and in the countryside, only 400 students were attending this school. We only met students with a Christian background, but no students of any other religious background. On the contrary, when we asked the students about their religious background most of them said that they do not have a religious background. In addition, most of the students did not know anything about their classmates’ religious backgrounds. This showed me that the personal religious background is not a topic of the RE lesson, even though the students should ask their own personal questions. In addition, I assume that it would be difficult to talk about different religions if the students do not have a religious identity at all.

In the second school we had the chance to see an RE lesson about Buddhism but we did not really talk to the students. However, there was no chance to perceive any diversity concerning the religion of the students due to the fact that the lesson was just based on facts about Buddhism.
3. **How does this influence the pedagogical practice of teachers there?**

Teachers try to base their topics on the interests and questions of the students. Due to the teacher’s agency and the very wide and open curriculum, teachers are free to choose their topics. This might lead to a student-oriented but not diverse lesson, however. If a teacher does not have any student from a different religious background in the class, he/she cannot emphasize the student backgrounds. On the contrary, especially in a school like the one in the countryside, where most of the students do not really have a religious background, these teachers will emphasize other topics and the students will not have the chance to take on other perspectives.

4. **What do they actually observe in that RE lesson in the context of diversity and plurality?**

We observed an RE lesson about Buddhism, which was not really a lesson that was structured according to Scottish theory of RMPS. Usually the students should be introduced to a topic, should engage with the topic and make connections for themselves. The personal interest of the students should be included and most of the time the pupils should be allowed their own “answers”. In the end they should think over what they had done and talked about. This would support their critical thinking and their own reflection. However, the lesson we observed started with a discussion on facts about Buddhism. The teacher first tested the knowledge of the students instead of engaging their own questions about the topic (which only happened at the end). The whole lesson was packed with a lot of input about Buddhism. The students had the chance to look for answers on their own. However, this research was not personal research; it was just about finding information about Buddhism on the internet. So I did not really observe diversity during this lesson. We did not get to know their personal backgrounds because the lesson was only knowledge based. In addition, there was also no real discussion about the topic. The students just answered the teacher’s questions about the information in the reader.

5. **How might these experiences influence their approach to the handling of diversity and plurality back in their own country?**

I like the idea of engaging the students’ ideas and their personal approach to the topic in class, even though we have not really seen the implementation of this model. I think this idea is similar to our way of teaching. We also try to connect the topics with the world and students’ questions. However, we do not reflect our teaching practice as much as I experienced this in Scotland.

We were also introduced to a model called “Philosophy for Children”, which was very interesting. This theory also encourages the students to ask their own questions and to discuss them. It is a similar to our model of “Theologisieren” with children. However, I think this model only works for some topics. One cannot always start a lesson this way.
6. **What did I learn during the week in Aberdeen?**

I learned different things in Aberdeen. First of all, I was surprised by the Scottish teaching program which is very different to our “Referendariat” in Germany. The model in Scotland is closely connected to universities and the students are only in school for a few weeks. They have to write a lot of essays where they connect their teaching experiences with theories they learn in their pedagogical classes. I think it is very interesting, that they do the whole teaching program in only one year.

Secondly, I was impressed by the amount of reflections the students and also the student teachers have to do during their time of teaching. I think on the one hand this improves the ability of self-reflection; on the other hand it sometimes dominates the whole discussion about teaching and leaves no room for pedagogical or theological discussions.

Furthermore, I was very impressed by the way the students in the RE lesson about Buddhism interacted with the teacher. Even though they do not get any oral grades, the motivation to participate in class was very high. In addition to that the students do not even have exams in RMPS, so there is no motivation that is based on grades. Therefore, I find it very interesting that students still are very lively engaged during the lessons even though they are not tested in the end. Hence, there must be a real interest in the topic.

7. **Did I have any questions or observations I did not understand? (critical incidents)**

I do not understand why they still have school assemblies that are prepared by a pastor/chaplain in a religious way. On the one hand the Scottish RMPS curriculum is supposed to be very neutral and it includes all religions; on the other hand there is the religious school assembly which supposedly all students have to attend.

We watched some recordings of school assemblies during the tutorials at the university. There was one where the school tried to introduce different religions in the assembly. Yet, I find it critical to expose one Muslim boy in front of the school by asking him questions about his religion. In addition, some other students practiced the moves of a prayer which is also very disrespectful towards the Islamic student in my opinion. However, when I asked the student teachers sitting next to me about this observation they all agreed that they do not see a problem in the way this school included another religion in the Christian school assembly. Nevertheless, I am still critical of this idea because the school started to mix different religions in one assembly. The assembly is taught by a Christian chaplain, but the content of the assembly is Islam. And finally, the student teachers at the tutorial admitted that they always feel uncomfortable during the school assemblies due to the fact that most of them do not really practice any religion. Thus, they do not know how to behave in this context.

Graeme Nixon’s new proposal for the assemblies is the model of “Philosophy for children”, where the students would ask and discuss their own questions concerning life, religion and many other things. This would also give Muslim students the chance to take part in the assemblies because they would not have to have a Christian perspective anymore. The assemblies are very important for the community spirit of a school, which is why I like Graeme’s idea to give every student the chance to take part in the assembly. However, I do not see how PFC could be implemented in a school assembly. Usually, only small groups can work with this model and not a whole school at the same time. So I do not understand how this should work.
8. What role does the teacher have? Does he/she have a religious identity?

During the RE lesson we observed we did not really get the chance to see the religious identity of the teacher because it was a very fact-based lesson. However, the idea of the Scottish curriculum is based on the teacher’s agency. The teacher can decide which aspects of a certain topic e.g. Christianity he/she will choose. On the one hand, this offers the teacher the opportunity to choose a topic he/she might be secure about. On the other hand, due to this very open curriculum there is the danger of reducing large topics like Christianity to one little aspect. In addition, it also enables the teacher to leave out topics he/she does not know. I talked to some of the Scottish student teachers and they focused mostly on the ethical parts of the curriculum and they have not taught religious topics yet. Most of the student teachers have not studied theology, so they are not as secure in their knowledge about the topics as we might be, because we have all studied it.

9. What is the relation between intercultural and interreligious learning?

I think it is very interesting that the Scottish curriculum emphasizes the Scottish cultural background in all parts of the curriculum. For example, the students should be able to “explain how the values of Christianity contributed to as well as challenged the Scottish society”. This is an aspect we could transfer to our German curriculum. The Scottish student teachers told us that in an area like Glasgow, where one can find disputes between the protestant and catholic people of the city, it is very important to talk about this conflict in class during the unit “Christianity”. I think one could also implement parts of the history of a town or current events in the RE lesson in Germany. This way the students would become more aware of their own cultural and religious backgrounds and maybe even of their own identities.

10. Is it possible to remain neutral while teaching RMPS?

From what I experienced in Scotland it is only possible to teach in a neutral way if one sticks to a fact-based lesson. As soon as one talks about the students’ personal questions it is not possible anymore to remain neutral. In addition, the teacher has the agency to decide what he/she will talk about in class. From my point of view, this is already a personal decision and not neutral anymore. If the teacher has a religious background he/she will be more willing to talk about religious topics in more detail than someone who does not believe in any religion. However, even if someone does not believe, he/she still does not have a neutral perspective because this non-believing perspective will also have an influence on the way this person teaches.
The week in Aberdeen has left me with many different (diverse) impressions. I am still in the process of mulling things over. So this reflection is not an end product, but part of the process of sorting through my experiences.

What was central to our study visit were two school visits which were framed by information about the system in general, about the Curriculum for Excellence and tutorials for student teachers. All of this provided a frame of perception as much as the expectations I had brought from home.

In the first school, everyone seemed incredibly nice. We were welcomed in a beautiful library and then led to a classroom where we were already expected by an RE teacher, her class and a nice display of Scottish sweets they had laid out for their German visitors. The students were wearing uniforms, yet they all seemed to have given them a personal touch. Diversity seemed to be allowed for and possible even within the prescribed uniformity of the uniform. Coming from a rather urban school, however, I had expected to find diversity of a different kind. All of these children seemed to be of Scottish descent. One pupil would later say himself, “We are not very diverse up here,” when he was asked whether kids in RE had different religious backgrounds. In fact, when another group of students were asked about their respective religious backgrounds, they all claimed to be from rather secular homes. Some of them would still call themselves Protestant, none of them anything else.

Unfortunately, we didn’t get to see an actual lesson in this school. The children we talked with seemed to like their school very much. They seemed to appreciate that RE gave them the opportunity to voice their opinions, which they considered to be valued by the teacher. All of this seemed very much in sync with what we had heard the Curriculum for Excellence wanted to achieve. The look of the classroom supported this impression. There were posters on many different topics on all four walls, some were bought, many were handmade, either by the students themselves or by the teacher. They seemed to support an open and positive climate. I, however, wondered if students didn’t get distracted by all of these different stimuli. Since we didn’t see an actual lesson, it’s impossible to tell how diverse the students’ opinions actually were and also how this openness is facilitated.

In the first classroom we were in, two students gave a presentation, and then the class was invited to ask us questions and vice versa. Soon enough, though, the teacher took over and asked questions that seemed to be more a reflection of her interest than what her students might have been interested in. This didn’t seem to be very student-oriented. However, this was not a normal lesson, and she might have wanted to avoid long silences.

I got another glimpse of how lessons might actually look like, when I talked to two students that were in the most advanced class. They explained that their class was taught together with students of the lower level. All of them would start a topic together, the lower-level students would then work through some worksheets while the teacher would expand upon the topic with the more advanced
students. I was left to wonder how the teacher might justify this. Does that mean only the more advanced students are allowed to discuss? If not, how are the two groups brought back together? These are still open questions for me.

The second school, a prestigious and expensive private school in the center of Aberdeen, left quite a different impression. There was clearly less leeway on how to personalize your uniform for these children. You could welcome this uniformity in view of the information that many children attending did so on a partial or even full scholarship. One can only imagine the different social backgrounds that collide in a class with children whose parents can pay 12,000 pounds a year and children whose parents are not able to pay any of that. The teacher who showed us around said that he as a teacher didn’t know who the scholarship students were. I am sure that uniforms can help in levelling out that difference. However, shoes are not part of the uniform, neither is a backpack or the Ipad every student owns. I wonder if the uniform doesn’t serve as a blank background against which shoes, backpack and utensils become even more visible. Just speculating…

At first sight, the student body of this school seemed to be much more plural than at the first school. Here we barely got to talk to students; however, the teacher told us that the school was home to different clubs, many of which were religiously connoted. I found it surprising that he didn’t know exactly which clubs/religious groups there were and concluded from that that he also didn’t know about the religious backgrounds of his RE students. Somehow, I had just assumed that in a religiously plural classroom this might be a topic. However, it fits with the concept of neutrality in RE. I suppose if students want to bring their personal experiences into the classroom, they can, but if the teacher doesn’t know whom to call on for illuminating a certain aspect of a religious tradition, he can’t initiate it.

The same teacher who gave us the tour also let us see a lesson on Buddhism. The lesson was started with big questions (If Buddhism is the answer, what is the question?) and led into the students researching facts about the geographical extension of Buddhism, Buddha’s life etc. The students worked with a very extensive reader that contained information, but also many closed questions to which they were supposed to find the answers with the help of their ipads. To my knowledge the students weren’t pointed to certain websites for this. Wikipedia seemed to be their source of choice. In the end, the students were asked to write down questions they had about Buddhism, and I still wonder whether and how they might be taken up again.

What has stuck with me most is the initial round after the question I repeated above was asked. The teacher valued each student’s answer. However, there were some deeply philosophical answers amongst them that were treated equally with answers of lesser depth. All answers received a brief “good,” and the teacher went on. They also weren’t taken up again at a later point which seemed like a lost opportunity. I suppose entering a discussion just wasn’t part of the lesson plan. Then, however, I’m not sure what that question was supposed to lead to, especially since most of the students clearly didn’t understand the question. Moreover, I wanted to go to the respective children and congratulate them to their great ideas. Neutrality, as it seemed, prevented compliments in this situation.

What have I learned?

Based on our university visits as well as the school visits, I have perceived the plurality and diversity in Scotland within a framework of uniformity. Uniformity I have learned makes plurality easier to handle. School uniforms are a way to handle diverse social backgrounds and standardized worksheets and testing in RE are a way to handle both, diverse religious backgrounds/levels of previous knowledge and children with diverse capacities of understanding.
The plurality and diversity I have seen is of a different kind than I had expected. This accounts for the schools as well as for university classes. We visited a lecture that addressed all student teachers at once: 1-year students, and 4-year students, student teachers of all subjects, of primary and secondary school alike. What was striking was the age difference of the students. There were very young-looking students who probably started this program right after their B.A., and there were students who were clearly embarking on their second career. This variety of student doesn’t only come together in lectures but also in the tutorials. Tutorials last only for an hour, and the respective professors have to teach more than one of them. We’ve learned that there are always several tutorials running parallel; the materials used are all the same. Uniformity again, serves as a support, then, to handle the great diversity of the student body.

Another concept to face diversity with seems to be ‘neutrality’. No religion or world view is favored. The student teachers who study to become teachers of RE hold degrees in various subjects that have something to do with religion(s). Theoretically, the pupils in their classes could hold any world view without one student being favored for his view over an ‘other’ view. As I have stated above this might prevent unwanted ‘othering’ of minorities. However, I wonder if in the context of trying to relate to students, teaching their respective world views or at least trying to relate to them somehow might be beneficial. Neutrality might allow for plurality, but does it really encourage it?

I also noticed during another discussion that I had had a very narrow pre-set notion of diversity. During our visit, the student teachers had to write an essay on concepts of ‘inclusion,’ which they were supposed to relate to their teaching. I asked what they meant by inclusion and what that particular student teacher had done to encourage inclusion. I learned that he was writing about how to also include shy children in a class discussion. In the lesson we noticeably saw only a handful of pupils had interacted with the teacher. Inclusion, as it seems, is perceived as something much more basic than what is has come to mean in Germany. It is yet a big enough topic to write a paper about. Rightly so, I think. Inclusion has to happen on so many levels. To include all children in a lesson also means not to forget about the children that might be just shy, or not so good with writing, or just no actors/actresses. Inclusion means to include all of the individuals in a class, the term isn’t reserved for racial or religious minorities or children with special needs.

While I have learned a lot during this stay, I am also left with a few open questions. First, I am wondering about the Curriculum for Excellence: I am impressed by its openness, the freedom it gives to the teachers. However, isn’t there the fear of missing out on topics that should be of interest to everyone? Isn’t there also the risk of only ever scratching the surface and to never really get to the depths of a topic?

Secondly, I am still asking myself how this openness the children of the first school were so fond of is achieved. In view of the second school and the lesson we saw there, I wonder if openness might be achieved at the cost of a deep understanding students might only learn through more questions and also criticism at times.
Trying to answer the key questions

1. When I asked the student teachers about their perception of diversity, they gave a quite general answer. It is basically the same like the diversity I met in my German school. There are pupils who are religious, others not; some come from a privileged family background, others not. Certainly this is not a world-changing finding, but I find it interesting in that respect that the range of pupils who can attend RME/RMPS class in Scotland is wider than in Germany because there isn’t a separation between confessions and ethics or philosophy.

2. One of the students told me that the most important thing in teaching RE is to offer every pupil the same opportunity to open a safe place for reflecting existential issues. Diversity within a class makes it a challenging task for him to create this safe place. By ‘safe space’ he means an atmosphere of trust and openness for different answers. The pupils should be offered a place in which the teacher encourages them to utter their ideas about the ‘big’ questions in life.

3. He does this by using didactic methods that allow everyone to participate – e.g. pupils who are shy and pupils who have no knowledge at all about religion/philosophy. One interesting concept I learned about was Philosophy for Children. This approach offers every pupil to share their big questions and thoughts about a topic. In the end, there is no fixed solution. The role of the teacher is to step back and organize the discussion.

Role and neutrality of the RE teacher

For me it was interesting to learn that there are different ways to become an RME/RMPS teacher. In contrast to Germany, where every RE teacher has studied either catholic or protestant theology, in Scotland it is also possible to have studied e.g. only philosophy. The student teachers we met did not have a religious background. In this sense they might offer a more ‘neutral’ perspective on different religions because they don’t teach with the protestant/ catholic viewpoint in mind but value every religion as its own entity. It goes without saying that this idea is also the underlying principle for German RE teachers. However, having studied theology and being an ‘expert’ in Christian theology, as well as teaching according to a curriculum which is set by the EKD, leads towards teaching other religions from a Christian perspective.

Intercultural and interreligious learning

I perceived the Scottish student teachers to see a close connection between culture (or: every day life in general) and religion. The evolving teaching approach reminds me of the German one – being pupil centered and taking their experiences as the hub for a lesson.
**Safe space**

I perceived that the idea of the student educators in Scotland is to create a concept of RE which allows for openness and benefits for every pupil. In this context the idea of a ‘safe space’ is important for a good RE lesson. A student in her final year told me that she chose RE without having any interest in the subject. Only after some time she discovered RE lessons to be a place in which she could discuss existential questions with her classmates. Also, after converting to Christianity she felt that she could still tell her opinion openly, even though she was the only believer in the classroom.

**Mixed bag of thoughts**

Does the idea of offering the students an open space for coming up with their questions and discussing them totally by themselves actually lead to a reflected view on a topic? (Philosophy for Children) Would any kind of guidance (e.g. propose a topic for discussion or present a philosopher’s view on the discussed topic?) be helpful? Or would that be counterproductive for a competence centered approach of teaching? Is a teacher who did not study theology trained appropriately for teaching RME? Does the educational system for student teachers offer enough time to develop their teaching skills (Switching between time at university and school seems to be very challenging)?
Trying to answer the key questions

1. **What diversity do students perceive in this context?**

In the fields of Religious Education, Teacher education, RE/RME teachers and pupils I have perceived the following aspects:

In the different areas I haven’t perceived diversity as its own criteria. Only when I consciously focused on diversity, I noticed it and even then I had to define for myself what diversity meant for me in each situation.

It was striking for me that educators, learners, RE/RME teachers and pupils take the subject RE/RME very seriously and use it as a means to think about the big questions in life. In the curriculum, RE/RME seems to be of the same importance as the other school subjects. There didn’t seem to be the need to legitimize the subject. I have perceived diversity in so far as my expectations haven’t been confirmed. I had expected students who put their beliefs at the center of their teaching, in real life I got to know students and student educators in whose beliefs and religious practices I haven’t gained any insight. I had expected religious diversity among the pupils but I saw pupils who are Christians and who practice their religion either wholeheartedly, or only a bit or not at all. I had expected students from the theology department, actually I saw students from the department of philosophy and other departments. Diversity became obvious among the Scottish trainee teachers – some of them seemed to have started their teacher education right after finishing university, others seem to have worked in other areas for some years before they start their teacher education.
2. How is diversity perceived to have been addressed in the school(s) they visit?

RE is taught in the same group as all the other subjects. In that respect diversity can be seen in the religion and confession. However, diversity as an explicit topic doesn’t seem to play a role because the teachers didn’t even know about their pupils’ beliefs. Diversity seemed to be there implicitly by offering everyone to take part in the subject. Everyone was welcomed to choose the subject, without any prerequisites. It doesn’t matter which social or religious background a pupil comes from, what their convictions and beliefs are, no matter what knowledge and interests they have. For me, the question remains if religious identity plays a role at all in this model of the subject RE/RME.

3. How does this influence the pedagogical practice of teachers there?

Maybe the main focus lies in the attempt to offer a ‘safe space’ in RE/RME. This means that in the classroom, opinions can be uttered frankly, that everyone can search for answers to the big questions in life and that the individual answers to these questions have a space in which they can exist and are valued. The role of the teacher is to open the possibility to think about the questions. For me some questions remain: In how far can a consensus be achieved? How does the teacher deal with positions of pupils that contain issues that do not encourage them in their lives, e.g. negative pictures of God? At which point in the lesson plan do the pupils get the chance to widen their perspective and put them into the field of philosophy/theology? If religious beliefs of those in the classroom don’t play any role, which status does the “holy/sacrosanct” in religions or the question of truth have within RE/RME? The main part of the lesson we observed was to learn about religion. The pupils learned about where Buddhism is practiced and what the beliefs are. It would have been interesting for me to see how people try to preserve the dignity of this religion, to confront the pupils with the relevance of the religion and at the same time to correlate it with pupils’ lives.

4. What did they actually observe in that RE lesson in the context of diversity and plurality?

At our first school visit at Milne’s High School in Fochabers, I couldn’t really perceive diversity which differed from diversity in our schools in Baden Württemberg: girls and boys, interested and less interested, open and shy pupils. I assume there also were talented and less talented, those from a secure background and those who cannot count on support of their parents, popular and less popular people, pupils with different social backgrounds. I didn’t learn about the religious background of the pupils – this is different to Baden Württemberg where the pupil’s confession is a prerequisite for attending either catholic or protestant RE/RME class. However, like in our RE/RME class it wasn’t obvious if the pupils actually believe and if they do, in what they believe. Although RE is taught in the same group and it can be assumed that a variety of religions can be found among the students, it wasn’t the case – at least this is what a pupil told us.

I also cannot draw any general conclusions about diversity from the lesson we attended in Robert Gordon’s College, Aberdeen. The reason is that the main part of the lesson was to inform the students rather than dealing with their beliefs, religious practice, attitudes and convictions.
5. How might these experiences influence their approach to the handling of diversity and plurality back in their own country?

What did I learn? I especially got to know another way of educating teachers and its different requirements than the one I am used to. I cannot tell in how far the new views will shape my way of teaching but I assume that the teacher’s background always, consciously or unconsciously, plays a part in his/her lessons. For instance, a teacher with a degree in theology is more likely to deal with theological topics than someone who holds a degree in philosophy.

Teaching RE/RME together in the same group as in all the others subjects: How can we use this experience for us in Baden-Württemberg? Maybe a first step would be to work together with other confessions.

In the end, the following questions remain and need further discussion:

- How can personal experiences in faith and religious beliefs be part of RE/RME lessons without leaving a feeling of indifference in the end?
- How can the pupil learn what their personal belief is based on? How can the question of truth be talked about without denigrating it?
- How can pupils be encouraged to take over perspectives?
- How can subjectivity and plurality be met in reality?
- What is necessary to meet the other with your own convictions and value him/her at the same time?
Vignette While “Unpacking“The Suitcase

The suitcase has in fact already been unpacked for some weeks. But I am still sorting the impressions, photographs and materials of our “learning activity”. And I am rethinking the chances offered by “learning diaries” and “reflective journals”. Considering my own personal way of learning and working, I am probably not the person who would have enjoyed something like a portfolio during academic studies and teacher education. So I follow the recent debates on mandatory and optional portfolios, about development and assessment types of them, about standarised, semi-structured, creative, digital and blended portfolios, about the relation between paperwork and outcome, about innovation, monitoring and control – with great interest but also a certain amount of skepticism.

First outcome of our study visit: Studying the Scottish system of education we Germans can indeed learn a lot about the possibilities and limits of portfolio-based teacher education. The Scottish colleagues look back on years and decades of experience with this approach and they are years ahead of us. This will be mentioned on various pages of this documentation.

Next, while sorting and arranging material for this learning diary, I had to admit that a reflective journal – in spite of my original reluctance – proved to be an excellent tool for our Tübingen “learning community”. We arrived in Scotland with relatively open and also differing questions about “Religion and Diversity” and sometimes we did not exactly know what to expect from the program points prepared by our friendly and caring hosts. Then again, as always in life, the actual days sometimes were full of surprises and quite different to what we had imagined in our minds. Altogether we all would have liked to see more of Scottish schools – probably much more than a one week study visit can ever provide.

In this context I would like to share the information that the ERASMUS plus program offers to teachers and educational staff quite a number of opportunities for a deeper immersion in another European context (key action 1): https://www.kmk-pad.org/programme/erasmusplus/leitaktion-1-fortbildung.html
While arranging this documentation we did not try to harmonize the different approaches, insights and perspectives of the members of our traveling group and we also did not try to eliminate a certain degree of overlapping. Nevertheless passing in review the days of the study week and trying to summarize our reflections we came up with surprising convergences – a “learning outcome” which might be a perfect background and starting point for the reciprocal visits of the Scottish colleagues.

A documentation can this way not only be an obligatory paper to be done or an information and show case for others. It can indeed help to structure and intensify learning processes.

Among the issues which were raised during the study week again and again and on which I want to continue reflecting on, I would like to mention only five:

1. The perspectives of learning about religion and learning from religion obviously can’t be assigned to certain countries as Scotland or Germany. Both didactics seek to realize, to connect and to interlink both kinds of learning. And how exactly this can work is our common concern. What exactly “learning from” can mean, should be discussed in detail and we should have together a close look at classroom situations and teaching examples.

Side note: An understanding of competencies based on measurable outcomes seems to invalidate the best didactical intentions in any country …

2. During the week in Aberdeen, we did not necessarily clarify the term “diversity”. It seems that the working definitions brought along became in a non-German context even more tentative and provisional. I was, however, impressed by the declared intent of Scottish educational policy, to face and to affirm the phenomenon of diversity and to declare it a national goal to learn how young citizens can deal with it.

In this context a model of Religious Education splitting children and youth into different groups according their often only formal religious affiliation must seem strange, definitely when these different groups are not brought together any more for having dialogues and debates about their different faith traditions.

On the other hand we noticed, that Religious Education “for all” doesn’t guarantee either that diverse world views and religious traditions are given a distinct voice. Sometimes a RE “for all” might even cover and keep secret diversity.

The common goal of the German and the Scottish model of teaching RE should be, to become aware of diversity, to articulate diversity, to respect the differences, to see diversity of perspectives as an opportunity to enrich life.

3. The example of Scotland shows that there can be very different ways of educating RE teachers. One can integrate the induction year (in Germany 1 ½ years of “Referendariat”) into university studies. It is possible to reduce the induction phase to one year and even our long way of studying religious studies or even theology before becoming an RE teacher doesn’t seem to be self-evident.

Impressive, sometimes also irritating appeared to me how everybody in the Scottish system continuously used and referred to professional standards, success criteria, feedback and meta-reflection – without complaining and questioning the procedure.
Very professional and far ahead of our situation in Tübingen is also the use of digital media in Scottish teacher education and we also noticed a rather consequent modularization of all teaching processes.

Since we are discussing all these issues intensively in Germany, trying to find a more effective way of teacher education, it will be good to have in mind these concrete and practical examples when new reform proposals come up at home.

4. I notice the temptation to process the huge amount of impressions by categories as “we” and “they”. Othering in the pink of condition. In a way these kinds of comparisons might be inevitable and for psychological reasons even necessary and I also discover myself again and again joining this game.

Generalization will however become dangerous and obstruct insights, whenever we connect observations and valuing too quickly, especially when we try to explain complex settings by monocausal arguments.

Thinking more thoroughly about it, we all know that the few days of a study visit just showed us isolated, somehow coincidental examples of Scottish Religious Education. And we all know that the teaching reality in German is also very diverse, complex, contradictory and above all not always delightful.

A good counterbalance to othering I found the intensive, inquiring and ruminative talks we had with our Scottish colleagues about concrete classroom situations. Over and over again I was surprised, also in the wider context of the entire READY project, how quickly experienced colleagues from different European countries, with very different concepts of Religious Education and very diverse forms of teacher education, would agree on what is didactically desirable and what not.

Is there beyond all theories and concepts something like a deep structure, some kind of common grammar of teaching RE, which might help us all to see regional debates and controversies in a new and also more relaxed perspective?

5. After the week in Aberdeen I am even more convinced that it is absolutely necessary to integrate our colleagues who teach Ethics and Philosophy into the READY project. Scottish RME teacher often studied philosophy and not theology. Philosophy with and for children (“P4C”) is one of the main methods in Scottish Religious Education. And if some of our colleagues plead for teaching Ethics and Philosophy “to all”, the Scottish model can show you one of many possibilities how such a school subject could look like and how it could be filled with content.
Tübingen Asks Aberdeen

eTwinning communication 1

Questions asked by Lydia Hüsemann (Protestant RE / English), Irina Lamparter-Sabor (Ethics / English), Martina Meng (Catholic RE / English), Susanne Katein (English, Mathematics), teacher trainees at Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasien) Tübingen. – Answered by Dr David Smith / School of Education Aberdeen.
1. Who has got the final responsibility for the content (education plan, ...)? Is it comparable to the “Hamburg Model” (= religious studies for every pupil about religious & ethic topics → protestant church functions as responsible head)?

In practice, the classroom teacher. Beyond this – the Head Teacher of the School through to the local Director of Education. These latter people would only be involved in the circumstances of a complaint or if a particular sensitivity had arisen.

2. What's the relation between religious and ethic content (which religions, philosophers, ...)? Is there any particular focus on one of the religions? Is the focus on moral topics/behaviour or also on other philosophical issues?

Christianity is still a key religious focus – due to the separation of Christianity and ‘Other World Religions’. Christian ethics might be considered; for example, through the Sermon on the Mount. Situation Ethics could be considered in the context of the Golden Rule.

Moral topics vary. However, Medical Ethics / Euthanisia / Capital Punishment / Homosexuality are often considered. Many teachers consider ethical approaches such as Utilitarianism.

3. Is there any “permission” for teachers given by the church for regular RE teacher and also for private denominational school teachers (compare “Vocaatio” or “Missio Canonica” in Germany)?

The Catholic Church authorises the teaching of Catholic RE – which is a separate curriculum from non-Catholic RE. Neither Graeme nor I are authorised to teach RE in Catholic Schools.

4. Is it possible for students to find their “religious identity” in RE (deeper insight in one’s own religion instead of being “merely informed” about all religions; example: what does it mean to be catholic/protestant, what does it mean to me, ...)?

This is no doubt possible where a confessional pedagogical approach is taken by the RE teacher, although my sense is that the majority of RE teachers would not take a confessional approach (even if they are religious themselves).

5. Is there any interreligious dialogue in the classes or is it on a comparing level?

Interreligious dialogue can exist. Some teachers will take a comparative approach which can form the foundation for such dialogue. Others will invite various faith representatives to contribute to lessons around a particular topic. In many schools, however, there is a predominant secular ethos. As such, interreligious dialogue would presuppose a level of specialist understand which may well not exist.

In practice, interreligious dialogue emerges where a class’s composition is interreligious.
6. Are there any religious ceremonies / rituals / festivities... at school?

Christmas is still celebrated in many schools. Some schools still take pupils to church at this time to mark this season. Religious Observance is a formal expectation in schools; however, many schools struggle with how to meet this requirement within a secular context. Graeme has undertaken research in this area.

Schools still invite Chaplains in to take school assemblies. However, while some chaplains are explicitly dogmatic in their input; many draw upon broad ethic themes within Christianity (and other world religions) which they relate to ways of living (e.g., the Golden Rule).

7. Do you feel professionally qualified to teach RE (to know all philosophers, religions ...)?

Student teachers would vary in their response to this question, depending on the strength of their backgrounds within the discipline area. Due to the breadth of our discipline, many will be conscious of their knowledge gaps.

8. How much practical experience do you get during your studies? Is it comparable to our Referendariat / teaching practice?

The PGDE Programme is 18 weeks campus time – and 18 weeks of School Placement. A further one year of probation (solely in a school) follows the PGDE Programme.

9. What is the role of the Church of Scotland?

The Church of Scotland is a ‘stakeholder’ who would be consulted concerning RE when discussions take place at a governmental level. However, there are no Church of Scotland schools.

Every school in Scotland has a local parish (Church of Scotland) minister. In some contexts, a strong relationship exists between the parish church and the local school. In others – it is variable. In areas in which the relationship is strong, a school chaplain could be involved in everything from taking assemblies to participating in prize-givings to offering pastoral support to staff.
Questions asked by Gabi Weber (Protestant RE / English) & Berenike Wagner (Ethics / Philosophy & Biology), teacher trainees at Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasien) Tübingen. – Answered by Dr David Smith / School of Education Aberdeen.

*Is religion / faith part of pupils' lives, outside the classroom? Is it appropriate / allowed for an RE teacher in Scotland to ask about the pupils’ personal beliefs?*

Religion / faith will be a part of some pupils’ life; but not others. Appropriateness is often down to the individual teacher to decide. No policy exists which would preclude an RE teacher in Scotland from asking about a pupils' personal beliefs. In fact, the concept of 'personal search' lays the foundation for sharing of perspectives amongst all pupils in the context of learning.

*Do all the pupils have to attend RE lessons? Is there an alternative, such as philosophy / ethics as in Germany?*

Yes, it is compulsory; however, the Government does not enforce attendance. So, some schools stop provision in the fourth year of Secondary; others stop provision in the third year of Secondary. It is mixed-picture. There is no alternative as the RE curriculum integrates Philosophy and Ethics into the curriculum. They are not taught discretely.
What are the main topics in the RE curriculum?

Christianity / World Religions / Ethics.
The separation of Christianity and World Religions is contested amongst educationalists.

What kind of education/degree do you need to be an RE teacher?

It varies quite considerably. To become an RE teacher, one needs to meet the national entry requirements, which for RE are as follows:

“Religious Education

Applicants must have a degree with at least 80 SCQF credit points from two or more of the areas listed below:

- Religious Studies
- Philosophy
- Theology
- Divinity
- Sociology of Religion
- Anthropology of Religion
- Psychology of Religion

Applicants wishing specifically to teach Religious Education in Catholic schools must have a degree with at least 80 SCQF credit points in:

- Religious Studies
- Theology
- Divinity

which may include a maximum of 20 credit points in:

- Philosophy related to religion

SCQF refers to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (http://scqf.org.uk/).

How many hours of RE lessons do pupils have per week?

This varies (again). However, usually between 45mins to 60 mins. Schools have different timetabling arrangements / period lengths. Most schools require one period of RE per week.
Religious Education in Scotland

The Scottish Education Act of 1872 created a national system of compulsory elementary schools. Prior to this the churches had financed the Scottish parish school system. However, the churches could no longer support the burgeoning school populations of the late 19th century and the state intervened. This legislation effectively sanctioned the creation of a secular school curriculum with religious instruction as an appendix. The 1872 Act also furnished schools with a statement of support for Religious Instruction and Religious Observance. It also provides the first mention of a conscience clause for parents giving them the right to withdraw their child from Religious Instruction. To this day, the 1872 act provides the legislative framework for RE in Scottish schools.

As far as Roman Catholic schools are concerned, these were first founded in the early 19th century to meet the needs principally of immigrating Irish Catholics, mainly in the areas of the industrial west of Scotland. The numbers of voluntary catholic schools increased towards the end of the 19th century. However the catholic schools rejected the 1872 Act's attempt to create centralised control of policy out of fear that the denominational nature of their schools would be eroded. In 1918, however, the catholic schools came under state control, mainly as a result of financial need, but also reassured that they would maintain theological autonomy. At present approximately 15% of schools in Scotland are catholic, although many of their pupils may be from non-catholic backgrounds.

The provisions of the 1872 Act on Religious Instruction were upheld on various occasions throughout the 20th century, from the 1929 Parliamentary provision right though to 1991 (SOED Circular 6/91). In 1943 the Secretary of State for Scotland supported the freedom of conscience for parents; the freedom of curricular planning for teachers, and the withdrawal of state control in such matters.

From 1945-1968 the Scottish Joint Committee for Religious Education (SJCRE) published a series of ‘experimental’ syllabi for Religious Education (RE, as it was now called), as well as guidance on the use of graces and hymns in schools. The SJCRE, as a Church of Scotland affiliated body, sought to ground RE entirely in Christianity, making no distinction between learning about Christianity, and the administration of acts of worship. Both were seen to be the proper role of RE, and both were sanctioned by these documents. It is noticeable, however, that these documents increasingly become concerned with a more objective treatment of the content. There is, for example, a move away from 1954’s ‘Graces for Use at School Meals’ which expected pupils to participate in grace as a matter of course, to the material in the 1968 ‘Second Experimental Syllabus’ which, while inviting pupils to consider the purpose and nature of Christian prayer, does not invite them to pray.

A number of events and trends led to a perceived crisis in Scottish Religious Instruction in the 1960’s. Until this point Religious Instruction was carried out by non-specialist teachers in primary
and secondary schools and was firmly centred on Bible reading. The incongruity of RE provision, as it existed at the time, came to a head for 4 main reasons:

1. Educational insight into the appropriateness of Bible lessons for children as young as five;
2. The rise of secularisation to unarguable levels in teachers, pupils and society at large;
3. The emergence of a multi-faith society, and
4. 20th century Biblical scholarship and theology.

The report of Millar’s Committee questioned the situation where RE remained mandatory but where there was no inspection and no teaching qualification or certification for pupils. RE had not been able to keep pace with developments elsewhere in the curriculum and “in the attitude of our society to religious belief.” Scottish census data, which has included questions on religiosity since 2001 charts a move from majority Christian affiliation

Source: 

The Millar Report can be summarised as recommending educational, non-confessional, inspected RE delivered by specialist staff. It also acknowledged that in advocating non-confessional RE, on the grounds of respect for freedom of thought and because of the multi-faith society, that there is a tension between this and the continuation of acts of worship in schools. Given the statutory restrictions placed on Millar Committee (1972) this is understandable. However, the uneasy relationship between RE and Religious Observance (corporate acts of worship in schools) continues to be problematic. In some schools to this day the two are conflated and in other schools Religious Education staff continue to feel undermined by the persistence of acts of worship.

In 1982 national certification for RE was introduced for third and fourth year pupils in the secondary school (ages 14-16). The content would provide a rough template for RE qualifications to come in that it posited 4 areas of study (in addition to a personal investigation by pupils):

1. Christianity;
2. Another World Religion;
3. Issues of Morality, and
4. Issues of Belief.

From 1999 Scottish secondary schools have been offering Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (RMPS) single units from the national qualifications suite, rather than courses, down the school at secondary third and fourth year during mandatory RE time, which is typically an hour a week. In 2010 across Scotland 35,595 RMPS units were offered discretely in Scottish schools, predominantly in third and fourth year core RE time, rather than as an elective (ibid.). The majority (25,503) of these concern morality and values. Only 4,820 of the total units concerned the study of a selected world religion. The remaining units (5,272) cover material such as the relationship between religion and science, the nature of belief and the existence of God. This increase in certificated provision in RE may be part of a drive to enhance the credibility of RE in schools. The prevalence of units dealing with moral philosophy, philosophy of religion and philosophy of science (30,775 out of 35,595) is evident here and may reflect on teachers’ perceptions that such content may sit better with an increasingly secular pupil population. The desire, by some non-denominational RE teachers to rebrand the subject RMPS may also be born of this perception.

The latest national initiative is the Curriculum Review (A Curriculum for Excellence 2005 - present). RE has one of several subject review committees currently looking at the national curriculum. ‘RME’ has been acknowledged as one of 8 ‘Curriculum Areas’ that should inform curricular planning. Curricular ‘experiences and outcomes’ were created for Catholic and non-faith RE in 2008, though it
should be noted that, despite this separation of provision at core level, children from Catholic and non-faith schools are presented for the same national qualifications and that this has been the case since the creation of RE certificates in the 1980’s. During the SQA exam diet for session 2013-14 4,318 pupils underwent Higher RMPS in the latter two years of their secondary schooling. Across Scotland, thousands more have been awarded discrete units. Although these numbers are not yet close to those in comparable social subjects (Modern Studies (Politics) had 8,929 Higher candidates in 2014) they do represent a year by year increase in uptake. For example there has been an increase of 2,212 pupils taking RMPS Higher since session 2007-2008. This represents a 95% increase in uptake over a period of six years.

Key Links

- Education Scotland area for RME & RERC. Contains curricular and statutory guidance: http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/learningandteaching/curriculumareas/rme/index.asp
- General Teaching Council (Scotland) Memorandum for Entry to Teaching: http://www.gtcs.org.uk/web/FILES/about-gtcs/memorandum-on-entry-requirements.pdf, University of Aberdeen, Scotland

Graeme Nixon, University of Aberdeen, Scotland http://www.eftre.net/

A Glance at Religious Education in England

Scotland and England have different educational systems and also with regard to Religious Education, there are quite a number of differences; nevertheless the commonalities are predominant. So, while considering the Scottish situation, it will be relevant to keep in mind the didactical discussions in the neighbour country.

- It is for example very interesting to notice a public debate about the situation of RE in England which even entered Parliament: cf. the Westminster Faith Debates: http://faithdebates.org.uk/ There is a proposal to rename, just as in Scotland, “Religious Education” to “Religious and Moral Education”.

- What is instructive, but not always encouraging are the official evaluations of OFSTED („Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills“) about the strengths and weaknesses of RE: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/religious-education-realising-the-potential


- Colleagues who are looking for teaching material for their RE lessons and who are interested in adapting them to the German context, will find manifold and interesting impulses on http://www.retoday.org.uk/ or www.reonline.org.uk.
Teilnahmebestätigung
Letter of attendance / Lettre de Présence
Identification No. / n° de contrat:

READY – Religious Education and Diversity. Sharing experiences of and approaches to teacher education in the context of “Education and Training” (ET 2020)

VG-SPS-BW-15-36-013767

Besuchte Einrichtung / organisation visited / établissement visité:

Name / nom: University of Aberdeen
Adresse/ address: Aberdeen AB24 3FX
Staat / country / pays: Scotland / UK

This is to confirm that the following person(s), staff and learners of the Staatliche Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasien) Tübingen,

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<td>Peter</td>
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<td>Weber</td>
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have attended our organisation with the following purpose:

READY learning event S 1, study visit

Stay (excluding travelling days) from November 28th, 2016 until December 2nd, 2016 (five working days)

Aberdeen, 02-12-2016

Signature of head
**Teilnahmebestätigung**  
**Letter of attendance / Lettre de Présence**

Aktenzeichen des Projekts / Identification No. / n° de contrat:

**READY – Religious Education and Diversity. Sharing experiences of and approaches to teacher education in the context of “Education and Training” (ET 2020)**

VG-SPS-BW-15-36-013767

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Besuchte Einrichtung / organisation visited / établissement visité:

Name / nom: University of Aberdeen, School of Education

Adresse/ address: Aberdeen AB24 3FX

Staat / country / pays: Scotland / UK

Hiermit wird bestätigt, dass folgende Person

This is to confirm that the following person

Nous certifions par la présente que la/les personne suivante

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unsere Einrichtung mit dem folgenden Zweck besucht haben:

has attended our organisation with the following purpose:

a visité notre établissement avec le but suivant:

**READY learning event S 1, study visit**

Stay (excluding travelling days) from November 28th, 2016 until December 2nd, 2016  
(five working days)

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Dauer (ohne Reisetage) vom 28-11-2016 bis zum 02-12-2016

Séjour (sans compter les jours de voyage) du 28-11-2016 au 02-12-2016

Ort, Datum: Aberdeen, 02-12-16

Unterschrift der Leiterin / des Leiters: [Signature]

Signature of head: [Signature]

Lieu, date: [Signature du responsable Prof. Ruth Irwin]
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<th>Monday 28th November</th>
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| All students to participate in PGDE programme inputs for primary and secondary student teachers, including workshop and lectures on:  
  - The role of emotion in teaching  
  - Partnership within and between schools and diverse agencies  
  1800: Dinner (TBC) | 1000: Milne’s High School, Fochabers (http://www.milneschool.org.uk/)  
| 1400-1700: Finkhorn Foundation (www.finkhorn.uk) | 1500: Depart | END | END | END |