

TEACHING RVE WITH PURPOSE:

Pedagogies for the Classroom



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1. Constructivism



Explanation:

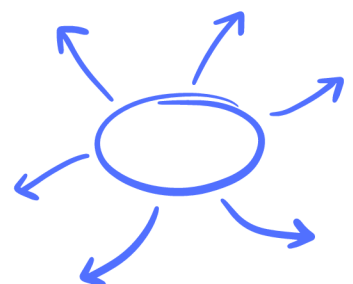
Constructivism emphasises that students actively build their own understanding rather than passively absorbing facts. Learners bring their own experiences, cultural background, and worldview into the classroom, and new knowledge is only meaningful when it connects to what they already know. In Religion, Values and Ethics (RVE), this means teachers should not just “deliver” information about religion and belief but should create opportunities for students to explore, question, and connect learning to their lives. Constructivism also acknowledges that students’ understanding develops over time, becoming more sophisticated as they encounter new perspectives.

RVE Implications:

- Begin with students’ prior knowledge and assumptions.
- Use activities that require reflection, questioning, and meaning-making.
- Encourage peer dialogue so students test their ideas against others.

Example Tasks:

- **Concept Mapping:** At the start of a topic on “life after death,” students map what they think happens after death. After study, revisit and expand maps to show growth in understanding.
- **Personal Symbol Box:** Students bring a personal object representing their values, then link this to symbols used in religious traditions.
- **Think-Pair-Share:** With a statement like “Religion is mainly about rules,” students reflect individually, share with a partner, then debate as a class.
- **Reflective Journals:** Short weekly entries on how lessons connect to their worldview.



2. Experiential Learning

Explanation:

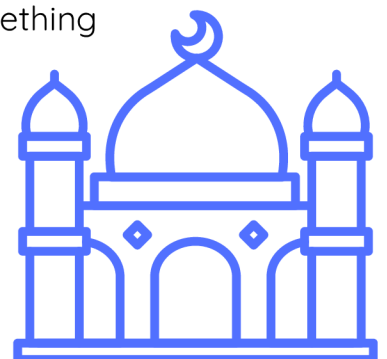
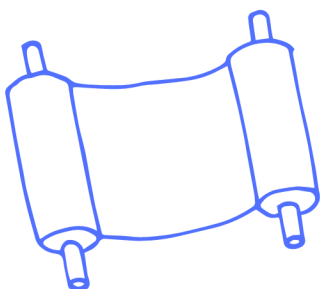
Experiential Learning is rooted in the idea that students learn best through direct experience. Kolb's learning cycle (experience → reflection → theory → application) underlines that experiences must be structured with opportunities to reflect and apply insights. In RVE, this could include visiting places of worship, simulating rituals, or encountering artefacts. The emotional and sensory engagement helps learners move beyond abstract ideas and develop empathy and understanding.

RVE Implications:

- Provide authentic encounters with religion and belief.
- Always include structured reflection activities after experiences.
- Use role-play and simulation to allow students to “step into” another worldview.

Example Tasks:

- **Field Visits:** Mosque visit → prepare questions, observe, and then write reflections on community and worship.
- **Festival Simulation:** Recreate Diwali or Shabbat in the classroom. Students discuss symbolism afterwards.
- **Role-Play Dilemmas:** Enact ethical scenarios (e.g., environmental issues) from the viewpoint of different religions.
- **Artefact Handling:** Explore religious artefacts with guided questions: “What does this reveal about belief and practice?”
- **Reflection Circles:** Students share “something surprising, something challenging, and something familiar” after experiences.



3. Critical Pedagogy

Explanation:

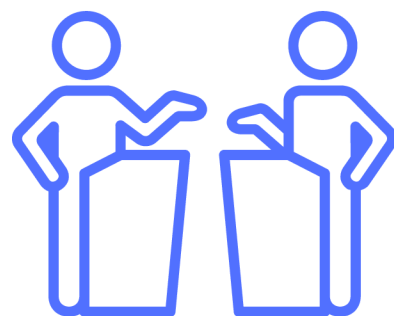
Critical pedagogy views education as a tool for empowerment and justice. In RVE, this means moving beyond surface knowledge of religious teachings to critically examine representation, power, and social issues. Students are encouraged to question whose voices are heard, whose are missing, and how religion interacts with privilege and inequality. For example, students might study how media portrays Islam or how women are represented in sacred texts. This approach nurtures critical citizens who can challenge bias and injustice.

RVE Implications:

- Teach students to critique sources for bias and assumptions.
- Highlight diversity within religions and challenge stereotypes.
- Connect RVE to social justice and inclusion.

Example Tasks:

- **Media Analysis:** Compare newspaper articles and practitioner accounts of Ramadan. Discuss differences.
- **Power Mapping:** Identify who has authority in a faith tradition and discuss fairness (e.g., gender roles in Catholicism).
- **Debate:** “Should religious symbols be banned in schools?” → explore societal implications.
- **Colonial Source Critique:** Examine missionary descriptions of Hinduism; identify stereotypes.
- **Social Justice Projects:** Research how faith communities in Wales respond to homelessness and evaluate effectiveness.



4. Multiple Intelligences Theory

Explanation:

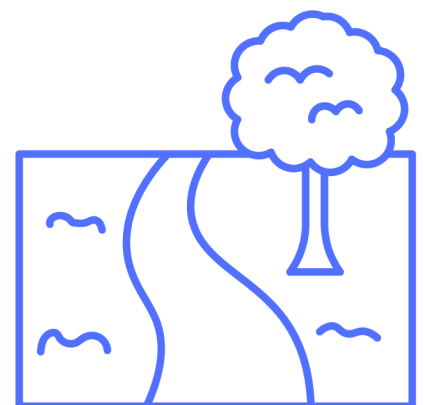
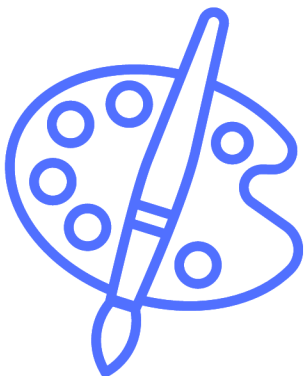
Howard Gardner proposed that intelligence is not one-dimensional (e.g., purely logical or linguistic) but consists of multiple forms: linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic. In RVE, applying this theory means offering diverse ways for students to explore religious ideas and demonstrate understanding. Not all students will respond to written analysis; some may excel through art, music, or collaborative work. This helps include all learners and deepen engagement.

RVE Implications:

- Use varied teaching strategies (art, music, drama, debate, writing).
- Allow multiple ways for students to express understanding of religious concepts.
- Value creativity and personal expression alongside critical thinking.

Example Tasks:

- **Art Projects:** Create posters or artwork showing the meaning of Diwali.
- **Musical Interpretations:** Compose a rap, chant, or song about a parable.
- **Drama:** Role-play a Buddhist Jataka tale, then discuss the moral.
- **Nature Walk:** Explore naturalistic spirituality (e.g., Paganism or Christian stewardship) outdoors.
- **Peer Presentations:** Each group presents a religion using a different “intelligence” (drama, visual art, debate).



5. Dialogical Learning

Explanation:

Dialogical learning is based on the principle that meaning is constructed through dialogue. Students learn best when they actively exchange ideas, listen, and respond to others. In RVE, dialogue is not only a teaching method but also reflects the subject matter itself: religions are living conversations within communities. Teachers create safe spaces where students practise respectful listening, questioning, and exploration of difference.

RVE Implications:

- Emphasise respectful listening and questioning.
- Use structured dialogues to explore diverse perspectives.
- Encourage students to voice uncertainty and curiosity.

Example Tasks:

- **Socratic Seminars:** Discuss a religious text (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount) with teacher as facilitator.
- **Philosophy for Children (P4C):** Begin with a stimulus (picture, story) and let students generate questions for discussion.
- **Peer Teaching:** Students teach a short lesson on an aspect of religion to classmates.
- **Interfaith Dialogue Simulations:** Students role-play different perspectives in a classroom “panel.”
- **Think Aloud:** Students verbalise their thought process when interpreting a religious story.



6. Behaviourism

Explanation:

Behaviourism focuses on observable behaviours and how they can be shaped by reinforcement. Though less fashionable in modern education, it still has practical uses in RVE. For instance, creating clear expectations, routines, and feedback helps reinforce positive engagement and respectful dialogue when discussing sensitive religious topics. Rewards and sanctions can guide behaviour, while clear learning objectives ensure students know exactly what is expected.

RVE Implications:

- Use praise and rewards to reinforce respectful dialogue and curiosity.
- Make learning objectives explicit (“By the end of today, you will be able to summarise two religious views on life after death”).
- Provide immediate feedback on tasks to build confidence.

Example Tasks:

- **Positive Reinforcement System:** Reward points for showing respect in dialogue or accurate use of religious vocabulary.
- **Learning Objectives Visible:** Students check off success criteria during a task.
- **Immediate Feedback Quiz:** Quick-fire recall of religious key terms with instant marking.
- **Respect Agreements:** Co-create classroom rules for dialogue; reinforce when students uphold them.
- **Reward-Based Reflection:** Award praise for thoughtful, evidence-based reflections.



7. Social Constructivism

Explanation:

Social constructivism builds on constructivism by emphasising the social and cultural dimensions of learning. Vygotsky argued that learning takes place first socially (between people) and then internally (within the individual). In RVE, this highlights the importance of group work, collaborative projects, and shared exploration of religious questions. Students learn not only from teachers but also from peers, community voices, and cultural contexts.

RVE Implications:

- Use collaborative tasks that value multiple perspectives.
- Involve community voices (guest speakers, faith visitors).
- Scaffold learning so students can achieve more with peer/teacher support.

Example Tasks:

- **Collaborative Projects:** Groups research and present different world religions' views on ethics.
- **Peer Interviews:** Students interview each other on their values, linking to RVE themes.
- **Group Posters:** Create visual displays showing similarities/differences between traditions.
- **Faith Visitor Q&A:** Invite a practitioner, then debrief as a group.
- **Shared Problem-Solving:** Tackle moral dilemmas (e.g., "Should war ever be justified?") collaboratively.



8. Transformative Learning Theory

Explanation:

Transformative learning focuses on deep shifts in perspective that occur when learners critically reflect on their assumptions. In RVE, this might happen when students encounter unfamiliar beliefs that challenge their worldview, prompting them to rethink previously held ideas. Teachers facilitate this process by encouraging critical reflection, dialogue, and opportunities for learners to explore the implications of changing their perspectives.

RVE Implications:

- Encourage deep reflection on experiences and texts.
- Create “disorienting dilemmas” (challenging questions or case studies) that prompt re-evaluation.
- Value personal growth and openness, not just factual recall.

Example Tasks:

- **Reflective Essays:** “How has studying Buddhism changed how I think about suffering?”
- **Critical Reflection Groups:** Students share how their views on religion and ethics have shifted.
- **Perspective-Taking:** After studying liberation theology, reflect on how religion can inspire justice.
- **Disorienting Dilemma:** Present a moral case (e.g., child soldiers). Ask: “How would different traditions respond? How do you respond?”
- **Identity Mapping:** Students chart how their beliefs and values have evolved during the year.



9. Inquiry–Based Learning

Explanation:

Inquiry-based learning positions students as questioners and investigators rather than passive learners. It emphasises curiosity, exploration, and research. In RVE, students are encouraged to ask their own big questions (e.g., “Why is there suffering?”), investigate religious and non-religious responses, and present findings. Teachers scaffold inquiry with resources, but the direction is often shaped by student questions.

RVE Implications:

- Allow students to generate questions from stimuli (artefacts, texts, news).
- Scaffold research and provide access to diverse resources.
- Focus on skills of summarising, analysing, and evaluating evidence.

Example Tasks:

- **Big Question Research:** Students choose a question (e.g., “Does science disprove religion?”) and research multiple perspectives.
- **Class Debates:** Explore ethical questions (e.g., euthanasia) from religious and secular viewpoints.
- **Source Enquiry:** Analyse sacred texts for insight into key questions.
- **Gallery Walk:** Students post questions around the room and rotate in groups to research and answer.
- **Independent Projects:** Each student investigates a question of personal interest and presents findings.



10. Phenomenology in Religious Education

Explanation:

Phenomenology in RVE, pioneered by Ninian Smart, emphasises studying religion through the eyes of practitioners rather than imposing outside judgments. Smart's framework of seven dimensions (doctrinal, narrative, ritual, experiential, ethical, social, material) helps learners appreciate religion as a complex, lived reality. This avoids reductionist approaches and helps students respect diversity by engaging with religion as multi-faceted.

RVE Implications:

- Study religion through multiple dimensions, not just beliefs.
- Focus on empathy and understanding from within the tradition.
- Avoid stereotyping by showing diversity of expression.

Example Tasks:

- **Dimension Journals:** Record observations of doctrine, ritual, and ethics after studying a tradition.
- **Comparative Analysis:** Compare Christianity and Buddhism using Smart's dimensions.
- **Experiential Letter:** After visiting a service, write a letter reflecting on what it felt like.
- **Field Studies:** Visit places of worship and reflect using the dimensions framework.
- **Narratives Project:** Collect personal faith stories and analyse them through Smart's model.



11. Experiential Religious Education

Explanation:

Experiential Religious Education (ERE) extends experiential learning by immersing students in the lived experience of religion across intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual levels. Rather than observing from the outside, students engage directly with practices, communities, and reflective activities. This approach helps them understand religion not only as a set of beliefs but as something embodied in daily life and identity. It fosters empathy, respect, and personal growth.

RVE Implications:

- Use immersive encounters to bring religion to life.
- Facilitate reflection on how experiences shape understanding.
- Encourage students to see religion as a lived and relational phenomenon.

Example Tasks:

- **Participatory Rituals:** Take part in (or observe) a service and reflect afterwards.
- **Service Projects:** Volunteer at food banks, linking to religious values of compassion.
- **Interfaith Dialogues:** Visit diverse places of worship and engage in structured conversations.
- **Simulated Ethical Decisions:** Role-play dilemmas faced by religious groups.
- **Retreats/Outdoor Learning:** Nature walks or meditations linked to spiritual traditions.



Conclusion

Each of these pedagogical approaches offers a different lens for teaching RVE, but together they create a coherent and purposeful framework. By ensuring that all learners are supported to make meaningful progress, teachers can nurture respect for diversity and allow every pupil to engage with complex religious and philosophical ideas at an appropriate level. Promoting the development of learners' religious literacy skills enables them to practise key competencies such as summarising, analysing, reflecting, and evaluating—skills that equip them not only for RVE but for wider learning and life as ethical and informed citizens. Providing support through specialist knowledge, practical skills, and lived experience in RVE ensures that teaching is both inclusive and engaging, giving learners the confidence to explore different worldviews critically and compassionately.

Taken together, these approaches encourage personal growth and critical engagement, helping learners to form their own well-grounded perspectives. The result is an RVE curriculum that is inclusive, engaging, and transformative—preparing young people to contribute thoughtfully and respectfully to a diverse and pluralistic society.