Study visit of the READY - “Learning Community”
School of Education Aberdeen / Scotland to Tübingen

May 28th – June 3rd, 2017
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 University of Aberdeen School of Education to the “Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasien)” in Tübingen. 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 May 28th to June 3rd 2017 and had been prepared by intensive online communication, also using eTwinning (“READY 1”), between teacher trainees in Tübingen and Aberdeen.

The Aberdeen traveling group consisted of five teacher trainees and two teacher educators, all of whom are involved in the field of Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies (RMPS):

- Dr David Smith, Senior Lecturer RMPS
- Dr Graeme Nixon, Senior Lecturer RMPS
- Matthew Forbes, PGDE(S) student teacher RMPS
Stewart Clelland, PGDE(S) student teacher RMPS

Marilyn Hamilton, PGDE(S) student teacher RMPS

Hannah Pyne, PGDE(S) student teacher RMPS

Rhianna Stewart, PGDE(S) student teacher RMPS
This document is a collation of the reflections of the Scottish group from Aberdeen on the range of experiences they had in Tübingen, from Monday 29th May to Friday 2nd June 2017, which included school visits, university lectures, discussions with READY colleagues, and cultural activities.

Here is the programme, followed by their reflections:

**Monday**

9:30  **Welcome** to the Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasien) Tübingen

www.seminar-tuebingen.de

**Introduction to the German system of Education and teacher training**

**Introduction to the curricula for Religious Education and Ethics**

Peter Kliemann
Lothar Bösing
Inge Strass

Uta Hauf (Catholic RE)
Birgit Maisch-Zimmermann (Protestant RE)
Marcel Remme (Ethics / Philosophy)
Hakan Turan (Islamic RE)

12:15  **Lunch**


14:00  **Subject didactics**

Ethics / philosophy I: Dealing with religion in Ethics classes  
Christof Schilling

Ethics / philosophy II: Writing essays as a creative method  
Marcel Remme

Catholic RE: Interreligious learning  
Uta Hauf

Protestant RE  
Birgit Maisch-Zimmermann / Uta Knoerzer

Peter Kliemann

Videoaufnahme: Thomas Rauch

16:00  **Coffee & Reflection**

**Tuesday**

10:00  **Stiftung Weltethos (global ethic institute)**  

Marcel Remme
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Organisers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15:00</td>
<td>Guided tour through Old Tübingen organised by teacher trainees</td>
<td>Lydia Hüsemann, Meike Sprecher, Gabi Weber &amp; eTwinning group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:30</td>
<td>Punting boat tour</td>
<td>Lydia Hüsemann (Stocherkahn Stift), Gabi Weber (Stocherkahn Bengelhaus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19:00</td>
<td>Dinner</td>
<td>Restaurant Neckarmüller: <a href="http://www.neckarmueller.de/cms/">www.neckarmueller.de/cms</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Wednesday**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Organisers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>School visit 1: Uhland-Gymnasium</td>
<td>Peter Kliemann, Ralph Maier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.ug.tue.bw.schule.de">www.ug.tue.bw.schule.de</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>upper secondary class Protestant RE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>School visit 2: Wildermuth-Gymnasium</td>
<td>Marcel Remme, Gaby Klingberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.wildermuth-gymnasium.de">www.wildermuth-gymnasium.de</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>upper secondary classes in Ethics and Catholic RE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School cafeteria Uhlandstraße: <a href="http://www.stollsteimer.de/mensa">www.stollsteimer.de/mensa</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:45</td>
<td>Coffee &amp; Reflection</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:15</td>
<td>University seminar Protestant Theology with Prof. Dr. Friedrich Schweitzer: Creation and Evolution – a challenge for RE didactics</td>
<td>Peter Kliemann</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://www.uni-tuebingen.de/fakultaeten/evangelisch-theologische-fakultaet/aktuelles/aktuelles.html">www.uni-tuebingen.de/fakultaeten/evangelisch-theologische-fakultaet/aktuelles/aktuelles.html</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Thursday**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
<th>Organisers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Albert-Einstein-Gymnasium Reutlingen</td>
<td>Meike Sprecher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meeting pupils of lower secondary RE classes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10:30  Discussion with the head of the school Dr Ernst, teacher trainees, teachers about the school concept in general and ‘inclusion’ in particular
       Meike Sprecher / Kai Voss
       Kontakt vom Seminar aus: Birgit Maisch-Zimmermann
       Uta Hauf
12:00  Lunch in the school cafeteria
15:00  Bebenhausen Monastery
       http://www.kloster-bebenhausen.de/en/home/

Friday
10:00  Mathilde Weber Vocational School
       http://www.mws.tue.bw.schule.de/
       Teaching RE in refugee classes
       (lesson, pre and after lesson talk)
       Jörn Hauf
14:30  Field trip to Buttenhausen / Swabian Alb:
       Jewish Life in rural Germany
       http://www.muensingen.com/Media/Attraktionen/Juedisches-Museum-Buttenhausen
       Birgit Maisch-Zimmermann

Final reflection & farewell dinner …
       Videoaufnahme:
1. **Monday 29th May**

**Meeting with READY colleagues from Tübingen**

Venue: Staatliches Seminar für Didaktik und Lehrerbildung (Gymnasien) Tübingen

(i) **Introduction to the German system of Education and teacher training**

(ii) **Introduction to the curricula for Religious Education and Ethics**

(iii) **Ethics / philosophy I: Dealing with religion in Ethics classes**

(iv) **Ethics / philosophy II: Writing essays as a creative method**

(v) **Catholic RE: Interreligious learning**

(vi) **Protestant RE**

**Dr Graeme Nixon**

*Introduction to the German system of Education.*

Education is devolved to 16 states in an attempt to avoid vulnerability to centralised ideology post WW2. This means 16 different systems and qualification models. Elementary school – 4 years (until 10). Then three tracks (you can move between them) and also comprehensive schools. Tuebingen works with Gymnasium. There used to be selective entry to Gymnasium. Gymnasium equivalent to the UK Grammar school. There are few private schools in Germany.

Teacher education is study of 2-3 subjects over 4-6 years. They undergo 18 months after university at the seminar. Move towards all having a portfolio documenting teacher education.

Basics subject include didactics and pedagogy, school and civil service law, digital media, German as a second language. Also a period of observation into 1st teaching experience (30 lessons in each subject) which includes school law. Some are offered a voluntary internship at a comprehensive school. Students are paid 1000 euro per month. Student teachers write a thesis after 12 months.

Examination – oral examination in each subject and also pedagogy. They also have optional modules. They also have to demonstrate their potential to lead a class in 3 lessons (2 in one subject and 1 in thesis area).

They have a tutor from the Seminar and a mentor from the school throughout their school experience. Trainees are typically in school 4 days per week with 1/2 days at the seminar for subject pedagogy and didactics.

There are few vacancies for teaching positions. The teacher role is flexible in terms of how many hours can be worked and taking career breaks. Pay is adjusted for teachers who have children (‘kinder money’). German teachers are well paid and enjoy many privileges.

*Curricula for Protestant and Catholic RE in Secondary Schools*
The German constitution (article 7) assures that the churches are responsible for content of RE and that it should be mandatory. Post National Socialism it was seen that the churches should have a role. Also there was a rejection of the civic element taught during the 3rd Reich.

Very fluid situation. Ethics the biggest group now for those without religious commitment. Now there is Islamic RE also.

Goals for RC RE – Faith as meaningful and vital orientation. A multi-tradition approach in both denominations. Both emphasise service to school and community. Teachers have to get approval of their denomination. There are process-related competences for RE (perception and (re)presentation, interpretation, judgement, dialogue and structuring.

Subject areas are Human, World responsibility, God, JC, Church, Religions and Belief Systems.

Content related competences structured around:
1. Recognising Meaningful Phenomena
2. Explaining and Understanding Christian Faith
3. Reflecting, reasoning about personal attitudes and actions

Teachers have flexibility to create their own plans around the competences.

Muslim RE in Germany
Creating a Muslim syllabus for Islamic RE has proved complex given lack of single Islamic organisation. In 2013 the Centre for Islamic Theology was established. First graduates will be in 2018. In Bad-Wittenberg Islamic RE began in 2006. In 2015 there were 35 schools in which Islamic RE was established. Ongoing dialogue with Protestant and RC RE. It is Sunni Islamic RE that is taught. There are 5 million Muslims in Germany. It is still required that the RE teacher is a member of the tradition being taught.

Ethics and Philosophy in German schools
A substitute lesson for RE. Aims to conduct ethical and moral judgements.
1. Ethics – what is a good life?
2. Morality – how should I act?

Students have to acquire knowledge for ethical orientation and skills for conducting ethical discussion. Aims to allow students to develop a ‘self-determined life’.

Pupils can choose from age 12 whether to attend Ethics or RE and can opt in and out of RE/Ethics.

Dr David Smith

Matthew Forbes
After being welcomed to the seminar and exchanging introductions, we were given an overview of the German education system and what is required from teaching practitioners. From first impressions from this discussion, we could see a huge contrast to the Scottish educational system. Firstly, compared to the Scottish system education at the secondary level in Germany appears far more complex with different secondary schooling being provided through different types of school. The idea of vocational schools felt particularly interesting to me, as it may provide a clearer link to learners between education and its relevance to working in their adult lives.

The differences in teacher training were also very different to what we were used to. While Scottish educations must meet the standards of the General Teaching Council, the teacher training required is specific to the region in Germany (though differences in regional training, could perhaps be compared to devolved government in the UK). The expectation to teach in two subjects was interesting to learn about. Though many teachers in Scotland do become dual qualified, this is optional and at least in my own experience of meeting dual qualified teachers, this is in closely related subjects (e.g. qualifying in two foreign languages, two sciences or two social subjects), while this did not seem to be the case from some of the teachers we met during the week, an example being one teacher who taught Religious
Education and Mathematics. I discussed this with one of the student teachers later, who did explain that sometimes this dual qualification combined with more freedom with teaching timetables can lead to some teachers focusing on one of their subjects and spending minimal (or even no time) teaching their other subject, which felt to me like studying a second subject might in some occasions may feel like little more than a formality. However, I would reflect that with the Scottish curriculum’s aim for holistic education with interdisciplinary learning, could benefit from subject teachers having a wider area of subject expertise.

I could see value in the Seminar working closely with schools, having teacher trainers spending time teaching in schools themselves could make the connection to theory and practice more evident. I have heard student teachers in Scotland criticise the detachment between university staff and everyday school teaching and would be interested to hear what such students would think of the practice of teacher trainers doing also working in school. Learning more about the standards student teachers must meet, there were many similar expectations, but I did find it interesting that a report on the student is completed by a head teacher, rather than a mentor teacher who is a specialist in the subject area and would question why an individual more directly involved with the student teacher is not responsible for this instead.

Religious Education in Germany

We were briefed by specialists in Catholic, Protestant and Islamic Religious Education and Ethics to develop a better understanding of how the subjects are taught. As we had learned before visiting Germany, Religious Education is structured very differently in Germany, where it is denominational and confessional, as opposed to Scotland’s non-confessional, philosophical approach in the form of Religious Moral and Philosophical Studies. Admittedly, the denominational nature of German RE did lead me to have some reservations about how effective it is (though some of these reservations were addressed throughout the week), my main concern being about segregating pupils based upon religious belief. Ethics is provided as an alternative for non-religious pupils or those who wish to withdraw themselves from confessional RE. Scottish parents have the option of a conscience clause to withdraw their children from RMPS.

Discussion of Catholic and Protestant RE echoed some of the aims of RMPS, in that both mention a search for identity and reflection, similar to the Scottish “personal search”. This reflective approach did address my additional reservation that denominational RE might simply aim to make pupils follow their faith blindly, without question. It was explained for example that a learner could still pass an exam whilst rejecting the Church’s teaching if the answer provided is reflective and properly informed.

We were also introduced to an overview of Islamic Religious Education which is still relatively new. As the subject was still being developed there are still various challenges to address. One concern which I asked about later in the day was about how the relatively small Muslim population affects class sizes. I felt that having lessons with only two or three pupils would surely single children out as “different” and potentially deny them a more social aspect of learning provided in full classrooms. I was told this was indeed an issue that was being explored, with one potential solution being to merge age groups.

The syllabus was described as similar to Catholic and Protestant RE, with the belief that an individual with an Islamic background being able to deliver a richer experience that someone with no first-hand experience of practicing Islam. As with the Christian forms of RE, I think there is value in having an individual with expert knowledge teaching the subject, though I am less sure on how this would work in practice when discussing other religions. There was discussion on how religious dialogue with Christian and Jewish Colleagues to approve content and avoid materials that could be unintentionally offensive to other religions. I see this idea of dialogue as definitely important, though I still fear that singling out individuals based on faith might reinforce a philosophy of “us” and “them”.

Ethics which as previously mentioned is offered as an alternative to RE, was stated to have the aim of developing ethical and moral judgement. There is a desire to enable students to be self-determined and responsible. As with the denominational RE, there is evidently an emphasis on individual identity, something which I would argue is equally important for Scottish RMPS.
I found it interesting that the focus in terms of content is primarily philosophical, without religious responses, despite religion being one of the major influences on ethics throughout history. Though this may simply reflect the fact that most of the learners in the Ethics classroom come from non-religious backgrounds, I would be concerned that this might discourage dialogue with religious responses to moral issues. I would also be concerned that minority religions who do not have their own version of RE might feel marginalised by being placed in Ethics when individuals of other faiths receive religious education. I do however feel this does address the issue of what to do about the education of pupils who do not participate in RE, by providing them with another form of valuable and relevant education.

_Catholic RE: Learning through dialogue_

In a workshop for student teachers in Catholic RE, I observed student teachers studying a lesson reflecting on the relationship between humanity and evil. Coincidentally I had been teaching a similar topic on freewill and suffering the previous week and it was interesting to reflect upon other ways to approach the subject.

The initial task of writing answers down individually, then performing a “chair dance” to move round the room adding comments and feedback to other pupils was practiced by the student teachers themselves to give an idea of the activity and would not feel out of place in a Scottish classroom. In stark contrast to the differences in German education that we had learned about in the morning, observing this workshop demonstrated that much of the actual practice of teaching and teacher training are not so different at all.

After completing the task, there was then a discussion of the theory behind the task, linking it to the Social Constructivist theory of Vygotsky, by combing learners knowledge and comparing ideas. I felt this was very effective in making the links between theory and practice very apparent and relevant to the students.

A discussion followed on planning lessons from the perspective of the student, which relates to the child centred approach the CfE endorses. This opening task was part of a lesson where learners would then need to learn about different theorist’s responses to the initial question. The two responses explored being Sartre and a local theologian, Hilberath. I found it interesting to choose a local theorist, which may be comparable to RMPS giving prevalence to the Scottish context.

These types of lesson also involve feedback questionnaires with questions from which the next lesson is built. While I can see many benefits from this approach, there was mention of doing this for lessons over a long period of time and doing lessons this way would sound difficult to implement, with little time to plan and prepare.

There was also a discussion on the importance of feedback, another similarity to the Scottish curriculum. It became very apparent to me from this workshop that despite the differences in the school system, learning itself is very similar in the German and Scottish contexts.

_Marilyn Hamilton_

Peter Kliemann explained the structure of Federal state system of which there are 16 in Germany and how that effects Education. The initial differences are apparent between Scotland and Tübingen as part of the state of Baden Württemberg, in their school system of schools which contains four levels of school education and also the required qualification and training of Teachers. Gymnasium (equivalent of Grammar schools) teachers require to have a Masters qualification covering at least two subjects, such as maths & English or RE & English. The initial teacher training is also different to Scotland in that the German student teachers complete an 18 months training during which they teach both in school and attend University during the week.

RE in Germany is considered to have a confessional approach, also different to Scotland. Teachers will trained in either Protestant RE or Catholic RE or Islamic studies (although this is currently not available in all schools).
Also unlike Scotland, the churches in Germany approve the RE curriculum and content and teacher as they provide funding to allow pupils to have 2 lessons per week of RE studies (unlike Scotland which provides only 1 lesson per week at core). Pupils must choose between Catholic or Protestant RE class or Ethics. Unlike Scotland where religion and ethics are taught together. Ethics would appear to be separated as required by the church, however pupils are able to move from one to another through the school year. Only pupils in the equivalent of Scottish 5th & 6th year have the opportunity to study philosophy.

Islamic studies is relatively new in Tübingen with currently only one school offering it as a subject. Teachers are in the process of training to be able to teach it as a subject which can be chosen by Muslims and non-Muslims.

It would appear that as far as we can see in a short visit as out siders from another country, it would appear a higher standard of education is provided not only in the required level of education at entry level of student teachers but also in subjects provided in Gymnasium such as the study of classics Greek & Latin available from S1. Also they have a “highly gifted child” programme for children with higher intelligence. An assessment takes place to be accepted for the programme, this is paid for by the state to ensure social inclusion. It appears that there are also lessons for “highly gifted children” in a separate programme similar to that offered to only ASN pupils in Scotland. In Germany some of these “bright” children work better in lessons in smaller classes when removed from an integrated class where they can sometimes be a distraction and have behavioral difficulties. This was particularly interesting to hear as currently in Scotland it is only possible to address and resource learning for pupils with learning difficulties not learning for pupils at the high end of the spectrum.

The education system in Germany appears more complex compared with the Scottish education system by way of structure. However from the lessons we observed the lesson planning and content is comparable to that of any Scottish secondary RMPS lesson.

There is an awareness and focus on social inclusion and equity in the German education system as with Scottish system. However, it appears that there are some education facilities which are specifically for children with learning difficulties which do not attend an integrated school or Kindergarten.

Further differences would appear in the status and value placed upon teachers in order to retain them in the profession. It would appear that Teachers in Germany are highly valued and as such their pay and benefits reflect it unlike in Scotland. The result would appear to be greater retention of teachers.

As teachers of RE which also covers moral and philosophical ethics together as one it is difficult to understand why there is such a divide between Protestant, Catholic RE & Ethics and see no reason why they cannot be merged as there is very little noticeable difference between how the lessons run between Germany and Scotland. I believe overtime the German style lesson will change and classes will eventually merge to share discourse and promote a greater richness of understanding.

**Hannah Pyne**

Having listened to the introduction lectures, while still a bit confusing, I now have a better understanding of the German system. Though I am aware of the concerns raised about Grammar schools and inclusion, I get the impression that in Germany, Grammar schools are the more the norm and roughly 40-50% of children go to a grammar schools in Germany. This is compared to under 5% in England (http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN01398) (The Scottish system does not have schools operating as Grammars). I feel this is important to point out when discussions are had about Grammar schools so not to draw direct comparisons between the UK and Germany. In the English system, Grammar schools are few and far between so children get sent from a wide ranging area, meaning only the brightest attend as the school can select from a wide area. By my understanding of the German system is that every town has a grammar school, so selection is to be more inclusive than England.

Another big difference with Grammar schools in England is that an entrance exam has to be sat. In Germany, this is not the case, instead children are recommended by teachers to attend a grammar
school. This still leaves the issue of children of certain backgrounds more likely ending up at a grammar school and whether the system is being fully inclusive. This did not appear to be an issue in the German system? Or this was not fully discussed?

It is important to discuss the English system as the Scottish system takes pride in focusing on inclusiveness within Schools. I remember being in a lecture at Aberdeen where sharp contrasts were draw on ideas of inclusion and behaviour management between the English and Scottish systems. The Scottish system aims to be inclusive for every child. However this can sometimes result in teaching to the middle and not always stretching every child’s ability. I feel this would not be the case in Germany, but worry about what happens to the 50% that do not attend Grammar schools. Teachers for Grammar schools have 6 years’ worth of training, while teachers for other schools only require 4 years. This gives the impression that those children who do not attend a grammar school are not quite getting the same quality of education as their teachers have less training. However I would like to qualify that those teachers not teaching in a Grammar School have the the same number of years as all teachers in England and many teachers in Scotland (mainly primary MA students).

I do like how geared up the German system seems to be with apprenticeships, especially post 16. It was interesting to hear how students who are training to be carers, or mechanics or florists have their core subjects (Maths, German, RE) together as a group and the aim is to link in relevance of these subjects to their training area. Apprenticeships in Scotland do not often occur before 18 and there does not seem to be the same opportunities to vary education, with College often seen as a something someone does if they didn’t do very well at school. I will always remember when I first moved to Scotland and said I did my A levels at college, many of my friends assumed I had failed them the first time round at school and didn’t understand that I choose to go to college instead of staying at school.

Two key questions I have reflected on about the German system is: Firstly, how easy/possible is it to move between the varying strands of education within the German system. Do the students get a say in what they want to do? Secondly, does attending a school other than a Grammar school come with negative assumptions, like me attending college? If a student choose to go down the route of an apprenticeship, is this choice encouraged or do the teachers dictate pathways due to ability? I suppose what I would like to find out more is the sociology behind education in Germany.

If attending something other than a Grammar school is not seen in the same light then I worry that some children would miss out on opportunities and their choices cut short due to factors beyond their control.

2. Tuesday 30th May:


**Dr Graeme Nixon**

Origins of the Institute lie in the late 1980’s with idea that religions could impact the polis and that inter-religious dialogue could be beneficial in a political dimension. Kuhn’s 1981 book ‘Global Responsibility’ hoped for inter-connected ethics in order for humanity to survive. He felt there was a necessity for some kind of connected attitudes – a global ethic.

The Parliament of Religions took place in 1983 and sought to create a declaration of global ethics. In 1995 the Global Ethics foundation was established and argued for the need to give opportunities for values discussion via a process of research and practice transfer. They have also argued for ‘prudent
leadership’ which is grounded, pragmatic and morally responsible. They have developed mental models in support of prudent leadership leading from disposition to action.

They promote dialogic reflection which has three elements; identity and self-image, theories and ideas, and practice and action. The aim is to awaken the global citizen. Their practice approach is to produce and disseminate a Global Ethics Manifesto, develop education programmes (‘Go Practice’) and public dialogue.

The Institute has an inter-religious focus, particularly a dialogue with Islam. They have been approached to train teachers in Germany in ethics education.

The core values are non-violence, justice, truthfulness and partnership. The aims are to foster:

- Intercultural consciousness
- Ethical thinking
- Inter-cultural dialogue
- Co-operation

The institute is sensitive to the risk of essentialising religious traditions. They have a free website (A Global Ethic Now!) and have introduced the Global Ethic School Award (since 2013). They have begun research into the impact of their educational work. They have an anti-radicalisation project.

Reflections: A monied, suited corporation? A salve for the elites? How global? How sensitive to the fact that some forms of ideology are antithetical to global co-operation?

Dr David Smith

Matthew Forbes

Visiting the Global Ethic Institute, we were welcomed into a large, evidently well-funded building and it was explained to us that the institute aims to unite the world by focusing not on our differences, but on our similarities. Interestingly, in the hall outside was a picture with the quote “Without contraries, there can be no progress.” underneath. A quote which would seem to celebrate differences instead. I would perhaps question if only focusing on shared values acts against celebrating diversity and reduces all religions and philosophies as “basically all the same”, but the general sentiment of the institute’s aim of uniting different ideologies to build a better world felt very positive.

The concept of a global ethic, created by agreeing on common values, sounded like something very desirable, especially in contemporary times where the plight of many is apparent in the news every day. Focusing on shared values also feels relevant as a response to some of the reactions to recent events, such as accusations about religious minorities not integrating. Such a celebration of similarities could highlight that this is not necessarily the case as well as encourage positive interaction between different groups within society.

The Institute aims to create “global citizens”, through public dialogue and through education programmes to emphasis these shared values and in contemporary society where civilisations are much more exposed to each other and moral issues are global and affect everyone, I can see value in helping people recognise and acknowledge that other people have just as much right to exist in comfort as they do. I am still somewhat unsure however, if this idea waxes over difference and diversity by only lamp-shading the similarities. When learning about the idea behind a shared ethic there was discussion of “Adhering to human decency” and a cultivation of trust. Listening and responding to others and learning together. This included interreligious dialogue, something which again I found agreeable.

When hearing about the ideology behind the global ethic, there was a bit of a dismissal of some aspects of moral philosophy as unrealistic, an opinion which I could not personally agree with. Moral dilemmas such as the infamous trolley dilemma were dismissed as not being worth exploring because they are too unrealistic. I would however challenge this by pointing out, while such a scenario might not be realistic, it is transferable to real world situations. There are surely situations in the global community where one must choose between actively harming people or passively harming others?
When questioned about the idea of ideological differences being incompatible, the answer given did not feel explored well enough. From what I understood of the question asked, different religions differentiate between those who live their lives correctly, i.e. according to their faith and those who do not. Holders of such a belief might not in any way be in anyway aggressive or unkind to non-believers, but nevertheless there is a can be a clash of values. The answer given seemed to respond to a question different to the one that was asked and explained that the global ethic is not something that extremists are going to embrace. I did not think the question asked was about extremists, but rather it was about incompatible values between different religious groups.

In exploring the role of the institute in education we were given an overview of some of the resources created to reinforce values of compassion, cooperation and non-violence. I also felt there may be a comparison between GE schools perceiving ethics as a responsibility for all teachers and the Curriculum for Excellence having Health and Wellbeing (which includes exploration of the rights of others) as a responsibility for all. Again, while I see these as worthy values to spread, but I am not sure how effective this would be. The justification was that it was prevention, not intervention, but I would question how successful this approach would be in practice. If a child is raised by parents with values of hostility or bigotry, will this not be a bigger influence on how the child forms their world picture? In Scotland, an RMPS teacher might also find themselves in a similar situation of trying to open a learner’s eyes to other points of view and combat bigotry that may arise from stronger influences such as family, peers or media, so while I would not argue there is no point in aiming for the prevention of extremist views, I do not believe prevention of these views through early years schooling is enough to create global citizens. Unfortunately the GEI were unable to provide any data about the success of their education programmes.

My overall impression of the institute was that it has some admirable aims in helping promote peace and compassion throughout the world and there is value in some of the ideas they use to work toward this goal. I would however suggest that some of the ideas that sound good in theory are not so straightforward in practice.

Stewart Clelland

Nietzsche Wept: The Global Ethic Foundation of Tubingen

It was with great pleasure that we found ourselves spending the week on the top floor of a beautiful old sixteenth-century house in the heart of Tubingen. Situated in the footsteps of the castle, our apartment looked out over the old school house of Hegel and Joseph Schelling. Known as the Tübinger Stift, the building is now owned and supported by the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Württemberg. Originally founded as an Augustinian monastery in the Middle Ages, it was described by that most radical of ethicists Friedrich Nietzsche as a symbol of the Teutonic philosophical tradition itself: ‘One need only utter the words ’Tübingen School’ to get an understanding of what German philosophy is at bottom—a very artful form of theology.’ (The Antichrist, 1895). After our visit to the Stiftung Weltethos, such artfulness it seems may still be found in Tubingen, if only one has the money to pay for it.

For more than two decades the Stiftung Weltethos (Global Ethic Foundation) has claimed to have ‘focused its energies on helping people reason through the ethics of daily living by providing tools and frameworks to help analyze the world around them’. It had been suggested that as five visiting Scottish R.E student teachers such ‘tools and frameworks’ may be of interest in the context of our ongoing pedagogical development. Indeed, ‘the ethics of daily living’ is the bread and butter of Scottish RE and we were keen to engage in the Foundation’s research.

Finding ourselves in the boutique back streets of the city, the Global Ethic Foundation is a beautiful modern building. Light and airy, and resembling more an art gallery than a research institute, the centre provides training and consultation packages that teachers such as ourselves might employ to ‘awaken the global citizen within’ our students. Ensuring the moral rectitude of our young people might be better protected from the evils of ‘radicalism and extremism’, the centre provides the means by which to instil in them such universal virtues as Ethical Fitness®, Ethical Literacy® and Moral Courage™.
Focused on the cultivation of a ‘Cosmopolitan disposition within’, I personally found the Global Ethic Foundation owes more to the philosophy of Gene Roddenberry, than either Hegel or Nietzsche. Whilst once admirable in its intentions, the Foundation now presents little more than a mere bourgeoisie critique. The theoretical framework that the Foundation is literally selling is one centred on ‘rekindling the cosmopolitan project within the heart of all decent people’ - in other words it specialises in exporting middle class (Capitalist) Western/German (Christian) values on those less fortunate than to have received the gift of modern suburban morality. Informed by the logic of the market, the Foundation work a system of ethical Marxism wrapped in the language of corporate industry that they hope will awaken the consumer-based dasein within- something clearly of immense appeal to Corporate and Government stakeholders, and no doubt attractive to certain educational boards. An artful form of theology, indeed.

Intellectually however, this theoretical framework as it is practised by the Global Ethic Foundation is philosophically disingenuous. A shared Global ethic is surely something that requires a reappraisal of one’s own values, including those of the Global Ethic Foundation; one wonders what ethics have they abandoned or adopted from the ‘Other’? In it’s fundamentally essentialist and reductive view of Religion and Ethics, anything that doesn’t conform to the Global Ethic Foundation’s own Western values are simply deemed as extremist or not really religion or ethical at all. There are ‘normal’ or ‘decent’ Muslims that conform to the value system as sold by the Global Ethic Foundation, and then they are the ‘Terrorists’, ‘Extremists’ or, in other words, the ‘Other’.

The Global Ethic Foundation clearly work on the view that any distinct group of people must have a set of attributes that are necessary to its identity and function; that these identities have an ‘essence’ of something that is fixed or is a static thing. It is an ‘essence’ that is far more confessional that the Global Ethic Foundation would have you believe - a capitalist confessionalism; a sacred fire within whose warmth all ‘decent’ people must want to share - materialism and money.

In our globalised world there is a general movement towards the emergence of dynamic and multifaceted identities and values. In a multicultural context, some people will choose to adopt a particular form of identity, others to live in a dual mode, and still others to create for themselves hybrid identities. Whilst the The Global Ethic Foundation’s concept of the ‘Cosmopolitan disposition’ seems superficially to want to embrace diversity, it’s essentialism is fundamentally at odds with the dialectics of identity we find in the real world. Presumably then, if we wish to understand the religious/ethical ‘Other’ we need to approach it from the Religious Studies angle to show how any essentialist claim is not in accord with those in other parts of their tradition, how it arose in historical, social, political, and gendered perspective, etc., not by appealing to mere economics. This is the role of good RE, and underpins the requirement of good subject knowledge. As a reflective RE teacher this visit was a ‘critical incident’, and it highlighted the importance of my own fluency in the ‘dialogue of identity’ - a pedagogical fluency in the dialogue of identity.

Marilyn Hamilton

We attended a very interesting lecture at the Global Ethics Institute in Tübingen where they are developing and delivering an important educational programme around German schools and across Europe working with teachers. The programme addresses the current humanitarian issue effecting them through the refugee crisis. The programme works alongside schools producing teaching material and assisting with lessons addressing cultural awareness and promoting, respect, tolerance, non-violence and justice through its World Citizen School projects working to create peace and harmony amongst German citizens and refugees from a variety of cultural backgrounds and is aiming to thereby stop radicalisation before it begins.

There are similar programmes running in Scottish schools as part of the Curriculum for Excellence, Responsible Citizens through overseas link-up programme’s and charitable initiatives run in school such as providing clothing for refugees coming to Scotland. However, it should be acknowledged that the refugee situation in Scotland cannot be compared with the crisis effecting Germany at this time.

Hannah Pyne
This talk, if being truly honest, left me a bit confused. While I can see what the Global ethic institute is trying to do, in some ways, I am not completely convinced by their approaches. I like the idea of drawing on similarities in beliefs and philosophies as I sometimes I feel as humans we spend too much time talking about what makes us different from others and not looking at what makes us similar. However, there maybe similarities in beliefs and philosophies but it is also important to point out they are not exactly the same. My impression was that the focus of the institute was to find overarching ethics that everyone shares. With different cultures, classes, histories etc. we run the risk of removing all this to focus on a 'global ethic'. For some, differences in beliefs and philosophies are fundamentally important and have shaped things that have occurred, these cannot be disregarded.

I think one thing I found difficult to understand was that while the resources looked interesting and led to discussion, there didn’t seem to be much research in the classroom to see what the benefits of this approach to beliefs and philosophies were. This approach of commonality seemed to worked in the refugee class we observed on Friday, when similarities and differences in cultures and faiths were explored, but differences were also discussed. It is also interesting having an approach that tries to combine religious and non-religious views, when the school system in Germany is set up to separate religious and non-religious views.

Rhianna Stewart

On Tuesday the 30th of May, we were invited to sit in on a talk about the basics, origins and perspectives of the Stiftung Weltethos, or the global ethics institute (GEI). The aims of the Weltethos-Institut are, according to their website, “to promote awareness of moral issues among international, economic and political actors and to facilitate meaningful intercultural dialogue”. The GEI boasts 30 years of research into the field of education with the aim of “Thinking deeper and acting better” and “seeing better, being better”. Whilst it was unclear how they achieve these wide spread goals, the team at the institute were enthusiastic about their work, in particular with focusing about a global dialogue that included dialogical reflection as a (practical) philosophy to apply global ethics, through teaching.

Their definition of global ethics focused upon a broad generalisation of all societies having the same fundamental values, which is shared between the religious and non-religious alike. Despite citing numerous times that their focus was upon teaching in the classroom, there was also a focus on including social entrepreneurs and intrapreneurs to take global values as a perspective and create new things based on these global values – however, there was no basic definition of what these values entailed exactly. As the talk progressed, it became clear that the GEI was only concerned to focus upon the internal drive of those involved in creating and helping towards the philosophical dialogue they had described early. However, surely to involve these types of entrepreneurs to create specific items for promotion of global values, they are expressing the external motivational rewards of seeing their product up for sale and reaping the benefits of such a product? At this point in the talk I became confused about their justification and assumption of all participants to come from an internal motivational source, another point to make, is how do they know that these participants are driven purely by intrinsic motivation? After studying the website of GEI and their papers which have been released, I have found no such data to back such a psychological claim.

The next step in the talk that became a cause of contention was the claim to “Human decency 101”. Whilst this claim itself is not new, it was the justification of using this as the basis to search for a common truth amongst people around the world and not applying this to extremists, or those who have been radicalised, rather, only to be used towards those who have been defined as ‘decent’. Closing this global dialogue to those who have been radicalised was intriguing to listen to, mainly on the basis that it was in contention with a talk at the University of Aberdeen by Jerry White I attended, which was on “Religion, Violence and Strategy: How to Stop Killing in God’s Name”. In this talk Jerry White (Nobel Peace Laureate and anti-mine campaigner) further examined and explained the methods in which to open conversation with extremists as a way to decrease threats to religion and society. Mr White
further explained his 25 years of experience in leading change-making campaigns to prevent mass destruction and to increase civilian security worldwide, working with both the United Nations and the United States’ State Department. As he is a social entrepreneur himself, I did find myself surprised that they had not tapped into his wealth of expertise and knowledge to help in their campaign at GEI for global ethics as a method to “thinking deeper and acting better”. In this talk Mr White explained the importance of keeping dialogue open with those who might be deemed ‘indecent’ according to ‘human decency 101’ as it kept them connected to society and to not further ostracise them and promote radicalisation of thought through this extraction from society. GEI seemed enthusiastic to build a culture of understanding, however they did not seem willing to introduce this to those who have already become ‘indecent’. Furthermore, they defined themselves as ‘pre-pre-prevention’. However, they did not further unpack how they did this. GEI further elaborated that their belief is that global ethics are not religious ethics, further emphasising their ability to ostracise and create ‘otherness’ across classrooms.

I was also surprised to learn that although they are well-funded, they have no formal research proof to show that what they preach does indeed work or have an impact, nor are they connected to those on a global scale who are also working towards the same goals, such as Mr White.

Whilst the GEI has some admirable goals, through their 30 years of work and research, they have yet to produce formalised results and a concrete plan on their efforts throughout schools. Aside from posters about world religions and some teaching ideas, there is still not formalised research about their ability to deepen diversity skills and whether or not their methods work. This lack of formalised data has left me sceptical of their efforts and products. Perhaps they should also look into co-ordinating their efforts with motivational entrepreneurs who have already managed to transform highly contentious issues into opportunities to unify communities and build stability and hope.

**Punting and City Tour in Tübingen**
3. Wednesday 31st May

School visit 1: Uhland-Gymnasium (upper secondary class Protestant RE)  
www.ug.tue.bw.schule.de/

Dr Graeme Nixon
This was a selective school for gifted pupils around 600 hundred pupils. Potential pupils are tested for entry (costing around 2000 euro) which is paid for by the state. One of our German colleagues children attend and were in Greece as part of the Classics curriculum during our visit. The lesson we observed was an ad hoc RE lesson due to pupil absence. It was therefore a very small class in which the teacher offered the pupils the chance to offer their views on RE in school. This was a mixed class of six sixteen year old pupils who would normally attend Protestant RE, Catholic RE and Ethics. Pupils have 2 RE lessons a week.

The atmosphere was very relaxed from the outset. The teacher presented a series of initial questions about the value of RE, or Ethics which the pupils answered in silence. These were then discussed and here are their responses:

Pupil 1: RE involves discussion of interesting questions. The best lessons involve cake! RE lessons play a small role in my education

Pupil 2: It’s part of my schedule. Switching to Ethics would not make a difference. RE lessons play a small role in my education.

Pupil 3: I’m Protestant baptised. I thought of switching to Ethics to be with my friends. I like the movies!

Pupil 4: I switched to Ethics but switched back to RE as it’s more interesting! RE is important as I go to church.

Pupil 5: I stayed with RE (the known). The best lessons discuss ethical problems.

Pupil 6: I attend RE because there’s no catering for Muslim pupils. The best lessons are philosophical or involve other religions.

The teacher summarised these views for us.

Next the pupils were invited to locate their views on RE on a circular board which had quadrants which allowed them to state the levels of agreement/disagreement with statements about the worth of RE:
Using various counters pupils were encouraged to discuss their placement and, if they felt it necessary, to move them if their views changed as a result of the discussion.

Here is a summary of their views:

- Religion is important to mediate rules, though not as important as German or Maths
- Ethics and other world religions should be taught in the same class
- The lack of grading (certification?) is not an issue.
- There should only be Ethics in schools
- Beliefs are private
- RE should allow pupils to critique religion
- There is a need for a general subject on all religions so that pupils can decide for themselves

The lesson was conducted in a relaxed and productive way. Doodling by pupils or chewing was not picked up on by the teacher. Given there were 9 adults in the room the lesson was remarkably fluent and pupils and the teacher confidently contributed. The lesson was skilfully led.

Dr David Smith

Matthew Forbes

Arriving at Uhland Gymnasium, one of the first impressions I felt that was the entrance felt quite bare. This impression continued throughout the building (though models of dragons created by pupils were on display when we moved deeper into the building). One contrast to Scottish education that I noticed early on was that pupils were permitted to hang around in the corridor outside class time. At least as far as the schools I have spent time in are concerned, pupils have been restricted to specific areas to the school or are not permitted in the building outside class time at all. Access to the building was also not restricted and it was an interesting contrast to Scottish schools where visitors need granted access to the building, sign in and wear identification. Perhaps incidents such as the Dunblane massacre has led to a much greater emphasis in security in British schools than it has elsewhere?

The dress code was also far more liberal than I am accustomed to, not only for the pupils, but also for teachers. This was a recurring observation throughout the schools we visited, yet despite the justification for dress codes that I have heard in Scottish schools, there did not appear to be any negative impact on the learning from the casual dress code.

It was explained to us that the school had IQ testing for special classes, which provided entry for highly gifted. There was testing for special “talent”. Though we did not explore this fully, the use of words “gifted” and “talented”, as well as IQ testing, felt to me to be a form of ability labelling, as I often find myself sceptical of “intelligence” testing.

The class teacher told us that there was a strong sense of school community, where everyone knows everyone. The pupils like it and there is a very tolerant atmosphere. From the short time we spent in the school, this positive atmosphere was evident both from the pupils and teacher in the class we observed and from those we saw in the wider school during the visit and even through more subtle factors in atmosphere such as a more cheerful arpeggio playing over the speakers as opposed to the abrasive sounding school bells I am used to hearing.

Pupils receive two lessons in RE per week as opposed to the one in Scotland. A difference I would think provides more room for subject exploration or perhaps a wider range of topics.

The lesson we observed was not a typical RE lesson. The pupils were aged 16/17 years and we were informed after that these pupils are among those perceived as “gifted”. We were also later informed that among those present, one had until recently been mute, and two were barred from attending a school trip after breaking into the school at night. From the engagement and positive participation from the lesson, I would never have guessed these things.
The classroom itself was also quite bare without pupil’s work displayed on the wall. I did wonder if this was normal, but visits to other schools during the week suggested that this was not the case, with pupil work being displayed in other schools both in corridors and in classrooms.

Some pupils did not turn up for the lesson and some time was spent waiting, whilst in my own experience I would be encouraged to start the lesson to avoid wasting time and affecting those who had turned up on time. No register was taken for the lesson. This again would be a drastic contrast to Scottish schools where such absences would need to be reported, not only to track attendance, but also for responsibilities toward the pupil’s safety.

The lesson eventually started with only six pupils. Despite not being their regular teacher, it was impressive how good a rapport the teacher had with the pupils. He could facilitate participation from all the pupils and created a very relaxed and caring atmosphere. The teacher also sat at the table with the pupils. This may be due to the small number of learners, but it felt positive to see the teacher down at the pupil’s level. I also noticed at this point that there was no teacher desk, suggesting a removal of a boundary that is more common in Scotland.

A discussion was held on how pupils felt about RE/Ethics as a subject and pupils explained why they did RE or Ethics and what they liked or disliked about the subject. Humorously some commented that they liked it when they could watch a video, a similar view I’ve heard expressed by pupils in Scotland and I wonder if German RE teacher also need to emphasise the relevance of videos that are being viewed to point out that learners are not just there to watch a movie. One of the pupils expressed that they considered switching from RE to Ethics because they were separated from their friends and another pupil, who was Muslim said she did Ethics because RE was not available for her religion (Islamic RE is not available in all schools). Both these views reflected one of my concerns from the discussion on Monday about segregating pupils based on faith and marginalising minority religions. Another notable comment about the topic was that one pupil did not really know what Ethics was, which was interesting since Religions could be viewed as a key source of ethical guidelines.

The board was placed upon the table and learners picked a marker to represent themselves such as Lego bricks or plastic sharks. Each had their own unique marker, which made the exercise feel very personalised and individual. They were to place a marker down for each question to express how much they agreed with a statement about the nature of studying RE/Ethics. They were not to discuss their responses while placing the markers, but they did discuss their views after. I found this task to be very creative and straightforward to implement. It felt very inclusive and would be the kind of task I would consider using in my own practice. The individuality of the markers also helped support the idea that everyone’s opinion was important and valued.

During the discussing, it was interesting to observe one girl was drawing in her notebook, without any intervention, yet this did not affect her participation. She could not only answer questions, but also volunteer responses to other learner’s views. In my own experience, I have been encouraged to stop any activities like these as they are viewed as hindering the learning, though this was evidently not the case for this pupil.

One particularly interesting response to the views discussed from one of the religious learners was that they felt religion should be taught, not just ethics. The view was that all pupils should do Ethics, but also there is also a need to discuss one’s own faith. School is a better context to do this than in a church setting as one can be more reflective and have a better exploration of religious questions. This suggested a positive impact of denominational RE that I had not considered, though it is notable that in contrast to the view, the previously mentioned Muslim pupil felt attending lessons to discuss her own faith was too personal a topic to discuss.

It was good to hear pupils discuss RE and Ethics in a positive light. Pupils felt it was good to hear about different viewpoints and said that since religion relates to morality, it is important to study it. One pupil also expressed the view that they would prefer one subject for all, as is the case in Scottish RMPS, because it is worth hearing all viewpoints.
While not a typical example of a lesson, I found the time spent in this classroom to be very positive and inclusive and it created a very positive impression of the relationship between teacher and pupil in the classroom.

Stewart Clelland

We arrived at a beautiful, modern, well-designed building that gave the impression more of a small University than that of a school. Wonderfully clean and practical, the school felt cosmopolitan, quiet and confidently informal. We had been told that this particular school was known as a highly tolerant and accepting place, and given the pleasant exchanges we witnessed between staff and students, this certainly appeared to be the case. Upon entering the classroom it was further explained that the school’s openness extended so far as to even having ‘boys who wear glasses and don’t play football’ living relatively hassle free lives. Suitably impressed, we were shown around a few more classrooms and couldn’t help but be struck by the high quality of student work on display around the school building. Overall the general aesthetic of the school was modern, slick, and inspired a feeling of aspiration and achievement.

It was quickly explained however, that our planned observation class would be somewhat artificial, as for one reason or another, this group of students didn’t really know each other, or, indeed, the teacher. It would be a bilingual class, and there would be only six students. There were five “highly talented” pupils and one female Muslim pupil; our guides explained that the school had a large concentration of what was termed ‘highly gifted’ students. Among the five, there would be one child described as a ‘mutist’, who hadn’t made any verbal communication until a few years ago. There would also be two pupils whose presence today was due solely to the fact that they had broken into the school and fallen asleep, hence the two were not allowed to go on the school trip that was currently underway. This background information however, was not immediately known to us until after the lesson had finished.

In a classroom filled with more teachers than students the lesson begun. The teacher had a calm and pleasant manner, but I don’t think it would be unfair to say that the lesson had no real start to it. It felt more like an informal meeting than a planned lesson. Children arrived late or not at all; there was no chastisements for lateness and ‘no search party’ scrambled for missing students. I could easily debate the lack of discipline here, but I actually found this quite refreshing. This incident was my first concrete example of the different ‘power-relationships’ at play between teacher and student in the Scottish and German systems. In Scotland there is clearly a requirement that the teacher dominates the room. It was clear in this school at least, a far more relaxed attitude was adopted. Furthermore, it became immediately obvious that there was no computer or indeed even a teacher’s desk to be found in the room. This was a very enlightening aspect of the learning environment on offer, even more so as I watched the effectiveness of the teacher’s interaction with the students. He explained that he was looking for intense discussion - I believe he achieved this. His success in this was certainly helped by his body language, demeanour, eye-line and more importantly, the fact that he sat amongst the students.

In Scotland, the teacher almost always has a desk, a safe space, a teacher zone, that students naturally know not to enter. In this class however, this is dispensed with to great effect. The teacher sacrifices their own safe space in order to achieve a safe space for their students. I found this very effective and inspiring - a critical instance.

This may even analogous to the question of the teacher’s neutrality - should the teacher be willing to forego their neutral ideological ‘safe-space’ and be prepare to inhabit the same opinions as the class, however dangerous? Is there a tension in the Scottish classroom between the teacher’s requirement for physical/behavioural dominance and a perceived ideological neutrality?

The observed lesson was not an RE lesson as such, but rather a lesson on the experiences of RE as a school subject. At first, the theme of the lesson seemed to bore the students and they appeared somewhat disengaged. However, this wasn’t really a problem within the context of the lesson and feels a bit unfair to critique as such. There was a young girl continually doodling, a student eating and a child sitting with a hat still on. All very trivial things that I only mention here because in Scotland this would be something the teacher would have to challenge. Petty indeed - on reflection, it is saddening how much of my time is wasted on such trivial matters.
However, the central aspect of this lesson I wish to discuss was the wonderfully effective main task. With the students working in a group, a circular grid pattern drawn on a piece of paper was placed on the table. A selection of toys/lego pieces were made available which the students selected to represent themselves. A worksheet with questions on the nature if their personal experiences with RE classes was given to the students and they used the lego pieces on the board to visually indicate their answers; debate ensued facilitated by the teacher. This visual representation of the students’ thoughts was very effective. In many ways the exercise had the appearance of a board game which seemed to really engage the children. Whilst generally I have a distaste towards the ‘gameafication’ of education, this activity worked exceedingly well - the board acted as a motor for discussion. I would however like to have seen the student’s directed to move the pieces about the board more as their options altered throughout the discussion. The activity whilst excellent, was possibly too long and too teacher led. It was however, impressive they spoke for so long on the topic, given the circumstances of the class. I was also impressed by the teacher’s confidence in the lack of writing in the period.

Furthermore, I found there was a beautiful metaphor in this lesson. The board appeared to me as a map or some kind of Grid Reference System. The objective of the lesson was to explore the student’s feeling on the development of their ethical orientation, to explore the value of their moral compass - the activity acted as a true ‘mind-map’ as it were.

Marilyn Hamilton
This school has a pupil roll of approximately 600 pupils. This school offers a programme for “highly gifted” children. To be accepted for the programme there is an entrance exam which is paid for by the state to ensure social inclusion and justice for all. The programme includes teaching classic subjects such as Greek & Latin from S1. They also accommodate and teach children considered ‘High ability” but who are unable to work in a regular lesson of large mixed abilities and therefore are taken out and schooled in smaller classes on the “gifted programme”. This in general in Scottish school only happens with pupils with Additional Support Learning needs such as developmental, behavioural issues.

RE is provided twice a week here. This school has a good reputation for meeting the individual needs of pupils and due to being small in size all pupils know each other.

As with most schools in Germany there is no school uniform policy and pupils and staff are dressed in casual attire such as jeans, converse, this would be exceptional in Scottish schools who generally have a school uniform policy which in itself promotes equity and inclusion. Casual dress in Scottish schools is generally kept for fund-raising as “dress-down” days.

The lesson we attended was with one of the “highly gifted” classes. However, as there was a school trip to Crete which most pupils were on, the class was made up of a mixed Catholic/Protestant RE & Ethics class of only 6 pupils age 16/17 years old. The teacher did not normally teach the pupils.

The lesson was based around four philosophical questions around RE. The pupils had to consider the questions and place their symbols on the target on the table depending on what they considered in their opinion on the question was. The teacher effectively facilitated the exercise and discussions.

Interestingly the Muslim girl in group did not feel to have Islam lesson was important to her as she attends classes at the mosque out with school. She did not want to learn about other religions either. The other pupils felt that everyone should do ethics lessons and should learn about religions in their own time. However felt that allowing discussion about religious beliefs would be more valuable in class which was interesting.

In conclusion this lesson could run the same in any Scottish RMPS lesson and is one which I will run in my own classes.
Hannah Pyne
The dynamic of this small group was very interesting. The children were from different classes and didn’t normally have a class together. They were students who for various reasons could not attend a school trip. It is interesting to see high ability students described as ‘challenging’. I think in Scotland, we associate ‘challenging’ with poor behaviour which can sometimes stem from struggling to understand and engage in lessons. Having extremely able students brings its own issues, particularly in making sure they are challenged and do not get bored. I know having been in a private school where students are ability tested, making sure the students are stretched can be indeed challenging. Early on in my placement I would completely underestimate how quickly some students would work through things and found having one extension task was not enough, with some students requiring two or three extension tasks within a lesson. The activity for this group was great. On a large piece of paper, a target was drawn with three rings. There were four questions to discuss and students were given 4 pieces of the lego, representing their view. They then had to place them on the target, with the inner ring being strongly agree and the outer ring being ‘disagree’. As the students discussed the questions, they could move their lego pieces further in or out of the target, if their view changed. The teacher did a great job of facilitating the discussion, adding alternative views that maybe students hadn’t considered, and most of the discussion was student led. This activity would be great to use in smaller class situations in Scotland on a range of topics, and this will differently be something I will try out.

The school itself looked modern and I liked how in the staff room there were sections for books/resources for each subject which any teacher could look at. There didn’t seem to be the same amount of resources in the classrooms as we are used to in Scotland. Classrooms are very basic, no teacher desk/area. This, I think demonstrates the different style of relationships teachers and students have in Germany. There were no computers in the classroom and the register was taken by pen and paper. There also was very limited things on the walls. In Scotland there are lots of displays and posters in the classrooms and classroom tend to be assigned to a teacher or subject.

Rhianna Stewart
This visit was to a school in Tübingen. It was a mixed sex, grammar school with a student population of 600/700. To enter this school students need to pass an IQ test as well as other tests. The school has special classes for the ‘gifted’, which parents decide whether or not to put their children into these special classes. As the pupils progress in the school, they also have the option to attend university classes. The teacher who we met emphasised these classes and his belief that they were good in helping pupils feel comfortable in classes and to relax be themselves more. He also emphasised that younger pupils have options to do their homework with pupils from older classes. He used this as a demonstration of the good relationship between pupils and the teachers as it helped foster a welcoming atmosphere where pupils greeted each other in the corridor.

The school was modern with a large, airy atrium, with the pupils work displayed in the corridors. There was no school uniform, and the pupils and teachers were dressed casually. In this school pupils have 2 lessons every week, 1 in RMPS and 1 in Ethics. The class that we observed was not a normal class for this teacher, the class he usually took were away on a trip to Greece as part of their Ancient Greek studies. The class we observed was small, only 6 pupils from different classes, some from Protestant and others from Ethics. Despite the teacher not knowing these pupils, he led the lesson calmly and with enthusiasm. The lesson was about the pupils’ experiences of RMPS. In comparison to Scottish lessons, there were no learning intentions or success criteria at the start or finish, however this added to the fluidity of the lesson and the pupils were still clear on what was expected of themselves. At the start the pupils answered some questions about why they attend R.E. or Ethics, why they switched from R.E. to Ethics, the best lessons in R.E./Ethics and whether or not religion plays an important or a small role in their lives. After the pupils had written down their answers they were given the option to tell us their answers in English or German, with the teacher helping them out. The majority of the pupils chose to do R.E. because it was part of their schedule, compulsory or they did not know what ethics was when they joined the school. In the case of one Muslim girl, she chose Ethics because R.E. for Islam does not exist as a subject yet. The majority of the pupils also stated that religion plays a small role in their lives. I found their answers on the role of religion in their lives to be similar to that expected from Scottish pupils.
After these discussions of the pupils’ answers, they were given 4 different statements: Religious Education/Ethics as a subject at school is as important as other subjects e.g. German or Chemistry; Religious Education/Ethics should just inform about the belief(s) of different religions; All pupils should attend common lessons in Ethics (whoever wants to, can attend religious education in his/her spare time); there should be no grades at school for Religious Education/Ethics. The pupils were given different types of counters and had to place their counter on a target sign, in the middle for strongly agree or in the outer rings for strongly disagree.

After a little bit of time passed, the teacher sat down with the pupils at their desks and talked/joked with them and asked questions about the position of their counters. His casual interaction with the pupils only increased the relaxed atmosphere of the class, and helped the pupils interact with each other. Despite not giving the pupils a time in which to complete this task, he was able to gauge when they were done due to the small numbers of the class. Despite the relaxed atmosphere, discussion seemed static and very teacher led, although this could have been due to the small numbers in the class and the lack of familiarity with the teacher and each other. Whilst the pupils generated really interesting discussion points, such as religion being the root of morality but not a way of life or a profession and school being better at reflecting upon religion rather than at a church, the teacher did not expand upon these lines of discussion, but instead acknowledged them before moving onto another pupil or a different answer to a question.

The lesson ended with the pupils’ answers to the final question, and a brief statement about the reasoning for their answers by the pupils.

With this observed lesson, I was struck with the similarities in answers given by the pupils in this school and the answers that would be given by pupils in Scotland. I was also intrigued by the anthropological approach to getting pupils to answer these questions and evoking discussion in contrast to the fully immersed interactions between pupils and teacher when helping them answer pre-discussion. In Scotland it would be interesting to evoke this lesson as topic for pupils at the end of different year groups to see the answers they would give in relation to similarity or contrast. I was also struck by the creation of ‘otherness’ between pupils who did Ethics and pupils who did R.E. The teacher described an incident in which a pupil was asking questions in an R.E. class and was told by other pupils to leave and attend Ethics instead as they were asking too many questions. The teacher elaborated that it was a challenge to create a ‘safe’ space for pupils to ask these questions in R.E. compared to Ethics. It would be interesting to find out whether or not this is a normal situation across R.E. and Ethics lessons due to the separation of both classes.

School visit 2: Wildermuth-Gymnasium (upper secondary classes in Ethics and Catholic RE)
www.wildermuth-gymnasium.de

Dr Graeme Nixon
This lesson was about Islam for about 15 senior pupils. The lesson smoothly and without any fuss or raised voice by the teacher. She used a photograph as the initial settling stimuli in order to contextualise the learning. Throughout the lesson the teacher maintained a good humoured rapport with the class. She was encouraging and inclusive. Previously the pupils had created posters on Islam and these were discussed so that the groups could learn from each other’s’ work. There was a very even balance of contributions.

A range of issues relating to Islam and RE were discussed. The teacher deployed a series of short videos followed by questions. Pupils evidenced a critical and nuanced grasp of the materials, and showed a willingness to critique the video presentations. The teacher concluded the lesson with the question ‘what is important for inter-religious dialogue?’ Some pupils felt that the teacher must themselves have a position in order for there to be a dialogue.

This was a the final lesson with the class which concluded with pupils being given a letter they had written to themselves at the beginning of the year, now supplemented with a few words of encouragement from the teacher.
Dr David Smith  
Matthew Forbes

In contrast to Uhland Gymnasium, the corridors of Wildermuth Gymnasium were decorated with the work of pupils. This is very like what we are used to seeing in Scotland and reflected more similarities between the two systems. Once more the atmosphere of the school was very positive, the corridor very lively, though perhaps a little boisterous too.

Sitting in on an Ethics lesson, there were many observations from Uhland Gymnasium which were repeated here. No register was taken, nor were any learning intentions or success criteria given. Both the learners and the teacher were dressed very casually. It was also notable that the posture of the learners was very casual and at one point a pupil even sat at a window sill. This relaxed attitude is a far cry from schools in Scotland and yet once more this did not appear to have any negative impact on the learning. The pupils clearly valued their learning and perhaps the general respect for teachers in Germany command compared to in the UK also has an impact here. This was an older class, so the pupil’s maturity may have had some impact on their behaviour. A further example of how casual the atmosphere was how pupils were free to get up and leave to go to the bathroom without asking permission. In Scottish schools, not only would permission be required, but in some cases, it might also be noted down. This suggested to me a much greater degree of trust between pupil and teacher.

The room itself had much more personality than the previous observed lesson and various examples of pupil’s work were on display. There were also indicators of the teacher’s personality and interests, with some animal posters on display in the room.

The focus of the lesson itself was on Social Justice and opened with a discussion on benefits from the state. I found it interesting to see political philosophy being included within the Ethics classroom as, at least within my own limited experience, I have not seen this area of philosophy explored very much within the Scottish curriculum.

The discussion on whether individuals should receive benefits from the state was discussed and it was chaired through questioning and volunteering answers. I found it noticeable that questioning was immediate, rather than giving thinking time, though learners supplied answers quickly nonetheless and were not shy away in doing so. I also found the philosophical approach to be very evident in the discussion. With premises and conclusions being written down as part of the task.

This was a double lesson, with the first part discussing Von Hayek’s view of winners and losers within society, and the second part exploring Rawls and the veil of ignorance. I felt this topic was something worth exploring and reflected real world issues the pupils could engage with and the discussion of human rights is one which I have found myself returning to regularly in my own lessons.

It was clear from how the lesson progressed that the learners understood the structure. The needed little direction and were clear on their expectations. Despite being a two hour lesson, the learners stayed engaged throughout, with only a few lagging toward the end. This was very impressive, particularly with the lesson taking place just before lunch, a time of day, where it can be difficult to hold learner’s attention.

Observation from this lesson that I noticed throughout the schools we visited was that the room had no smart boards or projectors for PowerPoints. While this at first appeared to suggest underfunding and lack of resources, the overhead projectors and chalkboards did the same job just as effectively and it made me reflect upon my own practice and how I should not become overly dependent on one method of delivering lessons.

Once again, the rapport between the teacher and pupils was very strong. Despite not being fluent in German, I could see the positive relationship with smiles and laughter from both parties throughout. The atmosphere was very pleasant in the classroom and had the discussion had the safe and comfortable feel to it that I would aim for in my own practice.

Marilyn Hamilton
• We observed Marcelle teach senior class age 17/18 (S6 equivalent) an Ethics lesson on State benefits are they a right and justice?
• It was interesting to notice that in both lesson there was no formal calling of register and checking that all pupils who were meant to be there were there.

• The pupils read abstract from socio philosopher Fredrick Von Hayek which they read allowed around class and discussed the argument for and against state benefits.

• They then contrasted the argument by reading “Theory of Justice” by John Rawls the political and moral philosopher’s position on social justice.

• This was a double period which allowed time for full and in-depth discussions and debates. This lesson ran very similar to a Philosophy lesson with senior pupils in a Scottish Higher Philosophy class.

• Pupils took it in turn to present back their groups discussions and conclusion. The lesson ran out of time, the final task would be carried forward to next lesson which was to put each of the theories into a letter to the other philosopher and explain their position.

• As an observer we had no translator in the lesson so I missed out in much of the lesson and the discussions through language barrier. However the lesson appeared to run well and the pupils were clearly involved and fully engaged through a long double period on a hot day.

**Hannah Pyne**

I attended a Catholic RE class. The lesson was all about Islam and Islamophobia. A few things that struck me were that: The teacher not the students moved classroom; there is very little on the walls, no computers or PowerPoint, everything is done with poster size pieces of paper and overhead projectors. If you had not of told me this was a Catholic RE class, I would have never guessed it was a confessional class. Most students were engaged in the class, the few that were not, instead of being told off, were asked questions about the topic during the discussion. Even though they appeared not to be listening, they were able to answer the questions. Not all students though were asked questions, certainly some students were more actively engaged than others.

An OHP was used at the start to ask opening questioning about what people from different religions many want to ask each other. Then the posters students had made from the previous lesson were put up around the room, so other students could go and read them. In this class there was a projector computer which was used to show 3 short clips about Islam in Germany, then discussion followed. The atmosphere in the class felt very relaxed, there were no jotters, and instead students had their own materials to write information down. Again the teacher did not go round and encouraged students to write things down, it seemed to be that the students had to take charge of what information they had gained.

After the lesson, the teacher did inform us that this was their last lesson of RE as they would be finishing school soon. The students picked the topic on Islam themselves. This idea of students picking units cropped up again when discussing lesson plans with one of the other student teachers, who students had picked Buddhism. CFE encourages student choice, however in Scotland, from what I have seen, this is implemented at task level not so much unit level.

With the fact it was the last lesson and a student chosen topic, how representative of a normal lesson this class was, I am unsure. Maybe if the topic was linked to Catholicism, there would be more confessional elements present.

**Rhianna Stewart**

This 2nd school was a short walk away from the 1st school we visited. In similarities, this school was also bright and open in design, but had more of the pupil’s work up on the walls in the corridor and in the classrooms themselves. The classroom we visited was covered in pupils’ work about Ethics and displayed the welcoming environment that the teacher wanted to create. This was another small class of 7 pupils of mixed gender. In similarities with the first lesson, this lesson did not have learning intentions or success criteria, however the pupils understood and knew the objective of the lesson and what was expected of them.
Once more this class displayed the fantastic relationship between pupils and their teacher, as well as the pupils being completely engaged throughout the long length of the lesson. I was particularly impressed with the way the pupils stayed focused throughout, particularly in relation to the difficulty of the topic, social justice. The pupils examined articles and theories by John Rawls and August von Hayek and were able to articulate their thoughts and opinions clearly throughout. The worksheets given out by the teacher demonstrated clear structure and informed the pupils what they needed to do. The pupils clearly understood what was expected of them from previous lessons and demonstrated a structured lesson that was impressive.

As the lesson progressed and led onto discussions, the teacher focused upon their opinions, questioning them and building upon their answers to explore new topics. The teacher also picked up upon the contribution of different pupils and made sure that all pupils contributed to the class discussions, either by asking for volunteers or requesting pupil’s answers through name.

Interestingly, the second final task required pupils to build a structured premise and create a definition based on the pupils’ development of their knowledge about the topic throughout the lesson. They took the definition further and used it as an outline to further discussion and develop the topic onto Neo-liberalism slogans, further critiquing the positions given.

During this lesson I was incredibly impressed with the relationship the teacher had with his pupils. He demonstrated an openness and safe space that is often perceived as a desirable goal within the teaching classroom in Scotland. Despite the informal atmosphere of the classroom, the pupils still had a high expectation of themselves and the work that was expected of them. This pedagogical teaching practice is one that I have not encountered before, but was very efficient in this scenario. I was also struck by the sophistication of the materials examined in this ethics lesson, Hayek and Rawls, and the ability of the pupils to grasp the material. This relationship was truly inspirational and has offered me further options to ponder in methods of developing relationships with future pupils.

University seminar Protestant Theology with Professor. Dr. Friedrich Schweitzer:
Creation and Evolution – a challenge for RE didactics

www.uni-tuebingen.de/fakultaeten/evangelisch-theologische-fakultaet/aktuelles/aktuelles.html

Matthew Forbes
Our visit to the Theologicum with Professor Schweitzer highlighted a lot of the differences in training teachers in Religious Education between Germany and Scotland. The building itself was a converted former
hospital and despite the room we spent the evening in being a former hospital ward, it felt like any other seminar room one might find in an old university. On route to this room we were given a brief glimpse of the Theologicum’s library, where a strict silence was observed, creating as atmosphere that gave an air of sacredness to the collection of texts.

The room we spent the evening in held a mixture of teacher trainees and pastors in training. I found it very interesting that the two groups are mixed and the denominational nature of German RE was evident from this. In discussion with a German student teacher later in the week, I learned that while pastors are expected to take RE classes, they can take a pay cut if they do not wish to do so. This idea of the church actively teaching in schools differs greatly from what we find in Scotland. Sometimes RMPS teachers come under suspicion of indoctrinating children from parents who fear a religious agenda. I would find it very interesting hear what German parents would think of this arrangement. Perhaps the denominational nature and the alternative of studying Ethics reduces the fears of individual agendas being pushed on learners.

While the initial presentations by Dr Nixon and Dr Smith were on the Scottish Curriculum which we were already familiar with, it was interesting to observe what how the German students responded to the understanding of RMPS. There were very reasonable questions asked such as how successful a non-confessional approach was and how much influence the Church has on the RMPS curriculum.

The discussion we were set to have was to be about approaches to teaching the creation story in Genesis, our groups topic of discussion was more on differences between Scottish and German education. This discussion was still very productive and the genuine interest of the students here was very positive as they took full advantage to ask questions they might not get opportunity to ask later.

A question was posed by Prof. Schweitzer toward the end of the session, but unfortunately we did not get time to discuss a full answer. He expressed reservations about which candidates for teacher training in RMPS are selected. Having introduced ourselves earlier, he had noted that rather than theologians our group contained anthropologists, psychologists and sociologists and questioned how such backgrounds qualified us to discuss religion. Students should expect to learn from an expert and with our own background, how can they trust in our teaching? While the philosophical approach of RMPS may have given some credibility to some of our backgrounds, the fact that few of us had qualifications in religion made us unfit to teach about it.

This seems like a reasonable concern because one should expect someone teaching a topic to have a good measure of subject knowledge. I feel it important defend my of my own educational background as a sociologist, having studied the causes and significance of secularisation, changes in the role religion throughout history and what different theorists argue to be the purpose of religion. I have also studied the role played by the Protestant Church in shaping modern Scotland (the context that is emphasised in RMPS). These areas of study might differ from what is studied in Theology, but I would argue that they still provide an important insight to the relevance of religion in contemporary society. While I do not have any qualifications in Anthropology and Psychology, I would expect my peers from these fields to have their own insights into the relationship between humans and religion that are informed by their varied academic backgrounds.

I would argue that the main concern here arises from what we think teachers should be. While the CfE emphasises the idea of teachers as learners in their own rights, perhaps the German system expects them to be primarily experts? It may be the case that one system prefers favours subject knowledge, while the other personal search. Scottish teachers are expected to constantly build upon our existing knowledge, rather than to be viewed as fountains of limitless knowledge. I would also ask if by this logic that one needs to be an expert on the subject, if students in Protestant Theology are in any way qualified to teach about other faiths with any credibility.

Marilyn Hamilton

- This evening seminar was interesting to meet and discuss with the German student Teachers on 5 year MA programme about the differences in RE Teaching in Scottish schools. The Teachers were very keen to know the differences in how we teach RE and particularly around the teacher qualifications of not being specialised Theologians and covering so many different religions and cross curricular topics.
Informative talks by Graeme and David explained some background of Scottish curriculum for RE to the German student teachers. The main difference appears to be the non-confessional approach to religious education in Scotland, where pupils are encouraged to take a philosophical approach to belief and science, to consider ultimate questions and whilst learning about religion also learning from religion, encouraging Scottish pupils the opportunity for personal search, what does it mean for them.

Hannah Pyne
The evening session turned into a bit of question and answer session, with German students enquiring about how we train as teachers in Scotland. In our group there was a lot of interest about how many teachers are in one school. They were surprised how few RE teachers there were per department. They also were interested in the way we discussed a range of views within one class.

I am aware that in another group the question was asked about teachers of RMPS coming from other backgrounds such as Philosophy and not studying theology. A discussion was had as RMPS teachers after about this. I feel for the German system, where classes are confessional, then yes having a theology background is likely to be important as you are teaching about the faith almost from within. As RMPS in Scotland is a non-confessional system, then I do not feel it is necessary to have a theology background. However having done two theology modules as part of my degree, it was good to see how things were interpreted from a different perspective. I have often described Religious Studies as being outside religion looking in and theology as being in the religion looking out. It was useful in my degree to see both sides as if I were to teach a child with a strong faith, I could possibly have more of an understanding of their perspective.

What I feel maybe is more important is that as Philosophy becomes a more popular and important part of our subject, that a module of Philosophy should be covered as well as a Religious studies module. For example those like myself coming from a RS/Sociology background should have a module of Philosophy within their studies. This doesn’t need to be within the undergrad degree, but maybe as part of the teacher training. Likewise those from a pure Philosophy background should maybe have a module in RS. Within the teacher training, very little content is covered, due to lack of time. However for example, Aberdeen University have both RS and Philosophy degrees, so lectures could be an optional extras for students who do not feel they have a huge amount of one discipline. I have one module of Philosophy within my degree, but looking back at my training, I wish I attended extra Philosophy lectures to get a better grounding for teaching. In Germany, teacher training is 18 months long and does include context. In comparison, the PGDE is only 9 months worth of training. I also like that the Professors in Germany still teach while training teachers. It is a good way for them to keep up to date with what is going on in schools. I know the Professors at Aberdeen do a great job in keeping up to date with what is going on in schools, but it is not quite the same as being in the field so to speak. Still teaching would give lecturers an opportunity to try new things out and pass it on to their trainees.

Also Secondary and Primary training is separate in Germany. In Scotland, many areas are combined. While in principle this is a strength as the two levels can work together, there are too many lectures where Secondary education is hardly mentioned and the focus and skills discussed are more suited for Primary teachers. Students in Germany also get paid while training. As someone who had to work weekends while on placement to cover costs (I had to live away from Aberdeen for part of my placement), having a small payment, even if when on placement would have been well received. You can claim expenses back but you have to pay out first and then claim back, and if like me you have gone from undergrad straight into training you don't have a lot funds to pay out first before claiming back. I know of students who have dropped out because they cannot afford to carry on training. When there is issue with recruitment in the profession, losing people for financial reasons only is a shame.
4. Thursday 1\textsuperscript{st} June
School Visit 3 Albert-Einstein-Gymnasium Reutlingen (Meeting pupils of lower secondary RE classes)
http://www.aeg.rt.bw.schule.de/

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Einstein.png}
\caption{Albert Einstein}
\end{figure}

\textbf{Dr Graeme Nixon}
The lesson began with the class singing a welcoming song! The lesson involved twenty pupils and the main object of the lesson was to consider the role of social media and its impact on teenagers. A stimulus overhead projector slide of a girl wearing a sad mask was used and pupils were asked to suggest a headline for the image. This was followed by a story about a girl who reflected on the role of social media on her life and wellbeing, which included the phrase ‘we dance as if on a huge stage’.

Pupils in the class described social media as superficial. The issues of trust and self-image were discussed. During the lesson there was some fidgeting of the class, but the teacher adeptly dealt with any inattention, deploying humour, and hand gestures, very effectively.

Pupils were asked to consider the various pressures on themselves, the groups and factors that pull on them. The image of hands pulling at them was used. Then they were asked if there was a hand that simply held them (presumably this was the religious element to the lesson?).

Here are some pupil responses to the lesson’s key question about the role of outside influences:

- You need friends who accept you as you are
- What happens when the outside ‘hands’ let go?
- Is there a hand that will catch us?
- God loves us as we are
- We need to throw the masks away

\textbf{Dr David Smith}
\textbf{Matthew Forbes}
Outside the Gymnasium we could see various large sculptures including a bear and a set of gears. It was explained that these were created by school leavers and that each year’s art is left on display at the school, giving a sense of value to pupil’s work.

The inside of the building was full of character. A large collection of fossils was on display including some very large ammonites and a small ichthyosaurus. Further into the building were cases with various animals
including rodents, fish and reptiles. There was a lot to see and a lot to take in and this gave the impression of a well-funded school.

The classroom we entered in contrast to this was relatively bare. This was a very strange contrast, though it was later explained that this was due to the pupils who regularly use this room having additional needs and too many wall displays would be distracting. The bare room was an exception and not regular practice. The class was composed of twenty-one pupils aged around 13 years, who welcomed us with song setting a highly positive atmosphere from the start, some also greeting us as we entered. This positivity remained throughout, though dealing with younger learners there were some examples of low level disruption during the lesson.

As with the lessons the previous day, the lesson made use of overhead projector and print outs as the means of presentation. Large font print outs were also placed on the board during the lesson. I found this means of presenting quite effective as time was not wasted writing on the board and the teacher did not need to turn her back on the class to put the information up. Once more it was evident that smart boards and PowerPoint, while effective are not necessarily required to meet a high standard of lesson. As discussed in the previous lessons dress code was casual, but I found it noteworthy that some pupils were permitted to wear hats in the classroom, something that which would be absolutely forbidden in a Scottish classroom.

The class teacher read the story that the lesson worked around and the class listened attentively. We later learned that the story was of the teachers own composition. Story-telling to facilitate discussion is something also used in Scottish schools and I could see yet another similarity between the two despite the many previously noted differences.

The lesson revolved around mental wellbeing and there was a discussion about how we present ourselves versus the expression of feelings. The story told involved social media, creating a relatable context for the pupils. Once more I could see practice that would not be out of place in a Scottish school.

There were a few instances where the pupils on one side of the room were unsettled. This group occasionally talked over the lesson and needed spoken to on more than one occasion, though the teacher never had to raise her voice, with a quiet word, facial expression or hand gesture being enough. I asked later if there was a behaviour management policy in place or if behaviour management is based on teacher’s discretion. The teacher explained that it was at her discretion and that though this part of the class were more challenging as they were being integrated into this class after previously being separated due to additional support needs.

It was explained that there were also social workers for pupils with these needs in the school and if major concerns did arise these could be taken to them or to a pupil’s form teacher. Interestingly she mentioned that these pupils often would apologise for behaviour after lessons. Once more this suggested an air of respect and good rapport between teacher and pupil and again a very positive and happy atmosphere was visible, with praise for positive contributions and a very open and safe environment.

There was discussion of identifying the idea of being pulled in different directions, stimulated by a picture of a person being pulled in multiple directions by different hands and this question was related to the pupil’s own lives and the idea of conflicting influences and personas of who we are made the lesson very much focused from the child’s perspective. The discussion of coping mechanisms also demonstrated care for learner’s wellbeing. Learners also reflected on an image of a single hand being held out and reflected on this image, with ideas of a hand of God influencing us, bringing a religious context into the lesson.

Marilyn Hamilton

- The school has a pupil roll of around 930. We had the pleasure to observe a mixed ability class of 21 (age approx 12/13) made up of two groups of pupils. The teacher had taught the girls in the class since P5, 6 & 7 so knew the girls well. The boys had joined the class in an integration & inclusion project. The boys had some behavioural issues which the project is aiming to address through inclusion. The teacher explained that it was still very early days in the programme and that the class were not yet full-
integrated. This was very evident in class layout with all the girls sitting together on one side of the class and all the boys sitting together in the opposite side.

- The lesson was based around the effect of social media and mental health, having to “act” or “put a face on” to always be happy. The class discuss pressure of social media and being accepted.

- Boys did appear disengaged and have a separate discussion going on around “fidget-spinner” and then again with a wasp at the window. Teacher carries on until a quiet moment when girls are working and discreetly speaks to the boys which was good. Teacher very enthusiastic and encouraging to class, includes the boys by asking direct questions which was very good. This is a difficult class of mixed ability but the teacher managed the lesson and engaged the pupils well. The discussions were good. Teacher facilitated discussions and lesson well and drew final thoughts to a close by asking class who they thought the hands in the picture on the OHP were? this was left open for the pupils personal thoughts.

- It was noted that the classroom walls were bare of any pupils work. When asked during discussions at the end of the lesson with the teacher, she explained that this was deliberate as it is considered that having the walls busy with course work can add to distraction for the ASN boys and that the plainness of the walls helps them concentrate better on lesson. This is an ongoing project.

- In conclusion this lesson could run very similarly in any Scottish secondary school and is most similar to the mixed ability classes we have in Scotland.

**Hannah Pyne**

First thing that struck me was how early it was, lessons had already begun when we arrived. The class we observed was a much more mixed ability cohort, described as a ‘trial’. The lessons, like in the classes before, are long, effectively double lessons. Yet from what has been observed, the students seem able to be engaged through the majority of that time. Also, again like other lessons we have observed, the classroom was very bare in regards to wall displays and equipment. Only a OHP and pre-prepared posters along with a chalk board were used. In the UK there is a big push on using technology in the classroom which is great for developing skills and keeping the lesson engaging, but even the constant use of PowerPoint can become repetitive. It is nice to see that successful learning can occur without always having to use technology. Throughout the class, even when there were moments of disruptiveness, the teacher never once raised her voice or ‘told’ a child off. Instead methods such as standing near certain students, or getting down on the children’s level and talking to them was enough to prevent things from escalating. I like this approach as it shows respect and understanding to the students who are then more likely in return, going to behave. Again there was no school uniform and while this being a Protestant RE class, there appeared to be nothing overtly confessional and interesting topics where explored (social media and identity).

**Rhianna Stewart**

Similar to the other schools, this one was a mixed sex school with wide corridors, and light, airy rooms. The class contained 21 pupils in total, a mixture of male and female. We were told that this class was a mixture of pupils from the current school and pupils from ‘special’ classes, and to expect behavioural issues. The classroom that we were in was actually used by the pupils from the ‘special’ classes and did not contain much in the way of decoration or pupil work on the wall, however, this would probably be to help pupils focus and decrease the amount of potential distractions, similar to the MICAS (Mainstream, Integration, of Children on the Autistic Spectrum.) base in Dyce Academy, which has little decoration inside, to help pupils concentrate on the work at hand.

The lesson itself focused upon the societal pressures of being okay, opening with a picture that the pupils had to assign a title to. This grab at the start was very effective, with the pupils engaging well with the task. After taking different ideas from the pupils she introduced the topic of societal pressures of being okay and stating that you were okay, considering the use of social media it was an incredibly rich and relevant topic that the pupils were obviously engaged with and could relate to on a personal level.

Throughout the lesson the teacher circulated amongst the pupils, checking for understanding and dealing with behavioural issues. She demonstrated her knowledge of the pupils by using simple, yet effective
behavioural management strategies that did now draw attention to the pupils for example, a simple hand gesture to indicate silence, a simple finger point for pupils to sit back down, all the while continuing the lesson but maintaining eye contact with the pupil. I did find the teachers’ attention to be mainly focused upon one side of the classroom, with her body language directed towards this side for the majority of the class, leaving the other side alone. Although, this could also be perceived as a method to keep the pupils on that side concentrated on their work.

As the lesson developed she used pupil’s answers and developed them to continue the discussion, as well as relating the tasks back to the pupils own lives, e.g. have they ever been in a similar situation? Ultimately developing the flow lesson in a semi-structured manner for pupils to consider whether or not a human being can live without being externally influenced? She also developed the lesson in such a manner that demonstrated a considerable application of health and wellbeing and allowed pupils a safe space to explore questions, such as can you say to yourself “I’m okay” without any restrictions? And when you are not always okay, how do you deal with it?

I found this lesson incredibly applicable to lessons taught in Scotland, and also explored the mental health of the pupils themselves, as well as providing a safe space for pupils to talk about such sensitive issues in. This normalisation of mental health issues is key in allowing children and young adults to address them appropriately, acknowledge their existence and dispel the stigmatisation surrounding them.

The final ending of the lesson, if God’s hands exist, then what would they change? Was left open to allow pupils to critically reflect upon this question in relation to the lesson and to further their discussions outside of the classroom.

Once more, this was a lesson in which I was impressed with the relationship the teacher had with her pupils, and the practical use of behavioural management techniques. She also demonstrated her own teaching ability in creating an open, safe space in which the pupils felt very comfortable discussing mental health issues, even with strangers sitting at the back of the room observing the lesson.

Visit to Bebenhausen Monastery
http://www.kloster-bebenhausen.de/en/home/
5. Friday 2nd June
School Visit 4. Mathilde Weber Vocational School (Teaching RE in refugee classes)

http://www.mws.tue.bw.schule.de/

Dr Graeme Nixon
This lesson took place in a vocational school with a refugee class. This may not always be the best fit for these pupils as they may have academic ambitions. Often these children are also traumatised by their life experiences. In discussion with the teacher he explained that teachers are given little training to deal with the very complex issues involved in teaching these pupils.

The class we observed included Somalian, Sunni, Shia, Serbian, Afghan and Syrian children. At the beginning a 16 year old from Syria introduced himself in English. The teacher later explained that his family had died travelling to Germany, and that this pupil had lived in the woods, and also been held in detention.

The lesson was an opportunity to reflect on the qualities of a good host and good guest. Pupils were divided into groups and then had to role play a host/guest situation with the third groups evaluating how they had been in these roles. The lesson concluded with reflection on the story of the Good Samaritan (Islamic version) and its message of inclusion and unconditional compassion.

This was an inspiring lesson. Led with great skill, positivity and love. It was a humbling and moving experience. The content was handled with a deftness and compassion that all teachers should exhibit. The ease with which the lesson was led belies the fact that this teacher has worked incredibly hard with this class since they arrived in Germany to deal with trauma, bullying, integration and cultural tensions (out with and within the class). The teacher is available to them outside the school day. The lesson itself was, for me, a powerful modernising of the Good Samaritan parable!

Dr David Smith
Matthew Forbes
Before sitting in on the lesson with a refugee class at Mathilde Weber Vocational School, we were given a brief overview of the education provided for refugee children and some of the challenges learners face, one of the key barriers being language. As such, the first six months of learning is focused solely on learning German. While in Scottish schools, teachers are expected to provide support for learners with English as an additional language, the need to accommodate full classes of learners with a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, many of whom are not fluent in German made me appreciate how much hard work and effort must go toward supporting these young learners.

The hardship faced by the children has led some to suffer from PTSD and it was evident that the teacher briefing us cared deeply about the children under his care. The school had six classes of refugees, and these pupils attended vocational schools rather than gymnasiums.
As opposed to the standard format of German RE, the class was composed of individuals from multiple faiths and from multiple countries. The READY Project focuses on diversity and the was so much diversity to observe from this lesson. Mixing learners and not segregating them based on religion was perhaps more akin to Scottish RMPS, but from observing the lesson and learning about the vast array of backgrounds and needs of the learners, this was still so very different to what I have grown accustomed to.

The class was comprised of fourteen learners and entering the room, I observed that they were as lively as any other class would be, despite the individual backstories and struggles that each had faced and it was a potent reminder that these were young people, just like any others.

One of the pupils who spoke some English introduced himself to our group. He was from Syria and we were later briefed on some of the personal traumas he has overcome to get to where he was today, including the loss of his family and time spent imprisoned. Having reflected on this, it was impressive both from this pupil and others how much they valued their education. There were no real behaviour issues during the lesson, other than a few occasions where the teacher had to stop other talking over each other. It was impressive how focused they were.

All of the lessons we had observed this week had contained a very positive atmosphere and this was no exception. The pupils were cheerful and smiley and the teacher was so expressive and warm in the way he spoke to pupils, that many of the interactions required no translation to understand the tone. Even when addressing pupils talking over each other, a tone of reasoning and respect was evident as he tapped his ears to emphasise the importance of listening. The rapport between this teacher and the young people in his care was outstanding, with expressive faces and gestures emphasising the opinions discussed and on numerous occasions, the teacher going down to eye level to speak to individuals. It was also notable that discussion was open. Hands were not raised to answer questions, but this did not lead to a free for all in conversation and the learners participated effectively.

The discussion of the lesson was about hosts and guests. Learners were to think about the rules and customs expected of those hosting or those being hosted. To do this the class was split into three groups; hosts, guests, and observers. The hosts and hosts were to act out a scenario of a visit, while the third group took notes of anything customs they might observe differently in their home countries.

To prepare, the guests and hosts were sent out the room to prepare and the level of trust required to send pupils out the room yet more evidence for how much value the pupils placed on their learning.

The two groups that had left the room and returned and role played a scenario of one family visiting another, observing various customs such as taking off shoes at the door, shaking hands, offering beverages and eating a meal together. I found this would be an effective way of addressing diversity as while social customs may vary, there were plenty of examples of practices that all recognised as good etiquette. Learners were also able to share and celebrate their own cultural differences in an open and safe environment. Some differences were observed based on geographical origin, such as the learners from Pakistan commenting that guests would not be expected to remove their shoes. There were also various views expressed about who would shake hands with who. While several differences were discussed none were singled out as more or less valid and everyone’s customs came across as having equal value. The use of the third group also allowed for a creative example of peer feedback.

The sharing of common values was also discussed with many of the key ideas of what makes a good guest or host in the learners home countries being the same or similar to those in Germany. This reflected some of what we had discussed with the Global Ethics Institute though here it felt like the differences were also celebrated positively.

The use of role playing seems an effective way for such a class to learn as coming from such a variety of backgrounds with a variety of languages, learners may find other forms of communication very challenging, yet even as a non-German speaking group of observers, we were able to understand what was going on with minimal translation. Peer feedback from evaluating group.
After the roleplaying exercise, the learners looked at slides which related the idea of guests and hosts to the pupils own situation as refugees. This technique related the topic from the lesson to the learners own personal circumstances. Personal feelings were discussed, such as whether learners wanted to return home one day or find work and stay in Germany.

A discussion of what made good hosts or guests was once more explored, but in the context of those fleeing from harm. A contrast was discussed between hospitality and humanity and this idea of humanity was used to link the topic to religion. The learners read the story of the Good Samaritan, with the concept of loving your neighbour feeling so very relevant to the pupil’s own background and why people might feel compelled to help each other. A side note to embracing diversity could be made in the teacher using both the Christian “Jesus” and the Islamic “Isa”, in his discussion of the story, suggesting an idea that either faith’s interpretation was valid and we learned that in the next lesson, learners would be discussing stories from Islam with similar messages. Again, this echoes the Global Ethic Institute’s idea of sharing common ideas from different religions, but here we could observe a practical implication.

Our post lesson discussion with the teacher provided us with opportunity to gain further insight into the strategies used to provide refugee children education at the school. As previously stated learners came from a diverse range of backgrounds and had not all originated from the same country. Included in the class were pupils from Syria, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia and Serbia, and there had been instances of cultural tensions between individuals. One example cited was tension between the two Somali girls in the class and the Serbian girl. However, there was little observed during the lesson that might have indicated this, suggesting that the style of learning that focused on socialisation was having an impact. The teacher went as far as saying he viewed the lessons as a form of social work and that school needs to be more than just learning subjects.

In explaining how the refugee classes integrate with the rest of the school, he explain that they had tried providing the same educational experience as other children, but this had been unsuccessful. One of these reasons being the language barrier. The teacher explained that written texts need to simplified to make them more accessible. However, there is opportunity to attend lessons in other subjects where they might flourish. I was curious if keeping the refugees in separate classes might single them out and when I asked about their interactions with the rest of the school we were told that the refugee classes do not socialise much with German pupils. While this might have some implications about how other pupils embrace diversity, within the class the way diversity was explored and aided the lesson was still very effective and positive.

An interesting point of discussion from this conversation was the role of religion for the teacher. He said that an Ethics teacher would not be allowed to teach a class like the one we observed as some manner of faith was required. It did not matter the pupil shared the same religion as long as there was religious belief in some form. Contrary to the Scottish curriculum, where religious belief is not required to teach RMPS, this was another example of how the teacher’s own background is emphasised in how RE is taught.

While I could not fully agree with the idea that a non-religious individual could not teach RE as effectively, there were examples within this teacher’s practice where it was evident that a genuine religious faith had helped strengthen the bond between teacher and pupil. There was a sense of trust and if the pupils ask it of him, the teacher would pray for the pupils or bless them, regardless of what their own religious background. Within most contexts the idea of a teacher bringing their faith into practice within the classroom to a group of learners with their own individual faiths would sound questionable, but in this context, it appears to have strengthened the trust between teacher and learner.

Observing this lesson was an incredibly moving experience. Here we had witnessed a practitioner who was working tirelessly toward providing as much opportunity as he could for the learners in his care. The rapport between teacher and pupil, from the expressive gestures, to the general positive atmosphere conveyed the genuine passion for what he was doing. As far as diversity was concerned, you could not only see it between the pupils in the classroom, but also in the wider context of the school as education had been restructured to meet the needs of the learners based upon their individual backgrounds. This was an inspiring lesson to observe and one which I will remember throughout my career.
**Stewart Clelland**

*Hot-pants and Headscarves: The Dialectics of Identity.*

The ‘Othering’ phenomena is something that is clearly reproduced, reinforced, and experienced by people all around the world, regardless of their race, language, gender, class, nationality, or religion. In classrooms made up of truly diverse groups of children, what are the challenges faced by RE teachers and how do they tackle the ‘Othering’ impulse? With this in mind we visited the Mathilde Weber Vocational School, a dual system school, which offers its pupils work apprenticeships three days a week. Here we were lucky enough to observe one such truly diverse classroom.

With a total of 14 pupils aged between sixteen to nineteen years old, from a variety of different countries, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria, the lesson we sat in on was concerned with the traditional and culturally relevant issues that surround being a good ‘Host’ and ‘Guest’. Prior to the lesson, we met with the class teacher who explained the difficulties he faced when teaching a classroom filled with refugee children. He was, in fact, a Maths teacher, but due to the particular nature of the German RE system, he had taken over the teaching of RE to these children. In the German confessional approach to RE, all children of a particular faith are taught RE by a teacher of their own faith. In the case of this class, an Islamic RE teacher was required, but was, however, not available. The next option was an Ethics teacher. The children rejected an Ethics teacher, as they requested that their Religious Education by taught by someone of faith, any faith. As a Catholic, the Math teacher volunteered to take over the role.

Over coffee, he informed us of the many difficulties the children had faced. Many of them suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome that could be triggered at any moment. He explained how that for some their parents had died making the dangerous passage to Europe; some had been sleeping in the woods and how some where involved in criminal activities. He explained that the police where at the school almost every day. He explained how they faced the ever present prospect of being deported; he reminded everyone that they were, in fact, still children. Moreover, it was pointed out that the refugee children were not fully integrated with the other children in the school. The nature of the racial, cultural, ethnic tensions that were a major problem when the class first came together, were at times, still an issue. Clearly, much of his time had been spent in a pastoral role, working to bring these children together in an environment that was conducive to learning. Later as we observed the lesson, his success in this was evident. It was truly heart-warming to see the interaction between the students themselves and the teacher. The groundwork that he must have put into this group of youngsters was wonderfully inspiring. With such a diverse and traumatised group of young people, to see the friendly and respectful discourse between them was humbling. To witness a young Roma girl in hot pants laugh and joke with a young Somali girl in Hijab, dressed head to tie in black, was a beautiful and touchingly humane experience.

Clearly, simply bringing young people from different backgrounds together physically is not sufficient to reduce prejudice and develop positive relations; the teacher needs to create the conditions for all children to develop what has been termed ‘intercultural competence’. In this sense, the UN suggest pedagogical tools such as cultural products, critical cultural incidents, qualitative research methods, and role-plays that all serve as instruments to make students cross-culturally aware and avoid reductionist and essentialist views regarding identity. These pedagogical tools were implemented admirably in this lesson. Personally, I aspire to always focusing on adopting a pedagogy which starts in the world of the child; which then considers the social world in which the child is situated; then the religious (Concentric circles considered in succession). Ultimately, my focus is always on the ‘Personal Search’ of the Scottish Curriculum; this lesson was a masterclass in that approach. Whilst the lesson was in a language unknown to me, the level of reflection amongst the students was palpable. Never has the material resonated so clearly with myself- this was done by a focus on the context of real world examples, shared experiences - a focus on the human, rather than the notion of a ‘fixed identity’. A differentiation of Identity was allowed, even planned for (guest/host). The manner in which the teacher was able to tailor this approach to let the topic / subject matter become truly relevant to his students was a critical instance for me. I always aim to use praise effectively in the classroom and promotes an atmosphere of trust and openness. I am always working towards engaging with all my pupils through discussion and good questioning techniques; rarely have I seen this achieved with such effectiveness as I did in this lesson. So much so, that the children took the task seriously and engaged perfectly. The role-play was, in fact, quite lengthy and all the students seemed to enjoy themselves and think carefully about what they were doing. Furthermore, it became clear that the
traditional summative approach would prove to be a barrier to learning in this classroom. Later it was, in fact, revealed that the teacher had refused to impose a grading structure on the class. Instead, differentiation was found by child’s application to the discussion. Less confident students were able to contribute and where encouraged, while the most confident contributed actively to discussions. Discussions, in which pupils are led to be reflective are particularly productive for the learner’s engagement in the learning. It is also an invaluable opportunity to recognise achievement and celebrate success, as was done throughout this lesson. This formative dialogue based pedagogy harks back to traditional story telling modes of knowledge transmission, again something that might claim to be a ‘shared global experience’ and transcends all sorts of cultural barriers.

The genius of this lesson was the focus on truly universal concerns; we all ‘break bread’, in fact there is no more of traditional and culturally vital arena in which we communicate and transmit knowledge than over a meal. This lesson worked because rather than focussing on a supposed ‘Global Ethic’, it focused on the existence of shared Global ‘experiences’ in which ones of own value system comes to the fore. Having guests and being a good host translates to any language or cultural context - it is a fundamental shared and tradition-based cultural experience into which the student can explore their own values and the values of others. In teaching a classroom of refugee children, taking the lesson back to the ‘Home’ was a poignant and beautiful analogy - fundamentally, a child (human even) centred approach.

The teacher’s use of slapstick humour and exaggerated facial expression was used to great effect. Another truly universal cultural experience - slapstick humour; the teacher played the Hanwurst to great effect. As the lesson progressed, the teacher skilfully drew an analogy between the student’s own experience as refugees in Germany, with the guest and host role-play just completed. Again, this was deeply moving moment in the lesson in which the atmosphere completely changed and the student self-reflection was palpable. This inspired transition was an example of the personal search aspect that is so important in the Scottish system. The linking of Hospitality and Humanity was deeply evocative.

Throughout the lesson the dialectics of identity was investigated - Guest/Host, Native/ Foreigners, Story-teller/listener, Mother-tongue/ German, Victim/Hero, Rights/Responsibilities. Is this key in intercultural dialogue?

In the final part of the lesson the teacher introduced the story of the Good Samaritan. In an inspired touch, he worked with the Islamic version of the story. I think it would be fair to say never has the story of the Good Samaritan resonated so much. At the end of the lesson, the students, so used to being written off, lined up at the door to shake the hand of their teacher before the end of the day. I found this whole lesson a deeply emotional experience. Afterwards speaking to the teacher, he explained that the student ask him to pray for them, and that they are proud to have their teacher pray for them. He explained that he blesses the children, but not with the cross. He explain that they discuss how the Mother Mary looks down on them. In any other context I would be appalled by this, but here today and in this context, I was moved beyond words. There was a pureness and humanity to his actions that transcended the politics of belief.

At the some point my observations ceased from being an academic exercise and my thoughts went to one of my second year students that had chosen to take their own life during the last few weeks of my placement. I started to think about my doubts over the role of RE in schools, as well as my lessons and abilities. The question of whether there was anything more that I could have done had been hanging over me for the last few weeks. I left this class with a renewed and clearer outlook on these questions.
Marilyn Hamilton

- Vocational schools appear to play an important part in German education by way of preparing young people who will not follow an academic route into Higher education for the world of work. They work in partnership with local business and industry to do vocational training whilst supporting the young people aged 16-18 years old through vocational based qualifications. The Mathilde Weber Vocational school like many schools in Germany have been affected by the arrival of refugees into the country.
- The school has a pupil roll of approx 900 of which 100+ are refugees. This is a complex situation which appears to being handled sensitively.
- Given the difficulties facing pupil behaviour of the German nationals many of whom according to the class teacher do not want to be in school and as such bring challenges to the education system. It has not been possible at this stage to integrate the refugees with German pupils in Vocational schools.
- The state has taken the decision that the 16+ pupils who arrive in the country as refugees with no educational evidence from their home country, must initially attend vocational schools until they are literate in German and integrated with German culture. At which stage they have the opportunity to progress to further educational routes.
- The class we had the privilege to observe had 14 pupils around 16-18 years old from varied countries including, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia & Serbia.
- They were a happy and well integrated class and welcomed their Scottish visitors with warm smiles.
- Jörn Hauf is the class teacher. Jörn has made inspirational progress in working with these young people since they arrived in the Tübingen area. He explained that it had been a difficult journey settling the pupils who have some of the most unimaginable and traumatic backgrounds and suffer from post traumatic stress which can trigger and set them back at any time. This, mixed with cultural differences and language barriers, has meant that integrating the class has taken time and patience. Jörn and his teaching colleagues appear to have done an amazing and inspirational job in educating and integrating these pupils not only providing them with stability in education but also pastoral support out with school hours when required. The passion and care for the pupils clearly evident and to be admired.
- The schools work closely in partnership with The Global Ethics unit in Tübingen who provide educational materials, advice and support across schools in Germany in tackling the sensitive and difficult issues surrounding the changes in the political demographics in the area surrounding the influx of refugees and educating German pupils on becoming Global citizens and welcoming and supporting their guests as well as tackling such sensitive issues surrounding awareness of Islamic radicalisation. Jörn mentioned how grateful they are for the help and support that they receive from the Global Ethics project.
- The double period lesson was based around German and other cultures in being a guest and being a host. As a class there was much light hearted discussion around what are expectations of guests from a host and as a guest from their hosts. The class was split into groups of guests, hosts and observers. They then acted out a role play where the hosts welcomed the guests and demonstrated what etiquette should be followed in German culture. The observers fed back on what went well and could be improved upon. This was done in a warm and fun way and much discussion was had around cultural differences and discussions were facilitated by the class teacher.
• Jörn smoothly moved this further on to discuss expectations of refugees entering a host country and the expectations of a host country Germany opening its doors to refugees. Again, the discussions received full class participation and open discussion. Many of the pupils discussed their desire to return to their own country where their heart was and about not giving up hope that they will one day return. Whilst some expressed their desire to make Germany their home to be educated and settle.

• As visitors removed from the humanitarian crisis faced by many European countries, and only experiencing it on news on TV or reading about it in the papers, to experience this discussion first hand was extremely powerful and emotional.

• Jörn tied the lesson together by reading the story of the Good Samaritan, the Christian parable which teaches about helping others even your enemies. At no time has the parable been more powerful or appropriate as it was in that lesson.

In summary, this was an inspirational lesson which could be easily taught in any Scottish school and whilst not only linking with the refugee crisis but can apply to looking at other people excluded from today’s society in Scotland such as the homeless, traveller people and prostitutes. This lesson was truly child centred and demonstrated everything which should be in a perfect lesson.

Hannah Pyne
This class was a class made up of refugee children around the age of 15-16. In Germany the first 6 months for refugees are spent learning German, then another 12 months carry out normal lessons as a group before being integrated into mainstream schooling. In the UK as a whole, there have been much fewer refugee children and they are integrated straight into mainstream schooling. While the argument may be that there is not enough resources, or that it helps integration, I feel the German way of getting these children to grasp the language first helps with integration more as they are less likely to feel isolated. This class was of great credit to the German system and the teacher himself who carried out an inclusive and engaging class and who’s style made the students in his care feel cared for. In return the students were willing to learn. Again, it is another example the great relationships we had observed all week between students and teachers.

This lesson was a double period, with the first lesson focusing on citizenship while the later part focused on RE. There were a range of activities, including role play, observation and work sheets, all things that would take place in the Scottish classroom. What was particular impressive was the way the material linked together. To begin with, the class discussed what was expected of a good guest and a good host. A group of student were sent out to be the guest, another group where to be the hosts while the third group observed and made notes. The groups had to act out how they would behave (depending on whether they were being a host or a guest). In this class were a range of students from different countries and backgrounds. The role play allowed them to discuss and work out what they felt were important features of being a guest/host. The teacher very much took a back seat and allowed the students the freedom to portray the task how they felt. The teacher offered guidance when asked but did not dictate how things should be done.

After the role play and following discussion, the next task looked at Germany being a host country and the refugees being guest. The work sheet asked the students to fill in what the host/guest would do in their country and then they had to compare this to what happens in Germany. Students were able to compare and contrast German practices with practices from their native country. Again this was a great way of including all students as not one culture was favoured in the discussions. Finally the class moved onto discuss why Germany wanted to help referees and linked the idea of helping people with the story of the Good Samaritan. The story was not read out as ‘this is what Christians believe’ but simply as an explanation to why some people use their faith as a reason to help others. The following lesson, a Muslim story with a similar meaning would be looked out.

Watching this lesson made me reflect on the real impact as teachers we can have. Even with everything these children had been through, they were enjoying and engaging in learning, thanks to a dedicated and inspiring teacher. No matter what country we teach in, and how different our education systems across the world may be, I feel this is what we aim to as teachers: being able to inspire and have a positive impact on children’s lives. Having a conversation with the teacher after the class, again it became apparent the relationships were slightly different in Germany. All the students knew the teacher was from a religious background and in fact some asked to be included in prays or ask for blessings. Some teachers in Scotland who do hold a faith are a) reluctant to outright talk about their personal faith and b) would be unlikely to have the relationship where students would asked to be prayed for. As someone who has been raised in a
faith, I am very aware of students assuming I would be biased, so have always given a more neutral stance of agnosticism if students have asked me about my beliefs. Other teachers often tell their pupils they are not allowed to tell them their beliefs. Maybe with there being more RE trained teachers in Germany, it is more common for teachers to be seen as religious. Many RE teachers in Scotland are non-religious, so sometimes I wonder whether those who do have faith, discuss this little due to the subject being non-confessional and for the concern of coming across as being confessional.

Rhianna Stewart

Mathilde Weber Vocational School is a school with a dual system for pupils, being an apprentice for 3 days a week and being in school for 2 days a week. If the pupils do well, then they can advance to a higher level with both paths. Such apprenticeships can include working in a care home, being a housekeeper, working as a florist, and being a nursery teacher, amongst others. Whilst at school, pupils can take lessons in psychology and biotechnology.

Before going into the class we had a discussion with the main teacher for this class, the class was a refugee class. These pupils originally go through a year of German classes in order to learn the language, before entering the dual system. The class we observed had a total of 14 pupils between the ages of 16 to 19 years old, with a variety of different religions, and from different countries, such as Pakistan, Afghanistan, Somalia and Syria. The class was a social studies class which lasted around 1 hour and 30 minutes. The main focus of the class was upon being a good host and being a good guest.

What struck me about this lesson was the relationship between the teacher and his pupils, he was able to create a light atmosphere through the use of role play for activities and body language whilst teaching. His relationship with his pupils was incredible. For the first activity, the pupils formed groups and demonstrated the different ways that they would be good hosts or guests from their own countries, with a discussion at the end based on the different ways they completed this task. The next task involved going over ‘guest rules’ and what the pupils believed the rules to be in relation towards being a good guest/host in their own country and then comparing it to what it is like going into somebody’s house in Germany. The pupils had a lively discussion and were able to draw comparisons and similarities.

The next section, “Hospitality 2” discussed the pupils’ belief of the role of Germany as being a good host for refugees and the role of refugees as being good guests. Despite the potential sensitivity of this topic the pupils had an interesting discussion and were able to lay down the different rules that they believed applied to the guests and the host. Furthermore, the teacher was able to develop the discussion towards the pupils interest in going back home. This in itself was fascinating, and also demonstrated the trust that the pupils had with their teacher and each other, as they were able to discuss this. The pupils had a mixture of answers, with a couple of Somalian girls stating, “I would like to stay, as there is no war and terrorism in Germany”, to a Syrian boy saying that he would like to go back to Syria as he believed that paradise was not yet lost.

In a final conclusion for the lesson the teacher rounded everything up and applied it to the pupils themselves, what was the point of this lesson? To get the pupils to discuss the ways in which democracy can change and the basis of human and religious rights in relation to the way that we treat each other.

What was most intriguing about this lesson was the use of the Good Samaritan story at the end to discuss human rights and the different ways that religions say we should treat each other. Throughout the telling of this lesson the pupils were very quiet and completely engaged with the text. I also noted that whilst reading the text aloud, the teacher switched between the German and Arabic name for Jesus. This was incredibly fascinating as the use of this subtle technique allowed the pupils to become more normalised with the blending of different cultures in the classroom.

After the lesson concluded we sat down with the teacher and discussed what it was like for himself with the class. As the pupils were from very different cultural and religious background, it was particularly fascinating that there was not any tensions in the room, however there originally was. It was only through the teacher implementing different techniques and hard work was he able to create the friendly atmosphere that we were able to witness that day. He also elaborated that with classes such as these the teacher takes on more of a pastoral role and becomes substitute parents for those in their class. He had given the pupils his phone
number and they were allowed to call him anytime they had an episode or just for a chat, demonstrating the bond he was able to develop with his pupils.

He also added that the pupils were unwilling to accept an ethics teacher, but would accept a protestant or a catholic teacher because they had a religious background and would actively discuss the differences and similarities in their religions, for example, the pupils would ask him how he prayed. This religious authority could give the pupils answers in the way that they believed an ethics teacher would not be able to give them. As he elaborated, the pupils did not care what religion the teacher was from, as long as they had a religious belief.

His interactions with the pupils was also intriguing. He would often ask them if they would like him to pray for him or if they would like him to bless them, and despite the differences in religion, they would often ask for this. This method is one that I have not seen before and is normally actively discouraged due to the implications that you could be seen as an impartial teacher in relation to a religion. This impartial, almost anthropological approach is often used to allow pupils to develop their own points of view about religion in the Scottish classroom.

At the end of our discussion the teacher said a few words which struck me as an aspiring ethos for all teachers to implement and construct their pedagogical foundation around, inside and outside the classroom, “I want to work with their hearts and personality, to give them a home, get them to think and give them a future”. Whilst I cannot sing enough praises for this teacher and his incredible work with these young adults, his lesson was a model I will aspire to and construct my future lessons and methodology around.

Field trip to Buttenhausen / Swabian Alb: Jewish Life in rural Germany
http://www.muensingen.com/Media/Attraktionen/Juedisches-Museum-Buttenhausen

Some Key Insights/Reflections/Observations

- The ‘Othering’ phenomena is reproduced, reinforced, and experienced by people all around the world, regardless of their race, language, gender, class, nationality, or religion.

- The Othering phenomena is exclusionary and creates ‘power over’ relationships that create hierarchies of superiority and inferiority amounts people. Power is gained in the ‘Othering’ tendency.

- This tendency implies that there exists an interplay of socially constructed and reconstructed subjectivities of the "Self" and the "Other" that continuously struggles for power, resistance, and agency. In this context, the question of identities – national, cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic, gender-based or consumer-based – has assumed a renewed importance for individuals and groups who see globalisation and cultural change as a threat to their identities: a tension exists between the dynamic hybridisation of Identities and the desire for a tradition-based austerity in Identity. How does RE deal with this tension? By viewing itself in relation to the Dialectics of Identity

- Without contraries there is no progression’- RE as the Dialectics of Identity?

- Some model desire to embrace diversity, but their essentialist views of Identity (Religion/ethics) is fundamentally at odds with the actual dialectics of identity we find in the real world. Essentialism and Reductivism prevent Diversity.

- In our Globalised world there is a general trend towards the emergence of dynamic and multifaceted identities. In a multicultural context, some people will choose to adopt a particular form of identity, others to live in a dual mode, and still others to create for themselves hybrid identities. Therefore, a key requirement for RE Teachers is a pedagogical fluency in the dialogue of identity. RE must continuously direct students to investigate and challenge essentialist or reductionist claims regarding
Identity (Religion, Values and ethics) in order to negate the ‘Othering’ phenomena. This can be done in the context of real world examples, shared experience - a focus on the human, rather than the notion of a ‘fixed identity’ - allow for the differentiation of Identity? Plan for it?

- The RE Teacher must remove the corrosive interplay of overpowering, resistance, and agency that we find naturally arising in the active process involved with the Dialectics of Identity). How? By being focused on promoting what Hegel called the aufheben - the process "self-sublation". synergies?

- Is it possible that by adopting the Hegelian Dialectic as a teaching pedagogy, the aufheben can channel the corrosive but natural will towards overpowering, resistance, and agency that leads to the ‘Othering’ phenomena into a positive force? Hegel says that aufheben has a doubled meaning: it means both to cancel (or negate) and to preserve at the same time; through the dialectical agency of the Teacher, the corrosive tension between the Self and Other may be starved of its oxygen -synthesis is achieved and move towards tolerance is closer.

- Aufheben is the motor by which the dialectic classroom functions.

- Is the Role of the RE teacher to bear witness to the Aufheben?

- Only in the promotion of synthesis or rather Aufheben can the RE teacher truly be said to remain ‘neutral’.

- German Grammar schools focus less on controlling children in the same way as the UK (such as lack of uniform, lack of behaviour codes etc.)

- While confessional lessons take place, from what was witnessed they do not appear to be heavily confessional, other faiths and ideas are explored. Would be interesting to see whether students could access both RE and ethics instead of one or another.

- There does not appear to be the same concerns about ability grouping and inclusion methods in Germany compared to Scotland where inclusion is a big focus.

- You do not always need technology and short lessons to keep classes engaged and interested.

- German RE teachers for Grammar schools have longer training but their training is very similar. In Scotland there is less training but a more diverse range of fields teachers have come from.