

EMERGING VOICES

**Breathing spaces for Values, Beliefs and Faiths
in the Further Education Curriculum**

An LSIS-REC-FBFE Project

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Where is this project coming from?

Its starting point is an FE college environment which wants the best for its students, and knows that that has to be achieved within firm budgeting constraints. The student body is itself diverse from one college to another, as well as within individual colleges. Differences in religious and cultural background, gender sensitivity, financial security and degrees of self-esteem are real. Whether full-time or part-time, the curriculum pathways are very varied, and the collegial 'together'-time is often very limited. Teaching staff are hard pressed to meet their immediate contractual obligations within their given hours of work.

Its starting point is a distinctive feature of this country's education. Since publicly funded education began in England, an explicit opportunity has been provided for children and young people in all schools 5 – 18 yrs, to give attention to beliefs. This has taken the form of the subject traditionally named Religious Education. There is no such statutory obligation in FE colleges, although Values, Beliefs and Faiths are significant elements within SMSC. Whatever the nomenclature, what's desirable is that those who are studying in an FE environment should not be denied the opportunity to extend their understanding of the beliefs and values that shape their own and others' lives. Critical reflection in this area can stand them in good stead for their personal and professional lives ahead.

The report which follows is an initial exploration of the potential for how this priority can be pursued within existing FE provision, concentrating on the strengthening of what's already there, rather than creating an additional burden. It begins with an initial overview of relevant options within popular award pathways. It then sets out some worked examples of curriculum materials. And it ends with a question about the usefulness of an assessed module in this area.

The project was funded by the Learning and Skills Improvement Service through the RE Council of England & Wales (REC) and the National Council of Faiths and Beliefs in Further Education (FBFE). The project team has drawn on expertise from both organisations, working closely with colleagues in a range of FE colleges.

PART ONE

An initial viewing of openings for SMSC within existing FE pathways

This was carried out in the REC's 'Scoping Project' on provision for supporting the spiritual and moral development of students aged 16 to 19 studying in colleges of further education. Between December 2008 and July 2009 six FE colleges were visited, on each visit except the last (which took place after the end of term) a range of staff and students were interviewed. Staff interviewed included two college principals, three college chaplains, other senior managers with responsibilities involving both curriculum and pastoral care, and members of teaching staff.

Whilst six colleges is too small a number to constitute the sort of sample from which conclusions can be reliably drawn, and the selection of colleges was by no means random, in all of them it was apparent that there is tremendous commitment to students' well-being and a desire to deliver a curriculum that achieves more than the narrow skills training and resulting qualifications that some outsiders might assume to be the primary concern of FE colleges.

However, it was also clear from these six visits that FE colleges work under conditions that are significantly different to the school situation and that therefore no simple transference of programmes designed to fit within a school curriculum was likely to prove appealing to FE colleges.

The report made seven recommendations which were:

1. The REC should consider whether to campaign for legislative changes for new statutory requirements on FE colleges in relation to religious education and spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
2. The REC should locate individuals within key organisations willing to cooperate with the REC in its work with FE.

3. The REC, in collaboration with fbfe, should consider the possibility of mounting a campaign to increase awareness of the effectiveness of multifaith chaplaincy, and to offer support in the selection, appointment and management of chaplains.

4. The REC, in collaboration with fbfe, should consider whether it is appropriate to devise and issue advice to FE colleges about good practice in relation to tutorials.

5. The REC should consider whether it can bid for funds first to audit where issues of faith, beliefs and values education (FBVE) arise, or should arise, in the various courses offered to 16 - 19 students, and subsequently to work on material to support teaching in these areas.

6. The REC should raise with government (it is not clear whether that should be the then Department for Children Schools and Families or the Department for Business Innovation & Skills) the question of how colleges can fund courses in religious education that do not lead to qualifications.

7. The REC needs to look closely at the Personal Learning and Thinking Skills (PLTS) currently in use in schools and due to be adopted as the 'personal and social development learning' required for all students involved in 'foundation learning.'

Of these recommendations some may no longer be practical, others may need to wait for the overall educational landscape under the current government to become clearer. But today's conference is mainly about reporting on significant progress on recommendation 5.

Locating places in the FE college curriculum where new support materials might meet or extend opportunities for SMSC already in institutional priorities and syllabus specifications.

This second scoping report looked primarily at the qualifications taken by students in the 16 - 19 age range in FE colleges with a view to identifying units of work where opportunities for exploring issues of values, beliefs and faiths (VBF) might be enhanced by new materials or different teaching approaches. The process proved difficult because of the number and range of courses taken in FE colleges and their internal complexity. This made a comprehensive survey unfeasible. To illustrate the extent of this situation, using the most recent Ofqual statistics bulletin:

There are currently 11,412 available regulated Vocational Qualifications These comprise 7,478 QCF qualifications (66 per cent of available Vocational Qualifications), 2,326 VRQs (20 per cent), 1,518 NVQs (13 percent) and 90 Occupational Qualifications (1 per cent) ...During the last quarter 853 new Vocational Qualifications were added to the list of available regulated qualifications. These included 852 QCF qualifications and one NVQ. (*Vocational Qualifications Quarterly* Ofqual's latest Statistics Bulletin, Jan to Mar 2011)

As well as there being a lot of qualifications, many of the specifications offer alternative units or pathways and the size of the resulting documentation is often daunting, for example, seven out of twenty-eight 'BTEC Firsts ' specifications were analysed in some detail. These specifications are made available as A4 documents with:

applied science, 334 pages
art and design, 306 pages
business, 380 pages
health and social care, 184 pages
information technology, 438 pages
performing arts, 438 pages
Sport, 311 pages.

The problem with existing curriculum mapping relating to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

With all BTEC specifications there is curriculum mapping regarding spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, but no information was forthcoming from EDEXCEL as to any guidance given to those who produced the specifications with regard to how the concepts of 'spiritual', 'moral', 'social' and 'cultural' are to be understood. Also, there is no evidence of guidance for those who teach these courses as to what expectations there are as to the introduction or development of these elements with students.

Most significantly of all, and this was confirmed in an email exchange with EDEXCEL, there is no requirement on providers to pay any regard to opportunities for SMSC development. It appears that, because SMSC development is nominally a statutory requirement for schools, examining bodies incorporate cursory references to it in courses that may be taken by students still at school, or on school rolls.

Considerations in identifying areas of work for exemplary development of exploration of faith, beliefs and values

In considering which courses and units to work with, advice was given by senior managers within FE colleges and within awarding bodies. It was that the QCF (Qualifications and Curriculum Framework) qualifications are the ones to home in on because:

- a) All vocational qualifications must now move towards this common framework
- b) All QCF approved specifications are written to a common template
- c) The learning outcomes and assessment criteria for all QCF approved units can be found on the Ofqual register available and are searchable by unit title at <http://register.ofqual.gov.uk>

Level 2 qualifications are the most widely taken by the 16 to 18 age group. The latest Ofqual statistics bulletin shows that QCF achievements in the first quarter of 2011 broke down thus: entry level 6%, level one 21%, level two 49%, level three 11%, levels four to eight 3% (but it must be remembered that these are not just 16 to 18 students).

Senior college managers and awarding bodies personnel spoken with all insisted that any SMSC development work aimed at existing qualifications will be wasted if it does not understand the pre-eminence of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria of the units. It became evident that any effort to produce SMSC materials would need to be done in collaboration with lecturers currently teaching the specific units for use with which the new material would be prepared.

A parallel development - accrediting students' work in tutorial and enrichment activities

An issue raised by colleges visited during the scoping project was the difficulty financing courses that are not accredited, or sustaining student interest in courses that are not seen as having currency when it comes to job-seeking or obtaining places within higher education. This is an issue that FE colleges share with schools and something that the REC has recently resolved to investigate to see whether a satisfactory resolution of the problem can be found. Progress to date with this issue is summarised in the Appendix at the end of this booklet.

PART TWO

Towards a curriculum approach: some material exemplification

Introduction

In what follows there are three sets of curriculum guidance materials which have been developed in collaboration with Croydon, Kingston, Runshaw and St Helens colleges. They have been designed to show how the SMSC (Spiritual Moral Social and Cultural) dimensions can be incorporated into existing curricular provision. In developing this project we have considered the spiritual element to reside in contexts where learners have opportunities to explore their interior lives, values and attitudes to others.

SMSC is a duty in the compulsory phases of education and it is recognized in the learning and skills sector that there is an over-arching responsibility to equip learners for the opportunities and expectations of life beyond college. So, for instance, awareness of how to live in a pluralist society, diverse in culture religion and ethnicity, is emerging as an important skill required by employers. There are opportunities in the tutorial, enrichment and course curricula to provide learners with opportunities to discuss and develop knowledge of contemporary social and moral issues, and to refine their own views

In preparing these examples we have been acutely aware of the pressures on time and resources in FE settings. In recognition of this we have worked on the principles of light touch and deep possibilities. We have used rich stimuli as starting points and focused on the importance of individual voices having their say. Except in the minority of institutions with a specific faith or religious character, it is not the function of learning and skills providers to promote any particular religious or non-religious belief, or any one set of moral teachings. But as educational settings all colleges have a responsibility to help learners become aware of, and to learn how to challenge, ignorance, superficial judgements and prejudice.

The Emerging Voices programme shows how SMSC development can be incorporated into *an enrichment programme*. At Croydon College colleagues who

had already worked up an extensive and well resourced enrichment programme recognized that their learners needed additional practice in listening to one another, in learning how to disagree and in recognizing and challenging stereotypes. These new materials can be used as in an integrated format or as stand-alone input. At Runshaw and St Helens Colleges, in recognizing that *tutorial time* would be significantly cut, the approach took the form of students being asked to prepare a range of questions in response to some clips developed by All Faiths and None (AFAN: www.afan.uk.net). The initial stimulus in the given examples provided opportunities for learners to reflect and to articulate their ideas without the need for major additional input from tutors.

At Kingston College the focus was on increasing SMSC opportunities through examining the spiritual and moral elements of the *independent enquiry aspect of the Humanities GCSE course*. Here, we found opportunities for students to work with other departments, opening up discussions and reflection on the moral dimensions of business and media.

Thus through these examples we hope to show that it is possible for SMSC to grow, and with this the scope for attention to values, beliefs and faiths. From the outset it is important to recognize the outstanding practice that is already in place in these and many other colleges. The thinking behind this supplementary work has been to show how what is already in place can be developed by means of some additional prompts and suggestions which facilitate progression. So, whether the need is for additional support in tutorial and enrichment programmes, or in existing courses, there are examples to show how the engagement, enjoyment and attainment of all learners can be increased. In developing these materials with colleagues from FE settings a number of wider themes emerged:

- ❖ There is significant alignment between good SMSC and PLTS (Personal, Learning and Thinking Skills) development. The PLTS are an important element of the whole curriculum and are embedded in the BTEC specifications.

- ❖ The Assessment Objectives in the controlled assessment for the Humanities GCSE require additional insight and empathy to achieve the higher grades. Again, SMSC is critical to securing these.
- ❖ Ofsted expects to see high levels of student engagement and involvement in aspects of college life, including expressing ideas about the curriculum. These examples show how learner voice can become the driver for deep and reflective responses to moral and social issues.
- ❖ The new public sector equality duty is placing responsibility on all public authorities to consider what they are doing to tackle discrimination, harassment and victimization. Paying attention to the SMSC dimensions of college life can make a significant contribution to this.
- ❖ There is also a substantial body of evidence that young people themselves want opportunities to reflect on the big questions of purpose, meaning and integrating successfully with others (*Making Space for Faith* 2007).
- ❖ And last, but not least, our experience is developing this work with colleagues is that it is a much more interesting way of working.

We are grateful to the following colleagues who have created the dialogue which has allowed these materials to be developed: Paul Cuff Runshaw College, Paul Johnson St Helens College, Di Layzelle and Fay Johnson Croydon College, Andrew Williams, Maria Endacott-Heser and Helen Sketchley from Kingston College.

Emerging Voices: Croydon College

This project has been designed to develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) aspects of the curriculum. There are already considerable elements of SMSC work undertaken by the college and the purpose of the project was to see how this might be extended.

Croydon College is the only FE College in the process of being accredited for expressing the values of the UN Rights of the Child. It has a long-standing and highly recognized programme of enrichment and social commitment opportunities through Cultural Awareness Month, International Women's Day, Refugee Week and World Aids Day. There was considerable evidence that students are actively engaged in these programmes. In building on this work it was agreed with colleagues that students needed more opportunities to develop skills in the following:

- ❖ to learn how to listen carefully
- ❖ to recognize and respect different points of view of others, and agree to disagree respectfully
- ❖ to recognize stereotyping.

The following exercises provide the structure for the skills of insight, empathy and recognition of difference to be drawn out, acknowledged and developed.

The Importance of Listening

If we compare how frequently we use listening skills in everyday life we find that it is used 60% of the time, compared with 20% for speaking, 12% for reading and 8% for writing. Listening consists not only of hearing but also of paying attention, understanding, retaining and recalling, as well as possibly responding.

Listening has been defined as the process by which spoken language is converted to meaning in the mind. It is particularly important to develop listening because the ability to relate to other people in a positive way, to respond to their ideas, depends on our ability to listen to them. Being able to listen is also an important aspect of

spirituality. The following exercises help pupils to listen more effectively to themselves and to those around them.

A: JUST A MINUTE

Background

Active listening involves giving your full attention to the other person rather than thinking about what you might say next. This exercise, which is in three parts, allows students to experiment with the ways they ignore people and then to examine their use of body language as both conscious and unconscious means of communication. As skills increase, the listener tries to uncover the real meaning of what is being expressed by reflecting back the content and feeling of what has been said.

This exercise can generate a lot of noise. You should watch for any students who may misinterpret the experience of being ignored even when they know that is the purpose of the activity. It is very important that everyone experiences 'the cold shoulder'.

Provide a selection of suitable topics about which young people can choose to talk for one or two minutes eg 'What I did in the holidays; my favourite sport; how I would spend a million pounds; the best story in the world etc.' It may be necessary to discuss with learners beforehand how we can show through our body language that we are ignoring someone and how we show that we are paying attention.

Part 1: Take no notice

Choose a topic you can talk about for a minute or two. Once everybody has chosen, each person in turn will be asked to talk. While that person is talking, their partner should show that they are not listening.

'A' can begin now.

After a minute, stop talking. Before the next person speaks, take a few seconds to think about what has been happening and how you feel. Consider the ways used to show that your partner was not paying attention.

'B' now takes turn to talk while 'A' ignores you. Again, talk for one minute. Before we go any further, let's spend a short time considering what has been happening.

- How did we ignore each other?
- What did it feel like to be ignored?
- What did we do to try to get attention and make ourselves heard?

Part 2: Pay Attention

The emphasis now changes to the methods of showing that we are giving attention. It may be necessary to demonstrate appropriate body language eg leaning forward, eye contact, nodding the head, saying 'mmm' etc.

'A' now chooses a topic which may be the same as last time or a new one. It is 'B's task to listen, not to ask questions or to speak. When it is your turn to listen, make sure that you give your full attention.

'A' can start talking now.

After a minute, stop talking and take a few moments to think about what was done to gain the listener's attention and how attention was being given.

Now it is 'B's turn to talk and 'A's to listen. 'A' must concentrate on giving their total attention to what is being said. Stop talking after a minute.

Let's discuss what has been happening and how you felt during the talking and listening.

Drawing out the learning

One follow-up might be to compile a list of things we can do to show we are listening. A mind map, displayed as a wall chart or poster would provide a permanent reminder of actions and responses that assist listening. Or students could produce their own personal checklists on the importance of listening:

- *make a list of the things that showed your partner was really listening to you*
- *when you are ready, show your list to your partner and compare*
- *create a piece of artwork which shows the difference between someone ignoring you and paying real attention to what you were saying.*

B: AGREEING TO DISAGREE

Challenge to thinking can be a spur to new insights into learning. It is important that the ideas are tested and justified without becoming personal.

These prompts help move the discussion on:

I disagree with X's point because.....

However I respect because.....

I have different ideas about this from Y.....

However, I can see their point when they say.....

My point of view is not the same as

but we still respect one another because.....

When someone disagrees with me I find I sometimes have a different outlook on the problem.

This happens when.....

It's good to change my mind sometimes because.....

.....

(Lat Blaylock *RE Today Services*)

C: STEREOTYPES

Making tough judgments

Many young people object to the way they are described in the media and are aware of superficial impressions that are sometimes made about them. This exercise is aimed at opening up discussions about making judgments on people, based on little information.

Suggestions for using the materials:

- Hand out the 12 statements below that refer to different individuals. Give each pair of students 2 statements (matched according to the grid below, eg one has statement A and the other has statement F)
- Working in pairs students could discuss which of the people described they think would be the most interesting to invite to a college enrichment day. They should be encouraged to give reasons.
- They are then told that the people they have been discussing are in fact the same person.
- What does this tell us? Why shouldn't a grandmother also lead a country? Why are we surprised that a power lifter is a committed Christian?
- Are there other examples that the students can think of where appearances have not given accurate information?

When the exercise has been completed, does it need following up? What could they do?

Who else needs to rethink stereotypes? How could we get them to think differently?

A **A celebrity millionaire football player**

F **A fundraiser for a children's charity**

G **An active member of the British Islamic community and founder of a Muslim school in London**

B **An award-winning singer-songwriter recently sharing stage with Bono, Beyoncé Eurythmics**

H **A 13-year-old girl**

C **A soldier fighting in a rebel army**

D **An expert economist, recently elected president of an African country**

I **A 68-year-old grandmother**

J **A woman who was born with spina bifida (a severe disability)**

E **An elite athlete with a string of world records and Olympic golds**

K **A bouncer champion power lifter**

L **A committed Christian working with prisoners**

A and F

David Beckham has been a supporter of UNICEF for many years. In January 2005 he became a Goodwill Ambassador with a special focus on UNICEF's Sports for Development programme.

C and H

Accurate figures on child soldiers are not available – but tens of thousands of teenagers, including girls, have fought in conflicts around the globe.

B and G

Yusuf Islam was recently voted Songwriter of the year. He performed at the Nelson Mandela tribute concert and last year dueted on a recording with Ronan Keating. He was known as Cat Stevens until he converted to Islam in 1977 when he became an active British Muslim.

D and I

Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf became Liberia's president in 2006, making her Africa's first elected female leader. She is a former World Bank economist.

E and J

Tanni Grey-Thompson was born with spina bifida. She is a highly successful wheelchair athlete, who has won 14 medals, nine of which are gold, countless European titles, six London Marathons and has over 30 world records.

K and L

Segun Adekoya known as Koya was involved in petty crime and as a bouncer was regularly in fights. He now works for the Tough Talk team, spreading the Christian message.

These materials are adapted from British Red Cross Education Resources

Emerging Voices: Runshaw and St Helens

This example offers a route into creating some space for young people's expressions of spirituality to emerge. The principles of this project are that in an over crowded curriculum and a target driven culture it is still possible to create opportunities for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

This project takes the view that a great deal of education is 'done' to young people. There are several consequences to this – a lack of ownership of learning, disaffection with the system and a closing down of gifts and talents. Not least, it leads to many professional staff feeling overwhelmed at the amount of work they need to do in order to prepare young people for their exams. While these pressures are real, the methodology in this project assumes that:

- students have a greater degree of commitment to learning once they have some personal investment in it;
- that the chance to have our say is one of our basic entitlements; and
- that real benefits can come from doing fewer things, but doing them really well.

This means paying attention to the process of engaging in deep learning, rather than covering quantities of content and it means being prepared to be surprised by what emerges.

Learning opportunities

This example considers how one rich stimulus can create the conditions for rich learning both for students following **A Level courses** at Runshaw College and those following **vocational routes** at St Helens. The example will use the same stimulus and will show how different avenues for learning can develop from this. While one might appear more rigorous and academic and the other more creative, there are high levels of thinking required for both and students should be encouraged to consider either route.

The only conditions that need to be negotiated with students are the ground rules. It should become apparent that every comment, connection or line of enquiry is legitimate as long as these are legal, decent and honest. It is important that students

arrive at these conclusions through negotiation and discussion. The spirit with which this work is engaged is as important as the final product. While this negotiating of shared values and expectations is sitting in the development of SMSC within the tutorial programme it will impact on the quality of learning across the curriculum. It is recognized that there has been a considerable reduction in time for tutorial and pastoral support in colleges and it is hoped that a relatively high level of student autonomy in this work will go some way to make up for this. It should be possible for this work to be offered in 15 minute sessions.

This project takes as its starting point the idea that a rich stimulus can provide the context for deep and extended learning. It assumes that colleagues running tutorial sessions will not have time to micro-manage the learning. It also works on the basis that students are interested in questions of purpose and meaning and want the chance to have their say.

Getting Going – how this might work for A Level students

For students following an A Level programme at Runshaw College, the Emerging Voices is designed to support the development of independent learning and higher order thinking. The suggestion is that the project is introduced to students and runs between six and ten weeks. The project is introduced to the group as a whole and the expectation is that they work individually and in groups as needed through the questions. There are suggestions for how this might link to a critical thinking programme for instance through the Open University. The timescale is left relatively open so that the balance of pace and time for reflection is maintained. Some students may complete this within half a term, others may need a full term. Students need to consider how they will share their thinking – either formally through a written presentation or informally through artwork etc.

D: *WHAT MAKES US HAPPY?*

The project has used some of the resources on AFAN (All Faiths and None). The AFAN site has been created to support the development of understanding of faiths, beliefs and values within the FE context. Of the great number of links and stimuli on the site, the one which has been chosen to exemplify this work is ‘What makes you happy?’ submitted by AFAN team member:

Amaranatho www.afan.uk.net/stuff/theme/-word/what-makes-you-happy

After watching this, students can be offered a structure for taking their thinking deeper. It is important that strategies are offered not forced. The idea underlying this work is that young people will engage if they are offered rather than coerced.

The route proposed for the A Level students is based on asking deeper, richer questions, framed from Bloom's taxonomy. It offers opportunities for high levels of challenge and deep thinking. Given that most of the curriculum is rushed, this stimulus and the resulting questions should be taken at a slow pace that is determined by the discussions and responses of the students. It is envisaged that one or two of the questions would be considered over a week both in formal and informal settings. Feedback and comparison of responses would provide material for ongoing discussion. Ownership of the process should be given to students as early as possible.

Bloom's Questions Example: Thinking about happiness - how Bloom's questions can be used to extend thinking.

Levels Examples of questions/activities

REMEMBERING	Make a list of the main types of happiness.
UNDERSTANDING	Tell the main points of the film in your own words. What would have happened if the film producer had come to this college?
APPLYING	Think of another big question and imagine what the people in the film would have said.
ANALYSING	Which part of the film did you like best and why? Why were they asking what makes us happy? Find out the most unusual answer to the question.
EVALUATING	What do you think of the film? Is it worth asking this sort of question?
CREATING	What kind of question would you ask 100 people? What would happen if everyone were asked what makes them happy?

Or you could....

Research how these exercises link to the development of critical thinking and why this is important for high level courses, for more interesting ways of working and helpful for getting better results. For example:

www.open.ac.uk/skillsforstudy/ways-to-develop-critical-thinking.php

Getting Going – how this might work for students following vocational courses

The same stimulus ‘*What makes us Happy?*’ is used for the students following vocational courses at St Helens College. This time the project invites students to offer responses to open ended statements. It is suggested that there is more structure to the conditions for learning and that after the clip has been viewed as a group, the facilitator encourages the students to engage with one or more of the questions per session. Again the idea is that the process should allow for considered responses rather than being rushed and so the suggested timescale is between half and a full term with one or two of the responses being considered each session.

A personal response to the question...What makes you happy?

The thing that makes me happy is.....
The person that makes me happy is.....
Being happy makes me think.....
The best thing about being happy is.....
We could be happy all the time if....
Some people think that to be happy you shouldn't get too attached to material things. I
Some people think that we are happy if we help others. I think.....
I think unhappiness is caused by.....
And another thing I want to say is.....

Now what could you do?

You could:

Paper the walls with your wisdom....

- Take each of the statements and blow them up at the top of an A3 piece of paper. Blu tack them around the room.
- Take three or four of the stems and write your responses on post it notes.

Compare your notes with others. Encourage staff and students from other courses or tutorial groups to join in.

You might consider entering the Spirited Arts Exhibition www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts. There are some striking examples of work from other students on this website. For 2011 there is a section on what words are the most spiritual for you? www.natre.org.uk/spiritedarts/2011.php. (Lat Blaylock RE Today Services)

And to the next project...

Once this way of working has been established and students recognize the freedom to express their ideas many want to take ownership of the process and tend to choose their own stimulus for thinking about. There are resources to support this from many sites including AFAN, BBC, Channel 4, www.truetube.co.uk, and www.ybgud.net among others. When working in this way it is important that the responses and questions, which emerge, find space to be considered in future projects. It is likely that one of the questions which will come up during the first piece of work is 'What can we do to become happier?' in which case the following stimulus from AFAN would provide food for thought for the next round of considering big ideas:

www.afan.uk.net/stuff/theme/suffering/dogoinq-good-feels-good

Additional resources and ideas

Students might explore further examples of happiness such as:

- *Accounts of the Buddha as a young man*

The story is told of an Indian Prince who had all that anyone might want in bodily comforts – a luxurious home, a beautiful wife + family, and great wealth. Then he saw someone growing old, another very ill, and then

someone who had died. He felt his happiness was superficial and he needed to think more about what living actually means. After talking with lots of others who'd also wondered about this, it came to him whilst he was sitting under a tree. People called him the Buddha – *the enlightened one*. What would you ask him if you had the chance?

www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/buddhistworld/buddha.htm

www.what-buddha-taught.net

➤ *Images of paradise*

In recent years there have been lots of instances of men and women being resuscitated after accidents in which they had lost all signs of life. Many of them have then told of 'near death experiences' in which they felt they were moving into another world. People in every civilisation have talked of there being a world beyond death. If there were, what would you want it to be like?

<http://hd-wallpapers-widescreen.thundafunda.com/desktopimages/paradise/paradise-01>

<http://www.near-death.com>

➤ *The life of Simeon the Pillar Dweller*

There are numerous examples of men and women who find happiness in being alone and separate from anyone else. An extreme example is the famous Simeon Stylites who chose to live on a small platform at the top of a pillar some 10 metres high for over 30 years. Why might someone be happiest in such isolation?

www.jesus-passion.com/saint_simeon_stylites.htm

Possible further suggestions

[**www.asdan.org.uk/Award_Programmes/beliefs_and_values_SC**](http://www.asdan.org.uk/Award_Programmes/beliefs_and_values_SC)

Additional stimuli from the AFAN site might include 'Are you willing to follow your passion even though it will cause your suffering?' This is based on Aung San Suu Kyi's Reith Lecture on securing freedom:

[**http://www.afan.uk.net/stuff/world-views/buddhist/aung-san-suu-kyis-securing-freedom-reith-lectures**](http://www.afan.uk.net/stuff/world-views/buddhist/aung-san-suu-kyis-securing-freedom-reith-lectures)

Visual prompts for discussion on images that change the world:

[**http://www.afan.uk.net/stuff/theme/music/one-world-one-heart-images-changed-world**](http://www.afan.uk.net/stuff/theme/music/one-world-one-heart-images-changed-world)

Nb: The Bloom's questions can be used to develop further ideas and insights.

Emerging Voices: Kingston College

This project has been designed to develop the spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) aspects of the curriculum. It recognizes that college life is very busy and has many competing priorities. And so it was important from the start that any SMSC development should be embedded within existing structures.

Kingston College has a strong Humanities faculty and a large cohort of students following the GCSE Humanities. There are two strands to the SMSC development project. The first is to encourage students following Humanities to embed their understanding of SMSC elements through the independent enquiry element of their course. The independent enquiry is a controlled assessment and accounts for 25% of the marks. Students need to undertake research on one of a range of cultural, social and moral issues - citizenship, issues of economic wellbeing and financial capability, environmental issues, religious and moral Issues, issues of health and welfare. The second is to provide opportunities to work with students following courses in Business and Media and use the results to inform their research for their chosen independent enquiry, whichever course they are following.

This will embed the learning for those following the Humanities course and in discussing SMSC themes with students following other courses will extend the SMSC aspects into other curriculum areas. In developing this work with colleagues from the Humanities, Media and Business faculties it is evident that there are many common themes relating to moral, social and cultural elements.

The starting point was the OCR GCSE Humanities Independent Enquiry Controlled Assessment for 2012. In discussion with staff across the three faculties it became clear that not only were there opportunities for SMSC development in all the controlled assessment questions, but that an understanding of the SMSC dimension was fundamental to the curriculum. It was agreed that links could be made between the Humanities questions and Business and Media schemes of work. So for instance:

***Job satisfaction is the most important factor in an individual's employment.
How far do you agree? (Economic wellbeing)***

This question has considerable potential for discussion with students following the Business course. Similarly the following has worthwhile research and discussion for both Media and Humanities students:

Is better sex education in English schools the best way to tackle the problem of unwanted teenage pregnancy? (Health and welfare)

Colleagues agreed that time for students to engage and interact with one another should be timetabled at three key points. They also identified how links could be made explicit in the schemes of work for all three subjects. It was agreed that students should use one another as resources in terms of the expertise which they had gained from following a course in either Business or Media. It should be made clear to them why this is important for their learning. There are three significant advantages to students when they collaborate in their learning in this way:

- When we ask questions about a topic our learning goes deeper – so students asking others about how they view a subject makes their own understanding more secure
- When we are asked our opinion about something we know about, again it makes our understanding of that topic even better because we have had to explain our reasons to someone else
- In order to explain something to someone else we need to be able to put it into words and that again helps with our learning

It is also important for students to recognize that top grades are awarded for insights from a wide range of sources and personal reflection. The highest grades require students to understand the factors that impact on people and societies and the attitudes and values that shape human society. They need to have a discriminating understanding of complex relations and be able to examine issues and debates systematically. In having the opportunity research and discuss with students from other faculties they will be able to draw on wider research which will provide substance for better grades.

In discussion with colleagues across the three faculties it became clear that

while Humanities students could benefit from researching their ideas with Business and Media students, there was also potential for research to go in the other direction. So, for instance, the question on sex education in the Humanities independent enquiry links to the Media controlled assessment on analysis and critique of a range of media such as magazines, music and film. There would be potential for an analysis of teenage magazines to inform moral discussion, which would benefit students following the Media course. Similarly it was recognized in the Business controlled assessment that there was potential for interface with the Humanities students on religious and moral issues. While the discussions focused on the common ground between Humanities, Media and Business, it was also recognized that several of the independent enquiry questions fed into the Geography GCSE.

This collaborative work has wider implications for college improvement. In recognizing that opportunities for SMSC development run right through the independent enquiry for the Humanities course, it has opened up conversations with other faculties. As a result, they are more alert to the SMSC elements of their courses. In engaging with the big questions of morality for instance, students are working at a higher level of cognition. This equips them for higher level responses in the exams. The importance of the personal, learning and thinking skills (PLTS) which are embedded in the specification for the BTEC courses are also supported through this ways of working. So, for instance the team working, researching and independent enquiry elements of the PLTS are developed through creating opportunities for students to draw on one another's expertise.

Finally, the research on learner voice tells us that students are eager to be involved in discussing these big questions, working out how they fit into their own lives and giving their responses in an open forum. A small group of students at Kingston were asked for their views on working in this collaborative way with other faculties: 'As Humanities students we both feel that we would be happy and able to talk about the SMSC themes, with our fellow students in our different classes. This is because social, spiritual, moral and cultural issues are expressed through not only humanities, but also media, business and geography and therefore different aspects are covered and an extensive view can be established.' In addition, lecturers have noted that working in this way will increase research and communication skills.

APPENDIX

Accrediting Faith, Belief and Values Education

Network (NOCN) to investigate the possibility of offering new qualifications that will allow students' work in the areas of faith, belief and value education to be accredited. Whilst this initiative is still at an early stage the thinking behind it and the hopes for it should be apparent from the two sets of bullet points below.

Desiderata:

- Credit rated as part of Qualifications and Curriculum Framework (QCF)
- Qualifications available at all levels from entry level to level 3
- Carrying performance points and UCAS points
- Available at award, certificate and diploma level
- Can take advantage of credit accumulation
- Colleges (and schools) able to design own courses, collaborate, or utilise off the shelf materials

Why the National Open College Network?

- Requirement to use an Ofqual recognised awarding organisation
- NOCN already has experience of administering courses in
 - General Religious Education (entry level 3 and levels 1, 2 and 3)
 - Faith Community Development (levels 1 & 2)
- Positive experience of Roman Catholic college community
- Has expressed enthusiasm for idea
- Meeting with Graham Hastings-Evans (Interim MD) and Mary Riddiford (Business Development Manager) arranged imminent.

The REC-FBFE project team.

Roger Butler was responsible for the initial scoping review and more recently the accreditation enquiry

Mary Myatt was responsible for the development of the curriculum development materials, working closely with the colleagues in each of the colleges

John Wise and Brian Gates have provided background interest and support.