

Worldviews and RE



Ruth Flanagan
Graduate School of Education
University of Exeter

r.flanagan@exeter.ac.uk

Aims

- To provide a working definition for worldviews
- To share practice from the PGCE Primary course (Exeter) for identifying worldviews and examining the process of formulation and evolution of worldviews
- To provide practical demonstrations of these techniques through engaging in a sample of worldview activities

Challenges of RE – teachers' voices

“engaging the pupils”

“lack of subject knowledge”

“answering children’s questions honestly (without offending parents)”

“It is sometimes hard to answer questions about religion/God.”

“Children can come into school with a negative view of RE.”

“To ensure I don’t influence children in their personal spiritual choices”

“Time”

Challenges for Primary RE

- Lack of knowledge about the subject, its purpose, aims and most appropriate pedagogies (Wintersgill, 2004:1).
- ‘poor and fragmented curriculum planning, very weak assessment, ineffective monitoring and teachers limited access to effective training’ (Ofsted, 2013:5).
- Lack of confidence: ‘about half of primary teachers and trainee teachers lack confidence in teaching RE’ (Lloyd, 2013:5).
- Non-specialists - with no undergraduate qualification or A level in RE, cited weak subject knowledge as the greatest challenge to their RE teaching.
- Initial training - on average, a primary trainee teacher receives less than three hours of training in RE on a PGCE or Schools Direct one year course (NATRE & RE council, 2017).

Challenges in practice

- Teacher trainees – negative attitudes ‘mumbo, jumbo myths’, similar to McCreery’s research (2000, 2005)
- Issues of neutrality (Revell and Walters, 2010)
- RE often taught by Higher Level Teaching Assistants (HLTAs) or Teaching Assistants (TAs) who hold neither a teaching qualification nor any subject qualification such as an undergraduate degree or A level in RE related subject.
- PPA cover time – not a school/teacher priority
- Statutory time often combined into a celebration day/week.

Religion and worldviews: the way forward?

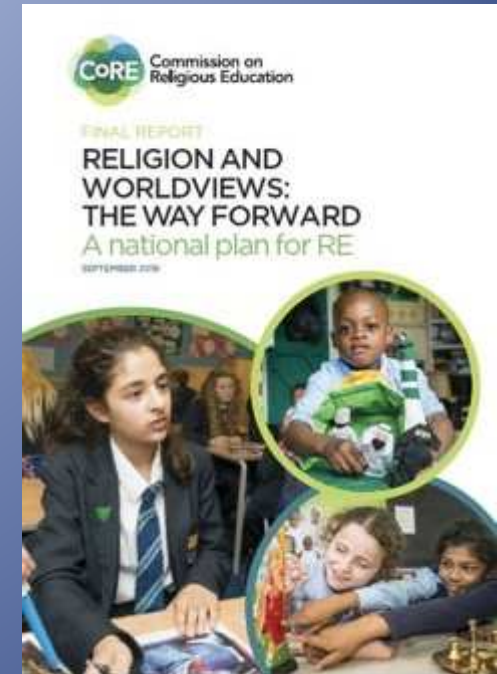
Commission on RE Final Report
(CORE, 2018)

11 recommendations

including 'Religion and worldviews'

BIG Ideas for RE (Wintersgill et al, 2017)

Big Ideas about the study of religion(s) and worldview(s) (Freathy and John, 2019)



Is examination of worldviews a bridge to success for RE?

- Develop understanding and empathy
- Provide an approach to new subject knowledge
- Increase confidence

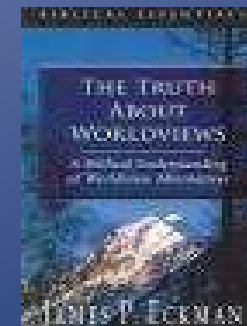
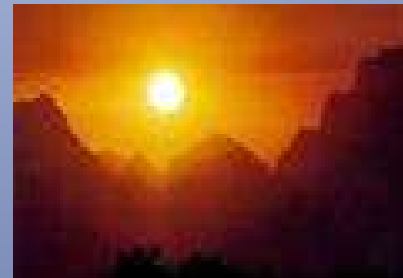


Deciphering worldviews

Visions of/for Life and Ways of Life

- The Big Picture
- Ultimate stories, narratives
- Metaphysical beliefs
- principles, ideals, values
- Mental models
- Comprehensive frameworks
- Maps of the mind
- The *glasses* or *filters* out of which we view the world.
- *weltanschauung*

*Our vision of life or worldview
is how we look at the world.*



Adapted from Dr. John Valk (2010) ISREV -
University of New Brunswick

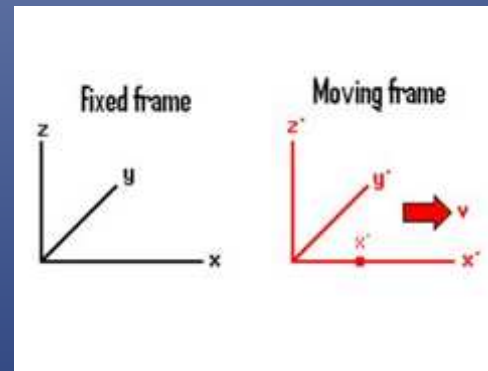


Defining worldviews

A frame of reference

‘A world view is a system of co-ordinates or a **frame of reference** in which everything presented to us by our diverse experiences can be placed. It is a symbolic system of representation that allows us to integrate everything we **know about the world** and **ourselves** into a global picture, one that illuminates reality as it is presented to us within a certain culture.’

(Aerts et al 2007: 7)



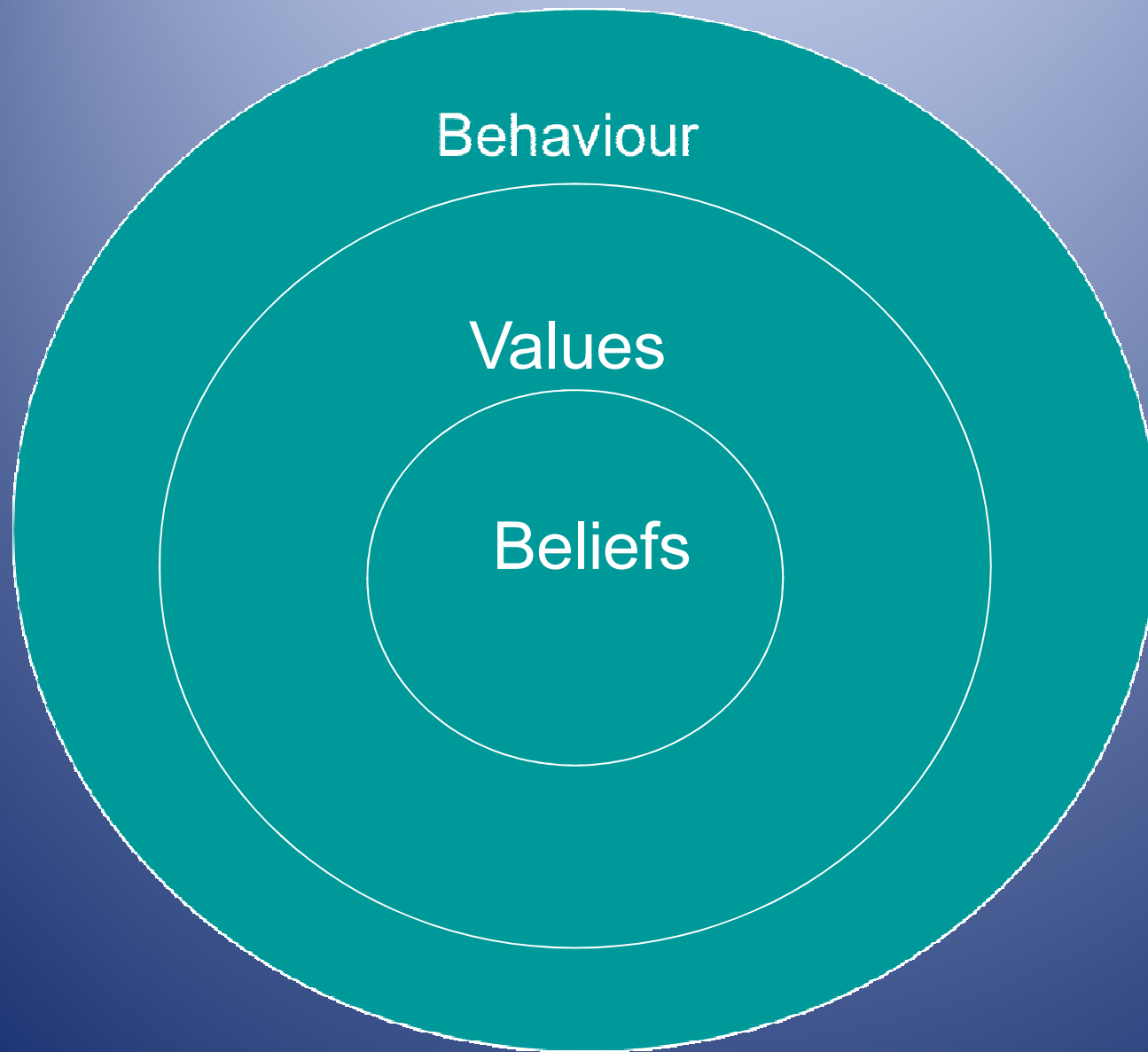
What constitutes a worldview?


- **(Un)conscious** - 'A world view is a set of presuppositions (or assumptions) which we hold (consciously or unconsciously) about the basic make-up of our world.' (Sire, J. ,1997:16)
- **'Personal'** and 'institutional' worldviews, CORE Final Report (2018: 4) or 'personal' and 'organised' Van der Kooij et al (2013)
- **Dynamic** (Aerts et al, 2007, Mansour, 2008)
- **Eclectic** (Van der Kooij et al, 2013)
- **Embodied** – lived response to personal experience



Frames of reference

- Examine this selection of pictures
- Choose one that you think portrays different perspectives in a way that appeals to you
- Discuss in your groups





Behaviour:
Don't steal

Belief:
deity will
punish me if
I steal

Values: Wrong to steal

Activity

Behaviour:

Belief:

Values:

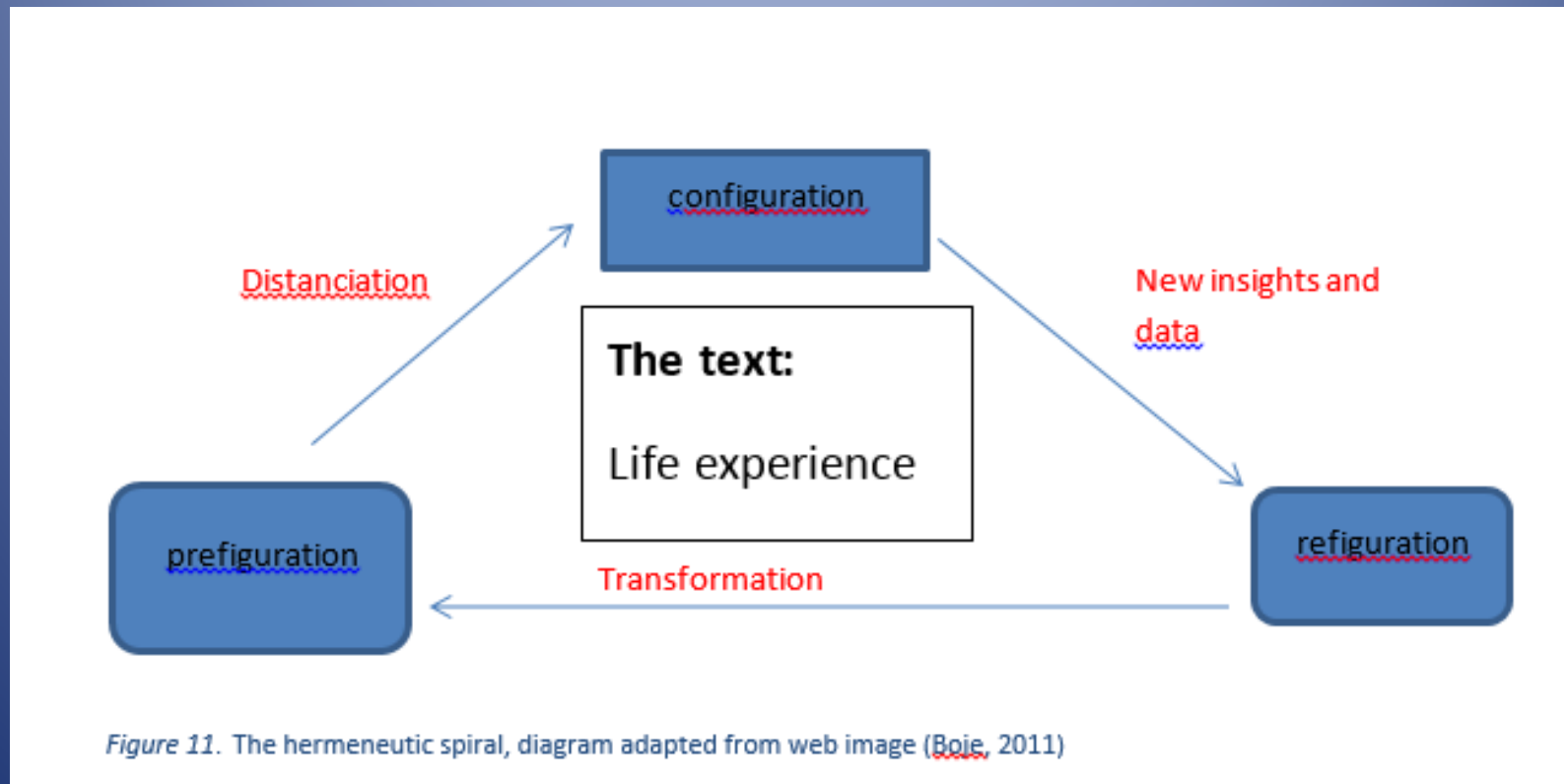
How are worldviews formed?

Paul Ricoeur:

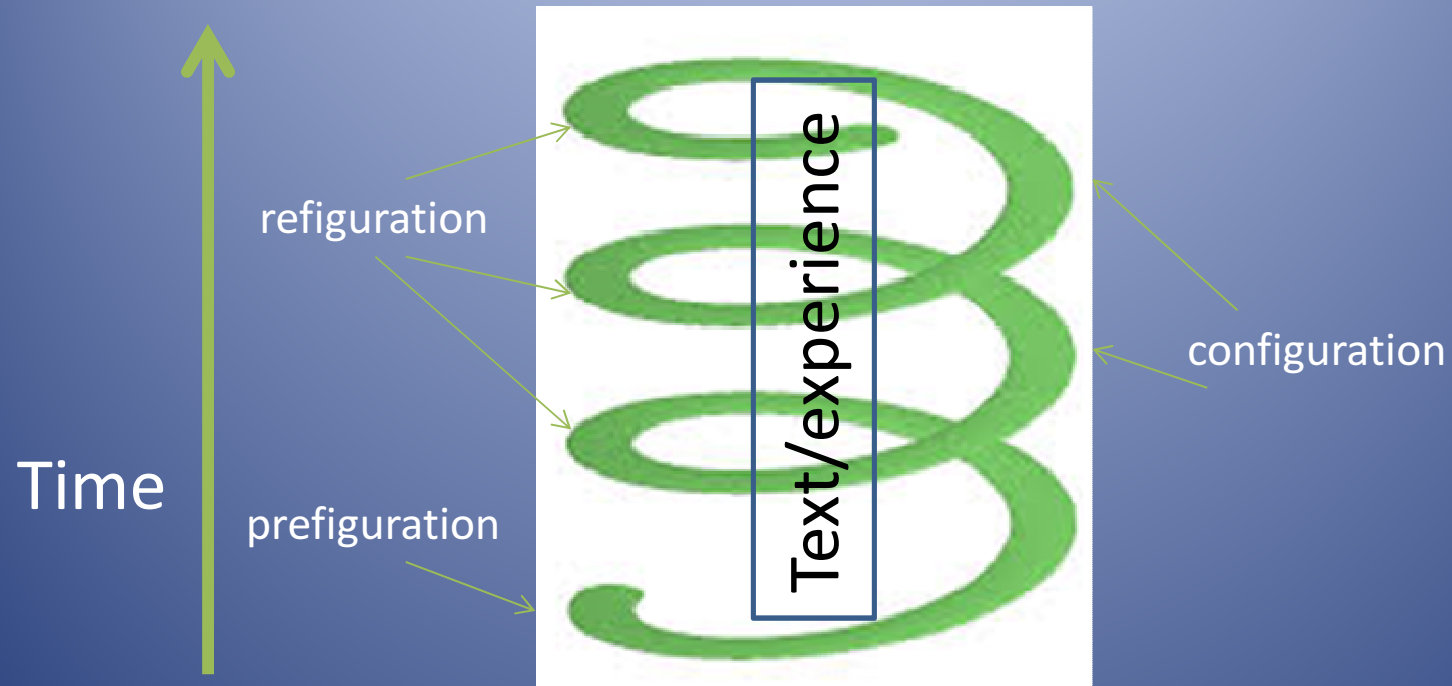
Identifications are associated 'with values, norms, ideals, models and heroes, in which the person or community recognises itself' (1992: 122)

To understand self Ricoeur suggests an examination of narrative: 'Self-understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self in turn , finds in narrative....a privileged form of mediation; the latter borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction' (1992: 114)

Hermeneutic circle

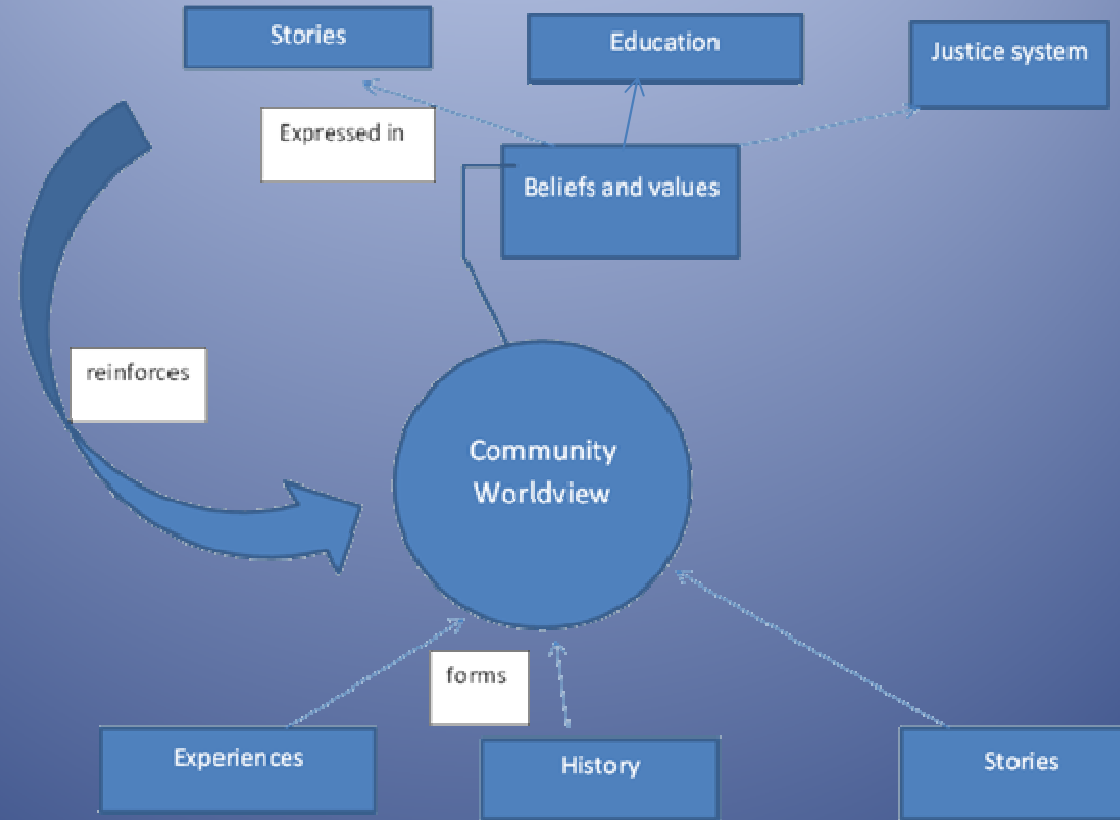


How are worldviews formed?



The hermeneutic spiral

How are worldviews formed?



This process is cyclical but can be impacted by a change in community experiences. External pressure can then be placed on the community worldview and transform it.

How are worldviews formed?

Take a look at the answers from the circles activity task.

- Choose one answer
- Can you identify the origins of any of your views?

(such as education, parent, teacher, peer influence, life experience?)

‘By seeing worldview as a concept that makes sense of the world, which can be different due to different life experiences, may assist understanding that what one perceives as the ‘norms’ of life are merely a product of our own life narrative and worldviews.

To recognise this prevents the views of others as being negatively perceived as ‘other’, ‘exotic’ or even ‘wrong’, as they deviate from individuals’ accepted norms, but rather view these as shared responses to life experience.’ (Flanagan, 2018)

Perhaps the main question for a teacher is not is there an objective truth but is it possible to be neutral? An individual is a product of socio cultural and personal history but this does not negate truth rather it negates neutrality and acknowledges that all individuals are engaged in 'informed' interpretation: as 'active participants in the process of interpretation ...we must abandon any strict claim to neutrality and objectivity' (West, 2012:399).

(Flanagan, 2018.)



What is your
Worldview?

John Valk's framework tool

Secular Worldviews		Religious Worldviews	
Consumer Capitalism	Exclusive Humanism	Spiritualities	Monotheism
Consumerism Capitalism Materialism	Individualism Humanism Rationalism Scientism Atheism Environmentalism	Buddhism Hinduism Taoism Confucianism Ecological Spirituality Indigenous Spirituality	Judaism Christianity Islam

Examining worldviews

Worldview Frameworks
Personal Identity
Ultimate Questions
Worldview Dimensions
Epistemological/Ontological
Primary/Secondary Values

My own worldviews

- How would I answer these questions?

Framework	Components
Ultimate Questions	Meaning/Purpose
	Responsibilities/Obligations
	Discerning Right/Wrong
	Righting our Wrongs
	Greater Force/Power/Being
	<i>Eschatos</i> : Life after this life

What is the purpose of life?

Do I have any responsibilities or obligations?

How do I discern what is
right/wrong?



How can I right any wrongs?

Is there a greater force/being?

Is there an after life?

- Using one religion attempt to discover how does it answer the big questions?
- How does this differ from your own?

Framework	Components
Ultimate Questions	Meaning/Purpose
	Responsibilities/Obligations
	Discerning Right/Wrong
	Righting our Wrongs
	Greater Force/Power/Being
	<i>Eschatos</i> : Life after this life

Purpose of life

obligations/responsibilities

discerning right and wrong



Righting our wrongs

greater force/power/being

after life?

Worldviews and RE

- All religions contain worldviews
- All people have views of the world
- Worldviews evolve and form through life experience
- They are flexible and continually evolving
- Identifying our own is important:
 - a) impact and influence on our teaching
 - b) enable us to understand and teach the worldviews of others

Any questions?

Thank you for listening.

r.flanagan@exeter.ac.uk

References

- Aerts, D. & Apostel, L & De Moor, B. & Hellemans, S & Maex, E & Belle H, Van & Der Veken J, Van. (2002). *Worldviews: From Fragmentation to Integration*. et al. (1994) *Worldviews: from fragmentation to Integration*. VUB press Brussels. Internet edition. 2007. Available at <http://www.vub.ac.be/CLEA/pub/books/worldviews.pdf> accessed on 7/3/18.
- Commission on RE (2018) *Final Report. Religion and Worldviews: The Way Forward. A national plan for RE*. Available at: <https://www.commissiononre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Final-Report-of-theCommission-on-RE.pdf>
- Lloyd et al. (2013) *RE- the truth unmasked. The supply of and support for Religious Education teachers*. An Inquiry by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Religious Education.
- Mansour, N. (2008). The experiences and Personal Religious beliefs of Egyptian Science teachers as a framework for understanding the shaping and reshaping of their beliefs and practices about science-technology-society (STS), *International Journal of Science Education*, 30 (12), 1605 -1634.
- McCreery, E. (2005) Preparing Primary School Teachers to Teach Religious Education. *British Journal of Religious Education*. 27 (3), 265 -277.

Ofsted (2013) *Religious Education: realising the potential*. Accessed on 19/01/17 at www.ofsted.gov.uk/resources/130068.

Revell, L. and Walters, R. (2010) *Christian Student RE teachers, objectivity and professionalism*, Jerusalem Trust.

Ricoeur, P. (1992). *Oneself as another*. Translated by Blaney, K. University of Chicago Press: Chicago.

Sire, J. (1997) *The Universe Next Door*. Intervarsity press. Illinois

Valk, J. (2009) Knowing self and others: Worldview study at Renaissance college. *Journal of Adult Theological Education*, 6 (1), 69 -80.

Van der Kooij, J., de Ruyter, D. Midema, S. (2013) 'Worldview': the meaning of the concept and the Impact on Religious Education'. *Religious Education*, 108 (2), 201 -228.

Wintersgill, B. (2004) *Managing more effectively the contribution of Non- specialist teachers*. Accessed on 26/03/2018 at www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/journals/articles_0506/Wintersgill.rtf