

## Chapter

## Towards Commitment

Diagram 8.4 in chapter 8 provided a range of teaching objectives appropriate to RE. The chapter then followed up with a little questionnaire inviting you to respond to the question 'Why am I teaching RE?' The point was to probe your deeper motives as a teacher. I was urging you to teach in the hope that your students would be brought to a point of personal commitment to beliefs and values that they had chosen for themselves on good grounds.

To put this another way, you would be aiming to get beyond mere rote learning or information intake about religions to prompting students to explore their own spirituality and consider questions about their true nature and destiny. This may be described as education for commitment or, better, *towards* commitment, because it stops short of trying to pre-empt or enforce that commitment. Instead, it seeks, through interesting and balanced teaching to *commend* the quest for worthy beliefs and values to live by.

Such a hope on the part of the teacher will, however, be futile unless the teacher him- or herself is modelling just that sort of person. It is impossible to exaggerate the influence on students of the teacher, not just as a teacher, but also as a person. And this holds true for any schoolteacher, not just a good one. Closeted with students for five hours a day during the school year, empowered to assess them as pass or fail, how could any teacher avoid making a lasting impression on students in relation to attitudes towards authority, personal relationships, and the worth of the subject matter? This comment, it should be noted, is as true in the case of unscrupulous or uninterested teachers as it is in relation to good teachers.

By 'influence' I don't mean 'power'. In fact it is precisely because the professional role confers on the teacher *ascribed* power that overusing or abusing that power is often counterproductive. As chapter 7 emphasised, students are not lumps of clay, easily shaped to the teacher's purpose. They are spiritual beings with innate powers which escape total control by others.

But sometimes even 'good' teachers get the wrong results. They may be very enthusiastic and knowledgeable about their subject and very good at motivating students to be interested in it. And yet those students, particularly in the later years, may be suspicious of what appears to them to have been an attempt on the teacher's part to override their powers of choice and dictate what shall be their beliefs and values. This may have been a fully conscious attempt on the teacher's part or the outcome of subconscious bias, mediated by favouring certain students over others or using language in a way that forces them to profess beliefs they do not hold. I want therefore to consider in this chapter aspects of the professional role of the teacher, and also how to get beyond it.

### The Professional Role of the Teacher

I often tell the story against myself of the student—I'll call him Kim—who, in my first year of teaching, was the essence of mischief in the classroom. I took Kim's merry baiting as a personal insult and wished him elsewhere. But I was then disarmed to find that he would frequently come up to me in the playground and chat with me as though I was a close friend. At first I interpreted this as further evidence of his impudence and found it hard to respond civilly. But then it dawned on me that he perceived the two contexts—formal classroom and informal playground contact—as quite different.

In the classroom, we were both participants in a game as old as human culture. When learning is formalised, role expectations are created. The role of the teacher is to control student learning, ie both to exercise social control over the student group and to guide their learning activities. The role of students is to obey the controller and to learn what is being taught. These roles are not symmetrical. The teacher has ascribed authority; the student's lot is to submit. Therefore, not unnaturally, students often feel an urge to push the limits.

When Kim and I were interacting in the playground, he was interpreting the situation in a different way from what I had at first supposed. While I as teacher still exercised general authority, there was no prescribed agenda, and the interaction was informal and more equal, at least as Kim saw it. It would have been churlish of me to have tried to hang on to my teacher persona and keep this friendly student at a formal distance.

I'll return to these issues in chapters 13 and 14. The point to make here is that the classroom environment is specialised and formalised, and we need to take that fact into account. It's a foolish teacher, for example, who thinks that he or she can totally override role expectations and turn the classroom into an informal forum of free relationships.

Yet, at the same time, teachers are still visibly persons and are often memorable beyond what the teaching of their subject might be thought to require. I recall a close friend and colleague who taught mathematics. He did it well, as I discovered from many student comments. When I once suggested that he was exercising a pastoral as well as a teaching role, he reacted quite strongly to the suggestion, insisting that his role was to be 'a good instructor'. He wasn't trained for other responsibilities. Yet, by his conscientious lesson preparation and marking of assignments, and his willingness to spend time explaining things to confused individuals, he was exemplifying a host of higher personal values.

How much more should this be true of the RE teacher, who is trying to commend to students the desirability of being rounded, ethical people who are sensitive to the spiritual dimension and integrated in their life purposes around a set of beliefs which for them make sense of life in this world. That is, the role of the teacher, especially (but not only) in RE, includes the responsibility of modelling such a person. Diagram 11.1 indicates the range of relationships on which the teacher's role-modelling impacts.

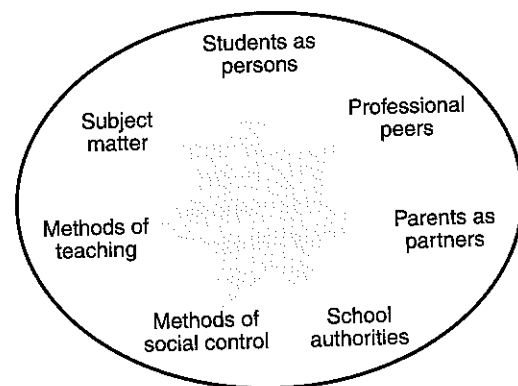


Diagram 11.1: The Scope of the Teacher's Role Modelling

It will be seen that four of the seven areas directly affect students. Each modifies the education they receive, regardless of what teachers may suppose they are getting across in the formal curriculum.

It may seem, for example, that the task of RE is fulfilled by ensuring that the **subject matter** faithfully follows official curriculum guidelines. But much also depends on adopting **methods of teaching** which reflect the aims of the subject, prompting students to explore their own spirituality and pursue their own religious quest.

Yet all this could be subverted if the teacher's **methods of social control** are heavy-handed and lack respect for the personal space of students. And beyond all this is a more fundamental need for the teacher to acknowledge and respect the **students as persons** and not merely learners, each striving to affirm their own significance and worth in a world which often seems heedless of them.

## The Ethical Stance of the Teacher

Part of being a role model involves behaving in an ethical manner towards other people. This is not the place to embark on a detailed analysis of professional ethics in general, but one issue is of particular concern for teachers who take their responsibility for values education seriously, such as RE teachers. This is the question of how the teacher's own personal belief-stance should be handled in the classroom.

I first took up this issue in 1974, and I repeat that discussion here in the hope that my readers will find it useful.<sup>1</sup> How, then, should teachers behave towards their students when it comes to teaching them about beliefs and values? Here are four possibilities.

### Exclusive Partiality

First, the teacher may adopt a stance of exclusive partiality. That is, the teacher may feel at liberty to promote one point of view exclusively, discouraging knowledge about or honest inspection of any other viewpoints. This can happen anywhere across the curriculum, from religious studies to the teaching of scientific theory.

The viewpoint presented will, in the first instance, be the teacher's own partiality, ie the beliefs and values he or she holds about the subject being taught. Where religious belief is concerned, an exclusively partial presentation is most likely to occur in a religious school which systematically hires teachers who endorse the same belief system. It is not inevitable that such schools will expect their teachers to exhibit exclusive partiality, but in practice many do.

The stance of exclusive partiality is the one which most obviously exhibits the contours of indoctrination, as described in chapter 6. By excluding contrary viewpoints and discouraging critical evaluation of diverse beliefs, it works to domesticate rather than to liberate student minds. Indoctrination is not good education.

### Exclusive Neutrality

The rise of state school systems in the late nineteenth century prompted a reaction against the exclusive partiality stance, till then common in most countries. In both Australia and the USA this resulted in the adoption of an

<sup>1</sup> Other places in which versions of this analysis have been published are identified in the Personal Bibliography at the end of this book under the entry for Hill (1981). Interestingly, it began as a paper at a philosophy conference which was received rather coolly, possibly due in part to the dominance of the myth of academic neutrality at the time. A measure of how the climate had changed was the fact that when I referred briefly to that paper in a keynote address to the same society in 2001, the chairperson expressed his support by saying that he annually invites his students to discuss it!

opposite extreme which I call exclusive neutrality. This term stands for a decision to keep such controversial areas of study as religious, social and political values out of the curriculum altogether. Neutrality is achieved by total exclusion.

Previous chapters have noted how in the USA a narrow interpretation of the First Amendment to the Constitution prohibiting official support of any religion has led to similar exclusions, and religious studies as such are still excluded from the public-school curriculum. Teacher involvement in religious activities outside the school, however, is not frowned upon (as it was until recently in one Australian state!).

At a practical level, there is something to be said for a policy of exclusive neutrality, given that pluralistic societies are becoming increasingly litigious. Many teachers have a justified fear that if they teach anything other than publicly defensible facts and skills there will be angry parents on their doorstep threatening legal action. But we cannot allow such considerations to carry the day, for ultimately not just RE but the whole curriculum is at risk.

In any case, is the stance of exclusive neutrality really possible, let alone desirable? Such a curriculum is likely to convey a warped view of the world, in which religious questions and values are marginalised and religious practices are treated as the private hobbies of the few. The irony is that when persons are interacting with persons, as teachers are with students, personal beliefs and values can never be totally hidden.

This became particularly evident in the 1970s, when sociologists were teasing out the effects of what they were calling 'the hidden curriculum'. As I implied earlier, much is learnt, partly unconsciously, from the personal interactions and role expectations built into the ongoing operation of the school. Even such things as classroom furniture, time allocations and the extent to which free time is available convey messages. The problem is that if such influences are not brought to consciousness, and if the values underlying them are not put on the table, then students may get a distorted idea about how values work.

They will also have no opportunity to develop a critical awareness of the effect of such values on their own lives and choices. Such effects are part of what we identified as outcomes of indoctrination. A further irony is that the teacher may not realise what is happening, having been indoctrinated in the same way!

In the end, the stance of exclusive neutrality can neither be defended nor sustained. Whether by design or default, it too is guilty of indoctrination. In government school systems it has often led in the past to bleached curricula which neglected the study of significant beliefs and enduring values. But how can one consciously teach values without lapsing into indoctrinative practices?

### Neutral Impartiality

A policy which has been gaining acceptance in many recent curriculum revisions has been what I call neutral impartiality. Whatever name it goes by, the policy provides for the inclusion in the curriculum of descriptive material relating to the beliefs and values held by various religious groups, complemented by practice in clarifying and discussing them. The teacher is expected to remain impartial, providing informational resources and encouraging rational discussion, while performing a neutral umpiring function which debars teachers from revealing their own personal views and commitments.

Is this the middle position we need, delicately balanced between the two previous extremes? Up to a point, yes. It recognises the importance in real life of people's religious beliefs and value systems and allows the school to provide students with a more valid picture of how our neighbours in the pluralistic society see the world, thereby reducing any unthinking suspicion of difference.

At the same time, however, a teacher adopting the stance of neutral impartiality may also be unintentionally reinforcing certain implicit values. A hidden curriculum comes into play at the point where the comparison of many religious traditions without evaluation is read as an endorsement of religious universalism, as discussed in chapter 3. Choice of a belief system is treated as an entirely subjective preference. In particular, the evident plurality of religious belief systems may trigger the response, 'Hang the lot of them. Why bother with religion anyway?'

It's at moments like these that students of all ages typically ask the teacher, 'But what do you think?' Neutral impartiality obliges the teacher to refuse an answer. I have actually heard teachers say, 'I'm not allowed to tell you'. Such a response falsifies the appeal to reason and openness which the discussion up to that point had been intended to model.

How will students interpret such a retreat from dialogue? The English philosopher Mary Warnock once pointed out that 'it is hard for pupils, especially if they are quite young, to realize that the neutral teacher is only play-acting'.<sup>2</sup> The problem is even more serious if older students interpret the teacher's neutrality as endorsement of a fence-sitting attitude to life: 'I'm not going to have someone make a fool of me. Like the teacher, I'll be a detached observer of human behaviour and avoid commitment.' It's much easier to laugh at religious fanatics than to pursue the religious quest for oneself.

Despite these reservations, the stance of neutral impartiality is much closer to the idea of what constitutes true education as contrasted with indoctrination. It

<sup>2</sup> Mary Warnock, (1975), 170.

acknowledges that values matter and that students are thinking beings. Some state-school systems, in endorsing this stance, have taken a significant step forward. And one can understand why many teachers welcome it as giving them a chance to be better educators, while at the same time minimising their personal vulnerability to public criticism.

Neutral impartiality is not, however, a robust enough buffer to forestall criticism of the teacher who adopts this stance. The mere fact that religious traditions are being discussed at all is enough to alarm some parents, because they rightly doubt if it can be truly neutral.

### **Committed Impartiality**

The fourth stance accepts all that the third stance has to offer, but it also allows teachers to tell students where they stand personally—under controlled conditions. The word ‘committed’ entitles teachers to reveal which religious stance they personally are committed to. The word ‘impartiality’ preserves the meaning it had in the previous stance, that is, teachers must maintain impartiality in their dealings with students and their choice of subject matter.

This suggests that our ethical guideline will need to maintain a balance between two principles. One principle will permit teachers to be participants in rational classroom discussion of various religious traditions, no less than the students themselves, and to argue for their own personal beliefs. The second principle will oblige teachers to ensure that students understand when the teacher is performing the role of umpire and teacher and when he or she is stepping out of that role to respond as a committed person.<sup>3</sup>

The second principle also requires teachers to restrain their urge to reveal their own position if doing so is not relevant to the aims of the lesson. It will often *not* be helpful to let students know initially where the teacher stands on a particular issue, because teachers unavoidably carry great authority and can, by doing so, easily quench thoughtful dissent or original thinking in their students.

There is a developmental factor here, too, given that young children often treat the teacher’s word as infallible, whereas students who have reached the stage of being able to think abstractly and independently are not usually so naïve. The teacher must in any case allow and encourage students to treat information about the teacher’s beliefs and values as simply additional data available for evaluation.

In this way, the requirement of impartiality continues to challenge teachers to be

<sup>3</sup> A procedure spelled out in the Humanities Curriculum Project developed in England in the 1970s by Lawrence Stenhouse (1975 and frequently reprinted).

fair and not show favouritism in their treatment of students. For example, their own temperaments and socioeconomic backgrounds tend to draw them more to some students than to others. Teachers must be the more careful, therefore, to give all students an equal chance to benefit from their professional friendship.

Superimposed on such potentially biasing factors is the individual’s belief system, and again, teachers are likely to be specially drawn to students whose religious background is closest to theirs. But teachers must be not less available in the classroom to students from different backgrounds from their own and must be ready to affirm any student who shows aptitude in discussing and weighing up alternative viewpoints.

### **Implications for School Policy**

A final caution. A teacher would be unwise to adopt the stance of committed impartiality if it had not been officially endorsed as school policy. I have tried to show that this stance is equally applicable and desirable in both the state-school classroom and the religious-school classroom. But because the policy allows self-disclosure on the part of the teacher, it is important that there be explicit endorsement of this policy in the school’s values charter.

### **Establishing a Climate of Discourse**

Every teacher, in settling down with a new class, labours hard initially to create a classroom climate in which they can get things done with minimum student friction and misunderstanding. Manuals for beginning teachers often refer to the need to develop ‘rules and routines’ which will habituate the students in certain agreed ways of doing things, reducing the need for special interventions and crisis management.

These range, for example, from guidelines on how to rule up a work sheet in the infants class to how to format research reports at secondary level. They also include agreements about when movement around the classroom is acceptable, how to address to each other and the teacher, when to speak and listen, how to treat each other’s property, and so on.

Sometimes even teachers are unaware how much such procedures are conventions open to negotiation. They begin to think that the classroom climate familiar to them from their own school is inevitable and unalterable, even when it may in fact be a hindrance to learning or good relationships. They are surprised when another teacher reports quite different reactions from the same group of students as those they themselves had been dealing with.

Mr Quell, for example, comes to be known for his noisy, fractious classrooms and thinks it inevitable that a captive audience of students will behave this way,

while Miss Bell seems to have music wherever she goes. Both may get comparable results from their students in tests assessing knowledge and skill, but a great deal of learning has gone on in their respective classrooms which test scores fail to reveal.

### Rules of Discourse

One area in which routines need to be laid down is the style of discourse to be employed. Is it to be the 'quiet unless I ask you a question' approach, which presupposes that the teacher dictates all interactions and knows all the answers, or an interactive environment in which courtesy dictates giving due attention to whoever is speaking at the time, and students are allowed to query things the teacher says as well as being expected to answer the teacher's questions? The contrast is between an environment in which students are strictly regarded as 'learners' and one in which they are also recognised to be growing 'persons', participating not only in a learning community but in a moral community of discourse.

Some teachers think that little can be done about the way students address each other and them. And students are happy to let them think so. But such teachers would be surprised at the amount of 'code switching' that goes on even between the home and the playground. Children observe different rules of discourse depending on which group they are with and what authority structures are operating.

There may even be substantial code switching between the way children address adults and the language they use among peers in the playground. The extreme example of code switching dexterity, perhaps, is the way many migrant and Indigenous children can switch smoothly between the language of the home and the language of the majority culture.

It is therefore not unrealistic for teachers to establish conventions of language and discourse that shall apply in their classrooms. For young students especially, it's just another 'language game'. This provides teachers with an opportunity for reinforcement through the rules they lay down for classroom discourse, enshrining values of respect for the worth of each individual and the sub-cultures of which they are members. In particular, the RE teacher striving for a climate of committed impartiality will want to develop conventions that respect differences of viewpoint and encourage values discourse and ethical negotiations.

### Justifying Beliefs and Values

Part of this will involve providing and practising a vocabulary which enables students actually to talk about beliefs and values. In chapter 6 I lamented the failure of most schools and tertiary courses to do this. Students, I said there, are not generally taught to understand the difference between facts and beliefs, the

role of RIBs in explanation, or the need to evaluate the evidence for beliefs and the justification of value judgments. If you invite them to justify some of the beliefs and values they pronounce, the reply is often an incoherent 'Well, that's just what I think (or how I feel)', as though that is as far as the matter can be taken.

Many of these learning tasks come to full prominence in the secondary stage of schooling, but they also have applications at earlier stages. This is particularly true of what is often referred to as 'presumptive language'. This is discussed further in Appendix 2, but a passing comment on the concept is appropriate here. In brief, teachers should strive for a classroom climate in which

- (a) all participants respect each other's worth as persons and their right to have and to express their own viewpoints
- (b) students are encouraged to distinguish between 'owning' and 'grounding' beliefs and are assured that they will neither be required nor forbidden to reveal their own personal religious beliefs and values.

### Owning and Grounding Belief Statements

The distinction between 'owning' language and 'grounding' language was pioneered in the 1970s by an RE team in the Australian state of Queensland.<sup>4</sup> Children were to be encouraged to accept comments by other students that said or implied 'this is something I believe' (an owning statement) as pieces of shared information, not triggers for defensive argument or personal criticism.

In dealing with contestable beliefs, the rule was to preface them with phrases that grounded them in some 'third-person' source, eg 'The Bible says . . .' or 'Buddhists believe . . .' The belief itself could then be discussed more coolly, on its merits, as a truth-claim.

This third-person mode of reference to beliefs and values is a way of relieving any pressure on students to use owning statements. They can reasonably be asked to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of truth-claims identified by grounding statements, but they should never be put under obligation to submit their own commitments to public analysis or to conform to what others say as a way of escaping teacher or peer-group pressure.

A well-known device which helps to defuse ego-involvement in discussion is Edward De Bono's technique of 'six thinking hats'.<sup>5</sup> Designed to expedite more efficient thinking, it is also helpful in diverting student attention from the person who expresses a view to the view itself. The red hat, for instance, identifies that

<sup>4</sup> See Mavor et al (1982).

<sup>5</sup> de Bono (1985).

the speaker is expressing emotions and hunches. 'The black hat is used to point out why a suggestion does not fit the facts, the available experience, the system in use, or the policy that is being followed.'<sup>6</sup> In declaring which hat they are wearing at the time, both speaker and listeners disclaim automatic ownership of the comment.

There is another way in which the language of the teacher can be harmfully presumptive. It is when teachers use a mode of speaking which co-opts students to a point of view they don't hold. A teacher in a religious school may glibly refer to 'what we do when we pray', for instance, blissfully indifferent to the fact that some students may not be in the habit of praying and may in fact not believe that prayer has any validity. Or consider the following question in a classroom test: 'What did God tell Abraham to do while he was living in Haran?' At least three major world religions accept the scriptures that tell how the patriarch Abraham believed God was telling him to migrate to a distant land. But what about the student? And how should a student answer such a question? On the face of it, the question is simply testing knowledge recall. No harm in that, surely.

The answer would be expected to begin in a way similar to: 'While Abraham was living in Haran, God told him to leave that place and travel to a promised land . . .' But the question is presumptive in that it presumes (1) that God exists, (2) that he communicates with human beings, on this occasion Abraham, and (3) that the biblical account accurately records a real event. All three assumptions are matters of belief, so foundational to the faiths that accept them as to be described as RIBs.

How might students acculturated *not* to believe in one or all of these assumptions feel about having to answer it? And what marks would they get if they dared to dispute the premises of the question? For the sake of peace, they could pretend to go along with the implicit language game, but what good teacher would want students to practise such a deceit?

Yet a simple adjustment to the question would make it manageable for any students, allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge of the account as required, while at the same time retaining their personal integrity. 'What does the Bible say God told Abraham to do while he was living in Haran?' A few words 'grounding' the beliefs represented by the question solve the problem. Students can use the same grounding language in their answer, leaving open the question of what they personally believe about the truth claims inherent in the story.

6 Explanation by de Bono on <http://www.saluminternational.com/articlesdebono.htm>. The six metaphorical hats represent: White—clarifying facts and figures; Red—expressing feelings and hunches; Black—looking for the negatives (a kind of devil's advocate role); Yellow—looking for the positives, feasibility and benefits; Green—floating new ideas and creative thinking; Blue—commenting on the discussion process itself.

## Getting Beyond the Professional Role

It is possible that at this point enthusiastic RE teachers may be feeling very constrained by the guidelines I have been developing, just as they may have found irksome the cautions in chapter 8 against seeking to evangelise in the classroom. I would point them again to the section in that chapter entitled 'Does the logic differ for religious schools?' There I discussed proposals by both Elliott and Rossiter<sup>7</sup> for a two-subject approach, one dealing with the teaching of religion and the other with specialist content based on the faith of the religious group sponsoring the school (a proposal which could hardly be transposed into the state-school environment).

I argued there for a merging of the two approaches into one approach ethically acceptable in the compulsory classroom context. But this was not meant to squeeze out some of the more voluntary and extracurricular possibilities which both Elliott and Rossiter associated with education in faith. On the contrary, there is much in both writers that can be endorsed with enthusiasm.

The crucial point is to honour the distinction between compulsory and voluntary contexts of learning. Over the years, I have been at pains to emphasise it.<sup>8</sup> Consider the opportunities that are made possible by the kinds of interaction that characterise voluntary learning environments such as youth groups. Diagram 11.2 highlights the contrasts between the learning environment of the compulsory classroom and that of the voluntary group.

Society largely defines our roles, but as we mature, personal relationships develop through our choices. In the classroom, the possibilities of open personal relationship are subordinated to (though not eliminated by) a teacher's contractual obligation to guide learning activities according to a mandated curriculum and to assess individual gains. Leaders of voluntary groups, by contrast, though lacking the teacher's power to compel certain kinds of behaviour, can paradoxically exercise a greater influence, provided they take advantage of the freer environment and don't try to pull rank.

In a typical voluntary group, the values for which the group stands have been freely embraced by its organisers. Modelled by the group leaders and committed members, they are available for inspection by newcomers. Visitors are free to come or go. If the group's value-system appeals to them relationally and/or intellectually, they are free to 'try on' the commitment it represents. If it does not appeal, or newcomers sense an attempt to manipulate them, they can leave. The only sanction the group can exercise if they are uncooperative is to exclude

7 Elliott (1986) and Rossiter (1981).

8 Beginning with Hill (1971) ch 6.

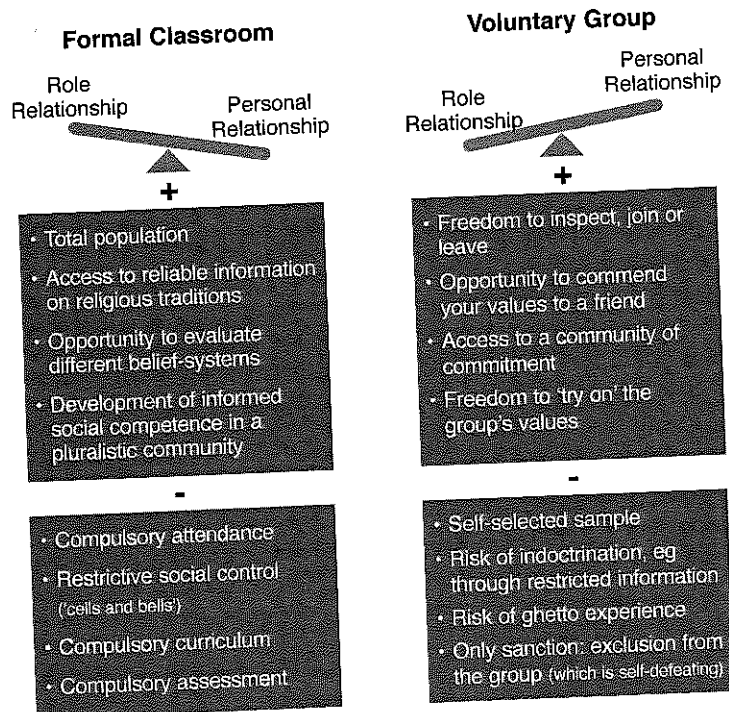


them, which, in terms of the group's aims, may well be self-defeating—and should be a step of very last resort.

The exciting thing is that if a newcomer chooses to embrace the commitment for which the group stands, the group now becomes a support structure and arena for putting one's beliefs into action. Voluntary youth groups have consistently outscored schools, and often even home influence, in drawing young people into religious commitment and service to others.

They have also exceeded other kinds of youth service both in terms of the number of older friends available to support young people and the number of young people entering into active involvement in community services. The ultimate goal of RE is realised here, and schools cannot ignore the need to welcome opportunities for partnership with such agencies. This is much to be preferred to trying to do the whole job themselves, relying on the powers of compulsion vested in them.

But the fact that it is a partnership, and both are needed in modern pluralistic societies, is driven home by the comparisons in Diagram 11.2. Note the pluses and minuses associated with each learning context.



## The Teacher in Voluntary Contexts

The question arises, should the committed RE teacher seek to be involved in learning contexts of both kinds? At its lowest level, involvement with children and young people in more voluntary settings can save teachers from becoming so addicted to the professional role that they cannot divest themselves of it when involved in more informal relationships. (For the same reason, professional teachers need to have non-teacher friends in the adult world and should not just fraternise out of school with other teachers.)

On a higher level, involvement with children and young people in more voluntary settings can be very rewarding to both parties, and trained teachers can be great contributors to leadership in excursions, camps, sports coaching, voluntary study groups and so on. Their training has given them skills which are much needed in such contexts. The danger, however, is that they will carry over to these settings the more formal techniques of social control and instruction which were appropriate to fulfilling their contract in the classroom. If they are not careful, teachers can turn camps and outings into extensions of the schooling model.

Again, the clue is to balance the contribution of trained teachers with that of lay people gifted in relating to youth. The expertise of the one is freshened by the informal friendliness of the other. The suspicion that the teacher is being paid to talk religion is allayed by interactions with people who are not, but who are sharing their faith from a desire to enrich their younger friends' lives. And to the extent that erstwhile RE teachers are able to divest themselves of the formalities associated with the school classroom, and to show that they are also 'doing it for love' in the voluntary setting, their hope of seeing RE flower into owned faith will have more chance of being realised.

The theme of partnership can be carried further. The individualism and consumerism which have diluted community life and civic responsibility in the modern world have led to the development of professional youth workers. Some of these people work in the public arena, others in faith communities. Their training is not the same as that for school teachers but usually includes more elements of social group work, personal development, conflict resolution, and counselling.

A notable leader in the British youth services area has called for 'a creative coalition' between teachers and youth workers, each bringing their own range of gifts and training to the field of youth development.<sup>9</sup> Given the leading role of religious groups in this area, the RE teacher should be on the lookout for youth

<sup>9</sup> Eastman (1981).

workers of like mind who can be partners in creating helpful networks for young people seeking answers to spiritual questions and outlets for energetic idealism in the service of their peers. But the need will usually remain for lay volunteers who lay no special claim to training or paid occupation to offer friendship for its own sake.

## For Reflection and Discussion

1. Can you recall, from your own school days, teachers whose stances in the classroom matched each of the four stances discussed in this chapter? On reflection, which of these teachers did you respect most at the time? Would your opinion be different now?
2. Record one of your RE lessons on audio-tape. In playing it back to yourself, note particularly the kind of language you use in relation to beliefs and values. Note any examples where you have unconsciously invaded the personal space of students by phrases or activities which presume agreement on their part with what you personally believe, thereby inviting either conforming lip-service or covert resistance to what you are teaching.
3. How far can and should the school go in advertising and endorsing youth services provided in the wider community by religious agencies?
4. Do you welcome or avoid informal contacts with your students outside the classroom or in the wider community? What are your reasons?