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**Fellowship Aims**

When I saw the advertisement to join the project, I was certainly intrigued. Ian Jones (Director of the Saltley Trust) and Dr Jeremy Kidwell (University of Birmingham) had organised a Teacher Fellowship Programme, focusing upon RE and the environment/ climate change. The interrelationship between ecology and the RE classroom was not a connection I had previously made or seen explicitly on a KS3 curriculum.

The project involved evening sessions led by a variety of experts to support fellows with their own projects. These projects were then presented during a symposium in Birmingham to a panel of experts.

**Focus of my project**

I was very aware when developing my project, that not all schools would be able to remove one their existing units entirely in order to make space for a topic covering RE and ecology. Criteria set by the Local Agreed Syllabus and ever-decreasing curriculum time means that it can be a struggle as it is to teach students required content, without shoehorning another topic in. So, my plan was to create an interdisciplinary unit of work that could either be a standalone topic or used as individual lessons within key topics already covered on KS3 curriculums.

My unit of work (‘People and the Planet’) is presented as a booklet, as I find these to be effective tools within my classroom. It provides clear instructions and routine, but it is important to use it as a resource, rather than a lesson. The booklet is also helpful if there is a vast array of non-specialists in the department, as it provides structure and uniformity across the whole school delivery of RE.

The ‘People and the Planet’ topic focuses on student reflection and allowing students to fully embed themselves in the narrative. In the classroom, while I make links to experiences that the students can relate to, encourage discussion/ personal reflection, etc., certain topics can be easier to make direct links with the lives of the students than others. This was discussed during our first workshop and became a focus when trialling my project in the classroom. As the topic of climate change is everywhere, students were very eager to share their personal experiences and contexts. The aim of the project is for students to fully place themselves into the narrative of climate emergency, rather than seeing it as a problem for others to solve.

**Reflection upon action research**

After planning a first draft of my booklet, I trialled the lesson with one of my year 7 groups. When first exploring the topic, students thought’s revolved around the phrases “**they** should”/ “**they** need to.” Students were all well-versed in the causes of climate change and what steps could be taken to resolve it. Many proudly shared that they recycle/ walk to school/ have an electric car, but ultimately the focus was placed upon others. Upon exploring this further, many felt they were too young, or inhibited by their family lifestyle. While I cannot change these factors, this allowed us to explore collective responsibility and how everyone can make a difference. Many activities were situation based, allowing students to apply learning to their everyday circumstances.

At the beginning and end of the topic, students created an artistic response to the phrase ‘People and the Planet.’ The initial response was completed simply based upon the phrasing, prior to commencing the topic. There was a contrast between the two responses, with the final responses showing a greater sense of connectedness and togetherness. Students have shifted towards using collective pronouns, rather than “**they**” when talking about the climate emergency.

**What next?**

The Fellowship concluded with a symposium, allowing us to share our project with the other teacher fellows. It was fantastic to hear how other teachers within different contexts interpreted the project and applied it to their setting. We were also able to receive feedback on our projects, which are being refined prior to being published on the Fellowship website.

Based on feedback, I have adjusted aspects of my project and will trial these with students. I will also be able to apply learning from the fellowship to other units of work, and share with my department.

I will be speaking along with Dr Kidwell, Ian Jones and Amy Powell at the RExChange conference later in the year about the project and the concept of a teacher Fellowship in RE as a form of research and CPD.