

WHAT ARE SCIENCE/RELIGION ENCOUNTERS AND HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THEM?



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The National Institute for Christian Education Research

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This project is being funded by Templeton World Charity Foundation as part of a wider scheme of research titled Big Questions in Classrooms.

Although studies have explored school pupils' attitudes concerning science and religion, there has been little research on beginning teachers' experiences in their development and formation and not much is known about how big questions are framed in classrooms or the extent of teachers' experiences of the science/religion encounter. This project addresses the gap, develops informed responses for teacher education and finds some preliminary understandings of the impact of the use of that knowledge in teacher education programmes.

Find out more at: **www.nicer.org.uk/science-religion-encounters**



TEMPLETON WORLD
CHARITY FOUNDATION



BIG QUESTIONS
in CLASSROOMS

WHAT ARE SCIENCE/RELIGION ENCOUNTERS AND HOW CAN I PREPARE FOR THEM?

Science Religion Encounters Toolkit 1

INTRODUCTION

We conducted a survey with beginning teachers and more experienced teachers to explore what science/religion encounters they had experienced in their classrooms. The findings are shared in this module, along with some suggestions of what you might be able to do to support your teaching around science/religion encounters in the future.

TASK 1



Identifying the science/religion encounter

In our research we asked RE teachers if science or scientific topics ever crept into their RE lessons. We also asked science teachers when religion or ethics crept into their science lessons. This could be through pupils asking questions or through intentional planning. We also wanted to know what science/religion encounters they would like to plan for in the future.

1. Make a list of the science/religion encounters you have observed in classrooms over the last year.
2. Would you like to see more of these? Why?
3. Were the encounters planned for or did they emerge from pupil questions?
4. Did you know how to handle the science/religion encounter questions that pupils asked?
5. How might you change future planning to ensure that science/religion encounters are anticipated and planned for in the future?

TASK 2



Where might science creep into RE or religion/ethics creep into science lessons?

Have a think through your different RE schemes of work. Where do scientific issues come in? Do pupils need certain scientific knowledge before they start work on your RE topic? Do you know whether they have covered that topic in science?

1. Have a look at the research summary.
2. Are there any topics here that you would like to teach more explicitly as a science/religion encounter in the future?
3. Which of these topics do you already cover?
4. Which of these topics do you find pupils asking questions about, possibly linking science and religion?

TASK 3



Support for the teaching of science/religion encounters

The beginning teachers completing our survey reported on barriers and facilitators to science/religion encounters. First look at the research summary and then answer these questions:

1. Which of these barriers might affect your approach to teaching science/religion encounters?
2. How might you overcome the barriers that limit your teaching of science/religion encounters?
3. Who might you go to for support in these efforts?
4. Why do you believe it is worth being explicit about science/religion encounters?

RESEARCH SUMMARY

An online survey was designed to explore beginning teachers' confidence and competence in planning for and responding to science/religion encounters in the classroom. The online survey was designed in response to comments in focus groups with 75 student teachers. There were 949 responses to the online survey. 324 primary teachers and student teachers completed over 50% of the survey and it is responses from this group that are analysed below.

Participants were asked to consider a number of topics which student teachers in the focus groups had raised as possible sites for science/religion encounters. The list of topics are set on Table 1 below. The topics highlighted in grey are those that were deemed appropriate for both secondary and primary teachers.

Table 1: Topics presented to online survey participants

Abortion	Blood transfusions	Experiences of Covid-19
Animal antibodies	Designer Babies	Mass vaccination
Big Bang	Euthanasia	Gender identity
Climate Change	Care for the environment	Conception of life, growth and change
Creation stories	Philosophy of science	Natural disasters
Death	Stem cell research	Human impact on the environment
Design argument for the existence of God	Evolution	Nutrition and diet

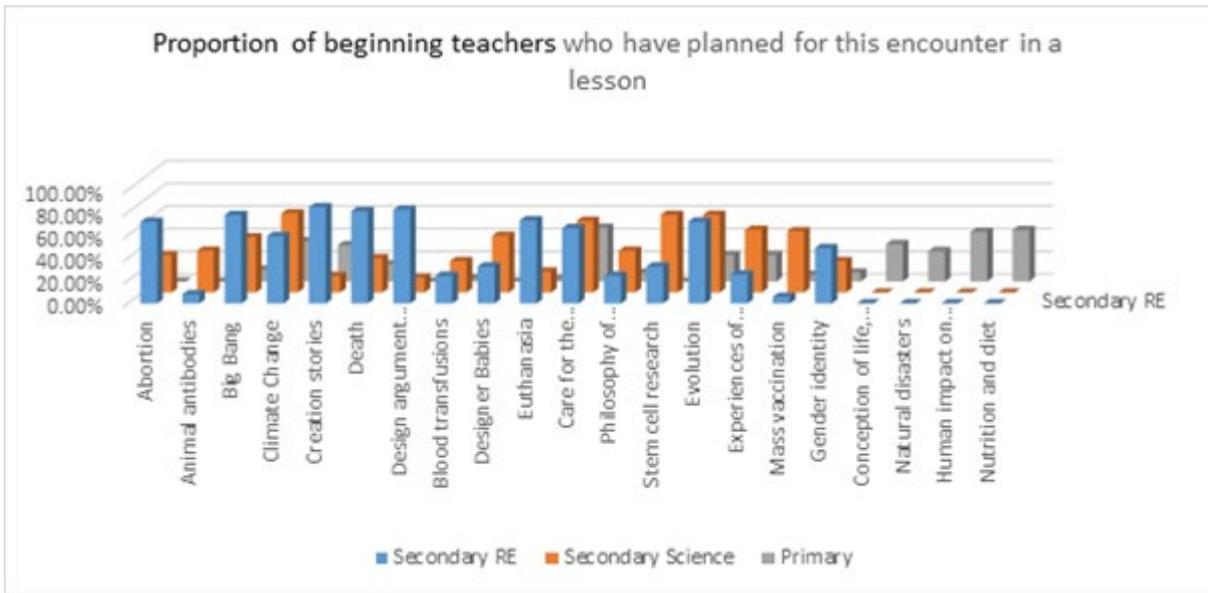
The data in this section considers only the beginning teachers, those in training of in their first two years post-qualification. For each of the topics, participants were asked to tick which ones they:

- Have planned for this encounter in a lesson;
- Have experienced pupils raising in a lesson;
- Would like to teach as a science/religion encounter in the future.

Have planned for this encounter in a lesson

The proportions of participants who said "yes" they have planned for this encounter in a lesson are presented in Figure 1.

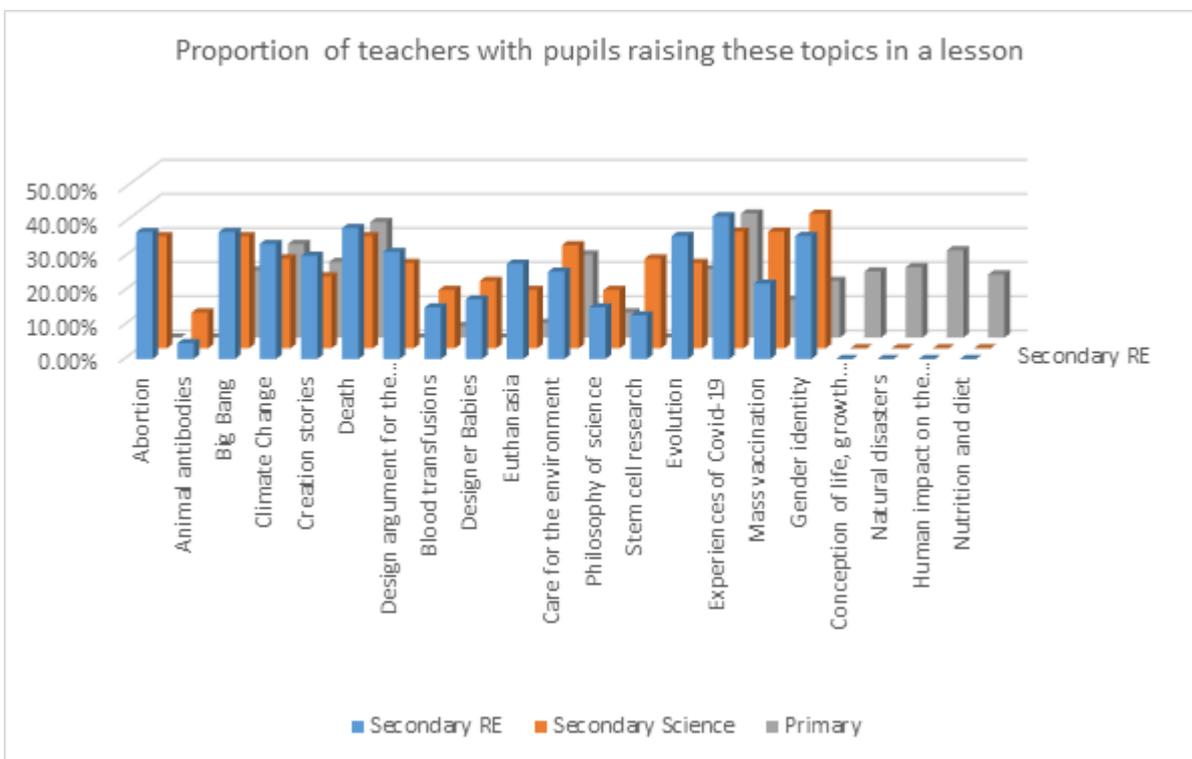
Figure 1: Proportion of beginning teachers who have planned for this encounter in a lesson



Pupils raised this topic in a lesson

The proportions of participants who said “yes” students raised this topic in a lesson are presented in Figure 2.

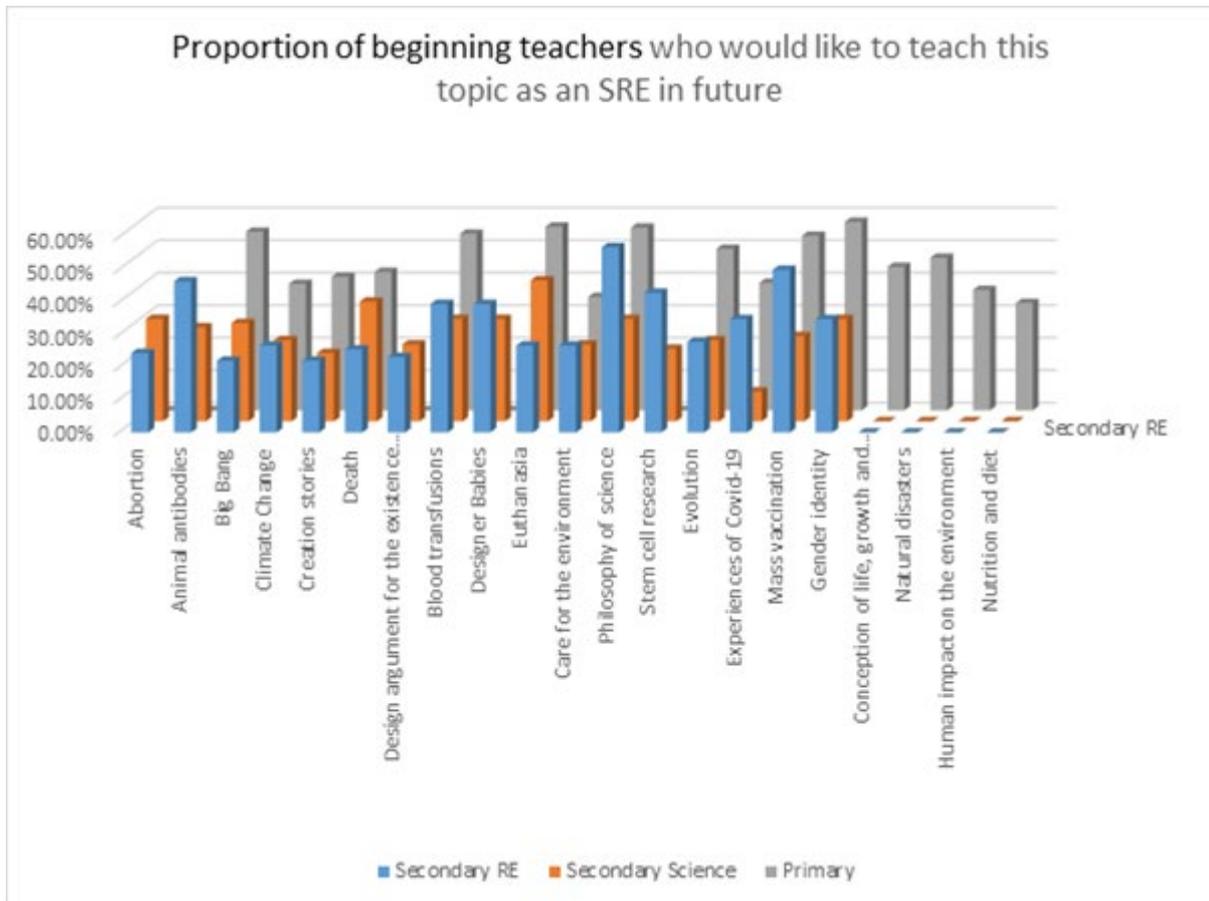
Figure 2: Proportion of teachers with pupils raising these topics in a lesson



Would like to teach in future

The proportion of participants who said “yes” they would like to teach this as an SRE in the future are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Proportion of beginning teachers who would like to teach this topic as an SRE in the future



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