



Teaching Controversial Issues in the Secondary RE Classroom

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Roadmap

Research project



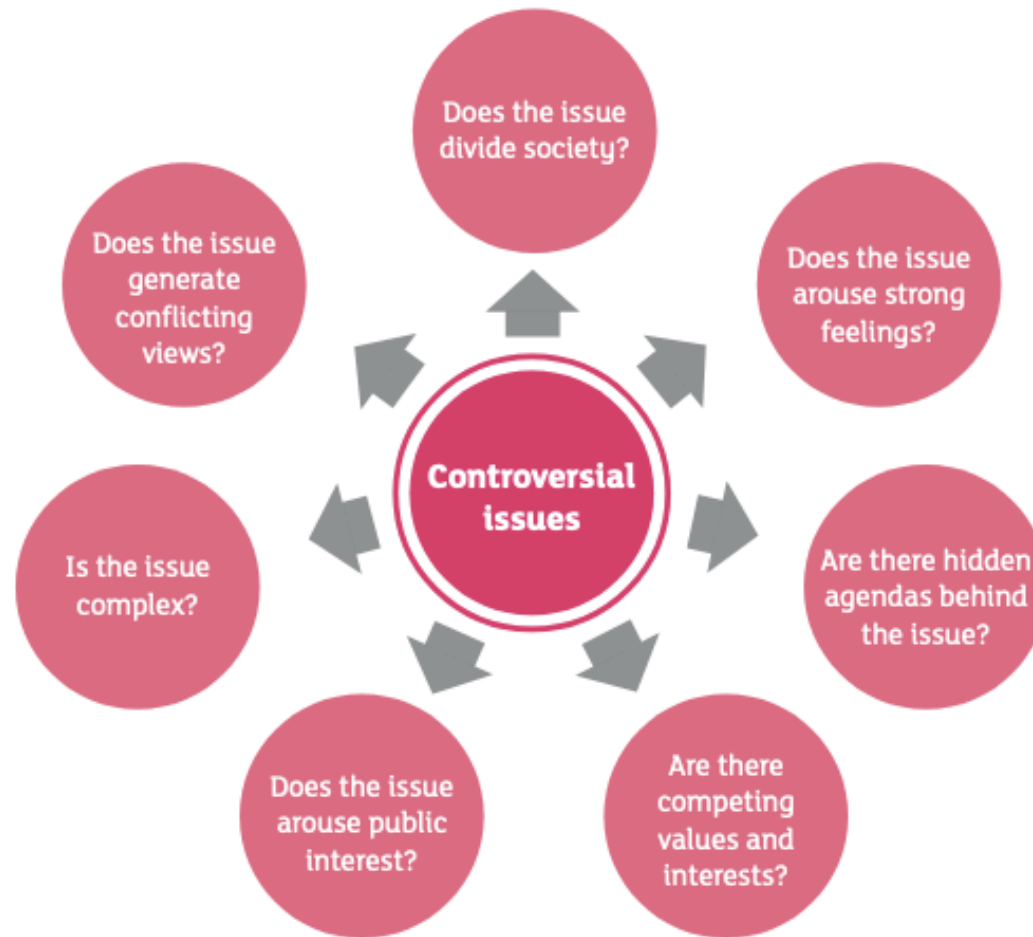
Background



Discussion and Reflection



Which issues
are the most
controversial?



A word cloud centered on the phrase "controversial issues". The words are arranged in a circular pattern around the center, with varying sizes and colors. The central text "controversial issues" is the largest and most prominent. Other words include "marriage", "divorce", "homosexuality", "religion", "faith", "freewill", "animal rights", "stereotypes", "censorship", "abortion", "human rights", "cloning", "genetic manipulation", "care", "violence", "politics", "creation", "punishment", "contraception", "extremism", "racial profiling", "palliative care", "belief", "sustainability", "discrimination", "poverty", "global warming", "euthanasia", "polygamy", "hell", "conflict", "gender", and "family planning".

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controversial issues

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palliative care

Controversial issues are important

Teaching must promote openness, respect for others, objectivity, scholarly accuracy and critical enquiry.

Pupils are therefore entitled to be taught by teachers who:

- a. have secure subject knowledge
- b. are capable of addressing misconceptions and misunderstandings and handling controversial issues
- c. demonstrate a critical understanding of developments in the study of religion and worldviews
- d. promote the value of scholarship.

Why teach Controversial issues?



Controversy at the heart of religion/worldviews



Controversial issues affect young people and they are motivated to tackle them



Controversial issues form the basis of individual or societal change



Helps in the preparation for adult life



Developing thinking skills



Personal and interpersonal development

Attitudes towards controversial issues

Inadequate training
(ITT/CPD) and no
formal guidance

Oulton et al. (2004)

Lack of support
from colleagues
and SLT

Woolley (2010)

Worried about
getting it wrong

Woolley (2020)

Concerns about
overheating

Council of Europe (2015)

Dealing with
spontaneous, or
strong emotional
remarks

Wansink et al. (2019)

Not enough
curriculum time to
do topics justice

Anker and von der Lippe (2018)

Fear of negative
reactions from
parents and wider
community

McAvoy and Hess (2013)

Doubts as to ability
to handle own
opinions

McAvoy and Hess (2013)

Concerns about
underheating

Council of Europe (2015)

Worries about
age/stage
appropriateness

Philpott et al. (2013)



Structural



Relational



Personal



Conversational



Pastoral



The PhD research project:
Teachers' experiences of tackling controversial issues in the context of GCSE Religious Studies

- A focus on one controversial issue at a time
- Semi-structured 1-2-1 interviews
- Knowing how teachers feel helps to provide more targeted solutions

Current Call for Participants:
Female teachers' experiences of teaching abortion at GCSE Religious Studies

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What advice would you give to a ITT Student who was teaching a lesson on a controversial issue?

- Planning and Preparation
- Resources
- Classroom dynamics/ behavioural management
- The teacher's own opinions
- Role or position of the teacher during discussion
- Pastoral issues
- Parents/Local Community/ Senior Leaders



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In Conversation with.... Abi Maguire

28th October 4.14 – 5.15pm

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