

*Develop empathy in Religion Education. From the "big six" to Worldviews*

Religious education in England and Wales has witnessed from the 1970s onwards a redefinition of the epistemological, didactic and pedagogical structure of the discipline, in the direction of an opening towards religious diversity and overcoming the confessional perspective that distinguished it (Copley, 2008). In this shift, the opening towards religious and cultural difference coincided with the redefinition of the objectives and contents of the discipline, within which empathy acquires a new centrality (Jackson, 2019). Far from having achieved a stable equilibrium, even today the discipline is faced with a paradigm shift in which it is not only the "six great religions" that are placed at the center of programs and textbooks, but also the so-called "Worldviews" (Final Report Religion and Worldviews: the way forward. A national plan for RE, 2018). The purpose of the following contribution is to analyze at a historical level how the element of empathy has been declined, included and valued in school programs and textbooks from the seventies to today. In particular, it is intended to observe how the introduction of empathy within the disciplinary objectives enshrined in the official documents - curriculum, syllabuses, reports - has been received, translated and included by the authors of the textbooks. To this end, the continuities and discrepancies between official documents and school manuals will be analyzed taking into account the presence and implications of empathy: how has this element been included and valued in textbooks? How has the space accorded to the development of empathic capacity changed over the period considered and in line with the redefinition of the objectives and contents of the discipline? If the current proposal intends to sanction an overcoming of the "religiocentric" vision, empathy represents an effective key to interpreting and decoding the new paradigms of inclusion of all diversity, not just religious ones.