

## MINUTES OF REMC SECOND MEETING, EDINBURGH, 2-3 SEPTEMBER

### **Conceptual framework and research questions**

There was a very useful discussion of the conceptual framework and the central research questions. It was agreed that the framework should include an explicit definition of religion, and should explicitly state that our study encompasses beliefs that are not religious in nature. The lack of focus on the peer group as a potential influence was pointed to as a gap in the existing draft of the framework.

Ides presented Borjas' 'adaptive acculturation model' as a potential way of looking at the mode of State accommodation to the role of religion in schools. This was seen as a potentially useful starting-point but would have to allow for critical interculturalism as another dimension.

*Action:* Christa is to draft a short (1-2 pages) note on definitions of religion/belief in the existing literature. Sheila and Goedroen will also offer possible definitions.

*Action:* ESRI to redraft research questions to reflect the discussion.

### **Study methodology**

Bert gave a useful presentation on the experience of the Redco project and the problems they had encountered in researching adolescents. These included:

- The need for a clear definition from the beginning of the project;
- The difficulty in combining different methods (e.g. observation, interviews etc.).

We should aim to draw on the experiences of the project in this respect.

#### *Selection of schools*

*Scotland:* The schools will be in two clusters: Edinburgh (1 Catholic, 2 non-denominational with contrasting class mixes); North Lanarkshire (2 Catholic, 1 non-denominational).

*Ireland:* The schools will be in two clusters: 1 urban area (1 Catholic middle-class, 1 Catholic working-class, 1 Protestant, 1 multidenominational) and 1 school in rural/small town area with a diverse intake.

*Malta:* 2 State schools (1 working-class, 1 diverse intake), 1 Muslim school, 1 independent non-denominational school and 1 Church school.

*Flanders:* 1 State/community school, 2 Catholic schools (1 with high Muslim intake, 1 mixed), 1 methods (multicultural) school and 1 middle-class Catholic school.

*Germany:* 2 public schools – 1 in Bavaria with high % Muslims, 1 more middle-class in Potsdam; Northern Rhine Westphalia – 1 Catholic, 1 Protestant.

Within the school, fieldwork should focus on:

- School principals;
- Regular classroom teachers or specialist teachers of religion and/or personal-social development;
- Parents of children in the upper part of primary school (aged 9-11 approximately); minimum of 20;
- Children in the upper part of primary school (aged 9-11 approximately).

We should be able to link the children interviewed to the relevant parents. However, we may interview more children than parents.

#### *Selection of stakeholders*

We can draw on the advisory committee for stakeholder interviewers. We should aim to interview 5-10 stakeholders; phone interviews are acceptable. Those covered should include: representatives of the main Churches, Ministry/curriculum body, parents' council, and teacher union(s).

#### *Interview schedules*

There was a good deal of discussion on the draft schedules for principals, teachers, parents, children and stakeholders. It was agreed that each partner would write a short note on each interview, giving their overall impressions of the interviewee and school displays etc. Any other available documents (e.g. on school policy) should be collected at the time of interview. We should also look into the possibility of taking photographs of the school (but not the children) as an aide memoire.

#### *Actions:*

- ESRI and UCD to revise principal and teacher schedules in light of discussion;
- Christa and Mary to cooperate on redrafting the parent schedule;

- Goedroen and Ides to cooperate on developing semi-structured questions for the child schedule.

#### *Methodology for working with children*

There was a good deal of discussion about possible ways of engaging children, including essays, drawings, vignettes, observation etc. Observation was seen as very time-consuming in the context of the current study as well as posing challenges for fully integrating its findings into the analyses of the interviews. It was agreed that there should be a common core element involving interviews with children but that partners would be free to explore supplementary methodologies to better capture the child's experience. Therefore, we should aim to have:

- Group interview with children;
- Short written questionnaire completed at group interview to explore more personal issues;
- Individual response in the form of drawing or writing etc.

We also discussed whether it was better to interview children in a group (for example, six) or in pairs. The Edinburgh team have offered to carry out a pre-pilot in which they compare these two approaches to see which works better.

#### *Time-frame for fieldwork*

- Piloting of schedules in early to mid October (to allow for translation of instruments); followed by feedback to the group as to any problematic issues;
- Fieldwork from the end of October; to be completed by early February;
- This would allow partners to be familiar with the interview transcripts before the meeting in April.

#### *Analysis strategy*

There was some discussion about how to structure the analyses in terms of case-studies, cross-cutting themes etc. It was agreed that a considerable portion of the April meeting would be devoted to deciding on such a strategy in light of what is emerging from the fieldwork.

### **Cross-national differences in beliefs and values**

Silvia gave a very interesting presentation on cross-national differences in beliefs and practices based on the European Values Survey 1999/2001. The analyses indicated important variation in religiosity across the study countries. It was agreed that it would be useful to conduct further analyses on the structure of religiosity (in terms of socio-demographic characteristics) as well as the relationship between religiosity and other attitudes, such as tolerance of diversity.

*Action:* Emer to compile a list of possible tabulations and circulate to the group for comment before sending to Silvia and Jaap.

### **Publication strategy**

It was agreed that we should aim to have at least one book based on the study.

Possibility:

- One book drawing on country reports and interviews with stakeholders;
- One book drawing on teacher, parent and child interviews.

Authors are also free to draw on their own national data for published papers etc. All publications should acknowledge the project team. Where a paper draws on data from two or more countries, the other country teams should be included as authors.

### **Practical issues**

It was agreed that we should aim to put all of our documents on the website as working papers. Where the material is potentially controversial, powerpoint presentations can be used rather than the full document.

It was also agreed that we should look into compiling a Word database of all of the references used.