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Deliverable 5.4: Report for Follow-up Steps from Docutubes Workshops

Contributor(s):	Dr John Maiden Dr Stefanie Sinclair Prof John Wolffe
Institution:	Open University
Contact:	john.wolffe@open.ac.uk

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The 'Docutube' Process

In these workshops, teenagers created so-called 'docutubes'. These are short films of about 3 mins length, similar in style to Vlogging videos on YouTube, although the films produced thus far have varied considerably. The workshops adopted a hands-on approach to learning that encourages young people to be active, express their voice and 'make and do', rather than 'sit back and be told' or simply recall facts. We found that the creative process of making short films can be a good way of encouraging young people *actively* to engage with and reflect on issues relevant to religious toleration and peace in the past and present. This process can also support the development of a range of other important skills, such as team working, and inspire young people to connect with each other, stimulating their curiosity and imagination. Importantly, while every effort was made to enable the young people to make the best films possible, the emphasis was always on the films as a means to an end – that is, to create opportunities for independent thought, critical thinking and working 'with' history - rather than an end in themselves.

The docutube workshops have four different phases: Engage, Plan, Create & Reflect.

In the first phase of the workshop, young people (aged 12-18) *engage* with RETOPEA materials, so-called 'clippings' produced by researchers on the RETOPEA team. By 'clippings' we mean short texts extracts, images or short videos that give examples of religious diversity and tolerance in the past and present. The RETOPEA clippings aim to provide young people with historical knowledge and serve as sources of inspiration to think about past, present and future forms of religious diversity and religious coexistence in an informed and empathetic way. In the ***Engage*** phase of the docutube workshops, discussion is facilitated about religious diversity in the past and in present-day society (including representations of religious diversity in the media). Facilitators then introduce a selection of RETOPEA clippings to each group from the RETOPEA website, although older young people were given more scope for selecting their own clippings. In the discussion of the clippings, young people are encouraged to make connections between past and present (the latter could include their own observations and experiences of religious diversity, toleration and peace; or a contemporary issue which is in the news). The young people are also encouraged to think 'out loud' about what religious tolerance might mean.

In the ***Plan*** phase of the workshop, young people are asked to work together in small groups of three or four to

- plan their film and produce a 'shooting script' for a docutube, inspired by the RETOPEA clippings. A shooting script is a table which places the intellectual and visual aspects of a film alongside each other.
- do a 'pitch' , explaining their plans for their 'docutube' to the workshop facilitators, and if necessary taking some further time to revise their ideas

In the ***Create*** phase, young people film and edit their docutubes. They can approach their docutubes in a range of different ways. They can, for example, film objects, produce artworks, interview each other or other participants, or reconstruct or reenact historical events. Films were sometimes made on school premises, on the streets or in locations such as religious buildings or museums.

In the final phase of the workshop, the ***Reflect*** phase, the young people watch each other's films and reflect on the process of taking part in the workshop, considering questions such as:

- *Have your thoughts on religious toleration changed?*
- *How did you find history could help us think about the present?*
- *What can we do to shape the society we live in?*

Additionally, the young people are invited to reflect on their experiences of working as a team, of engaging with the film-making technology and other practical aspects of the Docutubes.

The aim of these workshops is for young people to deepen their knowledge, engage in historical and critical thinking, and talk with their peers about religious diversity, toleration and peace. The process of making the docutube is just as -if not more- important than the end product of the film itself.

The Pilot Workshops

Our approach to the workshops was shaped by a preliminary series of focus groups with young people conducted in 2018 and 2019 and designed to give us insights into their attitudes to religious diversity and history. These discussions are described and analysed in John Maiden, Stefanie Sinclair, Päivi Salmesvuori, Karel van Nieuwenhuyse and John Wolffe 'Views of the young: Reflections on the basis of European pilot studies' in Riho Altnurme, Elena Arigita and Patrick Pasture, eds, *Religious Diversity in Europe: Mediating the Past to the Young* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022), pp. 33-49. In general we found that participating young people were accepting of religious diversity in the present, but had very stereotyped views of the past.

Following a planning workshop with RETOPEA team members at The Open University in December 2019, in February 2020, we initially piloted a docutube workshops with a group of university students

at KU Leuven. At that time our intention, in line with the original project schedule, was to run a subsequent series of pilot workshops with all the RETOPEA partners during the spring and summer of 2020.

Unfortunately, however, our plans were unavoidably severely disrupted and delayed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Not only were members of The Open University team unable to travel to partner institutions to hold workshops, but across Europe schools were closed and face-to-face meetings severely restricted. Hence the face-to-face team working inherent to the process was impossible and we had no option but to postpone the workshops.

During the autumn of 2020 as schools re-opened we began to explore ways of resuming the programme of pilot workshops, initially with The Open University team participating online, with international travel still impossible or severely restricted. Ongoing pandemic conditions and restrictions meant that progress was slow, but we were eventually able to complete the programme of pilot workshops in August 2022, involving a total of 97 teenagers (aged 12-18). The workshops were held in a range of different circumstances with participants of different age groups recruited in a variety different ways, as illustrated by the following summary:

Tampere University Teacher Training School, Finland: December 2020 – January 2021. The workshop was offered as a course option to students aged 17 and 18. 13 young people took part. It was conducted over a period of weeks in sessions of 1 to 2 hours. Due to pandemic restrictions, it was not possible for RETOPEA team members from either The Open University Team or the University of Helsinki to be present in person, but support was provided through online conferencing by members of the Open University team (Dr John Maiden, Dr Stefanie Sinclair and Prof John Wolffe), colleagues from ClearFocus Production as well as Dr Päivi Salmesvouri (University of Helsinki) and two students from students training to be teachers at Tampere University. Despite the unavoidable limitations of remote support, the approach was relatively successful and deemed an appropriate model for further pilot workshops as necessary. As participants expressed an interest in including interviews in their docutubes, the team developed further consent forms and procedures in consultation with the Ethics Board to enable young people to do so.

Hugo Treffner Gymnasium, Tartu, Estonia: February – April 2021. This followed a similar model to the workshop in Tampere – ie a course presented over several weeks to 17/18 year-old students with The Open University team participating remotely, although, helpfully Prof Riho Altnurme from the University of Tartu was able to be present in person. This also included a visit at the National Museum of Estonia where students gained permission to film some of the exhibits. The later stages

of the workshop were disrupted by the re-imposition of pandemic restrictions in Estonia, including the closure of schools, which meant that we were obliged, exceptionally and after ethical clearance, to allow the students to complete making their docutubes at home without adult supervision.

The Urswick School, Hackney, London: June 2021. In contrast to the Tampere and Tartu workshops, this one was delivered intensively over two days. 13 young people took part, aged 15 or 16. They were volunteers approached by the school during a period following the completion of their usual courses. Prof John Wolffe from The Open University was able to be present in person and worked closely with school. In light of time constraints and safely issues in a 'rough' area of London it was decided that, in contrast to other workshops, participants would not leave school premises when filming their docutubes.

The Green School, Isleworth, London: March 2020/July 2021. Initial sessions of this workshop with an all-female group had already taken place in March 2020, when the exclusion of all visitors and the subsequent closure of the school prevented further progress. However in July 2021, following completion of their other studies, one group of three 18-year-old young women successfully resumed work on the project and made a docutube with in person support from their own teacher and Prof John Wolffe, with additional online support offered by Dr Stefanie Sinclair.

Granada, Spain: July 2021. In contrast to the school-based workshops held hitherto, participants for this workshop (7 boys and 6 girls) were recruited from a local mosque and were younger (12-14) than in the other workshops. For that reason, three mothers and an older sister also took part in the workshop, supporting and chaperoning their children in filming around the city of Granada. Participants came from a very multicultural background: from Spain, Morocco, Britain, Syria, Ghana, Ecuador, Malaysia, Colombia, France and Pakistan. Most of the young people (if not all) held Spanish citizenship but their parents did not. Some of the parents also held refugee status. It was not possible for any member of The Open University academic team to attend but the workshop was facilitated in person by Dr Elena Arigita of the University of Granada and Gail Block from our film production partner, Clear Focus, who was able to bring specific expertise on filming and editing.

Le Foyer, Brussels: August 2021 and May-August 2022. This workshop was also conducted in an informal educational setting, with participants, aged 16 to 18, from Muslim backgrounds recruited by Le Foyer through its work to promote intercultural understanding. Prof. Karel van Nieuwenhuyse from KU Leuven attended to introduce the project, and the workshop was subsequent facilitated by Le Foyer staff. A second workshop was held in LeFoyer in Summer 2022 facilitated by Ann Trappers and youth workers at LeFoyer.

Zespoł Szół Gastronomicznych, Warsaw, November 2021. This workshop was held at the University of Warsaw over a period of three full days and involved 11 young people aged 16-17. Dr John Maiden and Dr Stefanie Sinclair were able to attend in person from The Open University and support was also provided by Albert Kozik from the RETOPEA project team at University of Warsaw. The age of the young people involved allowed them to work quite independently on locations close to the university in the city. The young people attending were studying gastronomy at a local college and had already worked with some of the RETOPEA Clippings in the context of their English lessons with their local teacher in the months leading up to the workshop.

Mainz, Rabanus-Maurus-Gymnasium (RAMA), February 2022: This workshop was also held in a school over three full days with a group of 11 young people aged 18 years old, who had recently completed their A-Level History exams. Dr Stefanie Sinclair (Open University) facilitated the workshop in person together with Dr Henning Jürgens (Leipniz Institut für Europäische Geschichte, Mainz). While we began initial discussions by introducing a small selection of RETOPEA Clippings, this was the first workshop where we let young people work independently with the entire online RETOPEA Clippings collection. One group chose to stay in school filming interviews with each other and with a teacher, while the other two groups filmed in multiple locations across the city of Mainz. There was an arrangements with the Landesmuseum enabling students to film there.

Skopje, Macedonian Centre for Intercultural Cooperation (MCIC), May 2022: This workshop was held in an informal educational setting over a period of three full days with a group of 16 young people (aged 16-17) who had been recruited from two local high schools. Three small groups were formed who all filmed in multiple locations across the city of Skopje. Dr Stefanie Sinclair (Open University) facilitated the workshop in person, supported by Goran Stamatoski (MCIC). Prof Lidija Georgieva (Ss. Cyril and Methodius University, Skopje) also joined the final day of the workshop for the screening of the docutubes.

Evaluation

In order to evaluate the pilot workshops, the RETOPEA team asked participating young people to give feedback, both in the form of anonymous questionnaires, as well as in the context of semi-structured focus-group interviews.

A total of 65 students who took part in Docutube pilot workshops completed anonymous evaluation questionnaires.

Questionnaire findings:

1. **'The RETOPEA project has helped me to think of religious peace and toleration in new ways'.** (Please circle one of the following answers.)

Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
4 (6%) Total: 65	3 (5%)	4 (6%)	49 (75%)	5 (8%)

2. **'History can help us understand how to approach religious peace and toleration in society today'** (Please circle one of the following answers.)

Disagree strongly	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
	2 (3%)	6 (9%)	0 (46%)	27 (42%)

3. **'The RETOPEA sources I used for the Docutube film helped me to ask questions about religious peace and toleration.'**
(Please circle one of the following answers.)

Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
2 (3%)	4 (6%)	9 (14%)	41 (63%)	9 (14%)

4. **'Making a Docutube film helped me learn about religious peace and toleration'.** (Please circle one of the following answers.)

Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
2 (3%)	7 (11%)	4 (6%)	36 (55%)	16 (25%)

5. **'I enjoyed making a Docutube film.'**[1]
(Please circle one of the following answers.)

Disagree Strongly	Disagree	Don't know	Agree	Strongly Agree
		4 (6%)	20 (31%)	40 (62%)

[1] Question 5 only as a total of 64 answers as one person did not answer this question. All other questions have 65 responses.

Findings from the evaluation of the pilot workshops indicate that far from being a distraction, the filmmaking process can stimulate deeper learning and reflection compared to conventional classroom discussion as it involves active and creative engagement with the learning materials. Our pilots highlighted the effectiveness of creative approaches to learning with history and to critical thinking about the past and present. Our findings furthermore support the hypothesis that multisensory, 'hands on' approaches that allow room for exploration and creative freedom can support deep learning. The vast majority of young people who took part in the evaluation of these workshops said they enjoyed the process of making a docutube and felt they had learned a lot from it. They liked, for example, that filmmaking is a very hands-on, creative process and enjoyed learning about other people's opinions and expressing their own views. Open comments on the questionnaire stated, for example, that 'Filming and interviewing allowed me to learn about religious peace and understanding what other people think.'

Participants fed back that they very much appreciated the opportunity the workshops gave them to form and express their own opinions and that they felt inspired to think more about the role of religion in society in the past and present. In their open comments on the questionnaires, participants stated, for example, 'It has made me realize and think about religious peace and how my actions can help keep peace.' Or they commented, 'I have learnt about many other cultures and beliefs, I have learnt many new things and learnt about how much an impact religion actually has on many people.' Others fed back that 'The Retopea project has taught me that in history we have had events of peace between Muslims, Christians and Jews.' In the workshop discussions, young people also expressed desire to learn more about different religious traditions and religious history, particularly in their local environment. The evidence suggests that docutubes – both the creative engagement with historical sources and the process of filmmaking – provide a means of addressing the 'presentist' epistemology which young people tend to have when thinking about the past.

Some docutubes that were made in the context of the pilot workshops did not explicitly refer to any specific RETOPEA clipping. However, in their feedback, many young people said that working with the clippings had inspired them to think about how religious diversity is represented and reflected in their own environment, their own school, their own community group or their own city. We found that it was important to keep bringing the young people back to the historical examples of religious diversity, as they might tend to focus more on contemporary examples and their own experiences. However, with some input from the teacher or the RETOPEA team, it was usually possible to achieve this balance.

Many participants said that they saw the benefits of the fact that the process of making films relies on teamwork (stating, for example, 'I learnt that teamwork and collaboration can lead to great work.'). They also stated that it was important to them to work with others in a relaxed, but respectful atmosphere, and that they appreciated and enjoyed the fact that the workshops created a 'safe space to speak out'.

The workshops highlighted the value of respectful, 'open minded approach' to discussions with young people about religious toleration and peace, facilitation of a 'safe space to speak out', express their own opinions and share experiences. It became apparent that the process of making docutube is more important than the end result, given that this process can support the development of a wide range of skills, incl. critical thinking, team working, presenting, public speaking, filmmaking and editing skills, as well as different forms of literacy, such as cultural, historical, religious and media literacy.

Dissemination

The RETOPEA materials, including the docutubes filmed by young people taking part in our workshops, will (with their or their parents' permission) be shared on the RETOPEA website. We have also developed an online short course entitled 'Young people and religion: creative learning with history' for educators, teachers and youth workers. The course is available free on the Open University's OpenLearn platform and explains how to run the docutube workshops and use the RETOPEA resources, without the presence of members of the RETOPEA team after the completion of the RETOPEA project. The course is currently being translated into the other major project languages – ie Dutch, French, German, Polish and Spanish – in order to facilitate widespread adoption across Europe. Participants who successfully complete it will earn a digital 'badge' as evidence of their achievement, which may be used as evidence of Continued Professional Development.

We are also encouraging educators who run the docutube workshops beyond the lifespan of the RETOPEA project to keep in touch with members of the RETOPEA team to share their experiences. We have been encouraged by the Culham St Gabriel Trust, an organisation based in the United Kingdom which aims to foster broad-based, critical and reflective eduction in religion and worldviews, to bid for funds to further develop and disseminate the Docutubes approach. If successful this will allow The Open University team to employ a part-time member of staff to set-up further docutube workshops, this time for young people in the sectarian/peace-making context of Northern Ireland and in more challenging socio-economic contexts in the North of England.

The RETOPEA team have presented the workshop findings and drawn attention to the docutube workshop method and the freely available RETOPEA educational resources at a wide range of events. This included presentations and panels at academic conferences, such as conferences of the European Association for the Study of Religions (2021), the British Association for the Study of Religions (2020, 2021 and 2022), the European Social Science History Conference (2021), the European Conference on Religious Dialogue and Cooperation (2022), and the Religious Archives Group (2022). There was also a presentation to an online conference on 'Principles into Practice' at the School of Education, Oxford Brookes University in May 2021 as well as seminars, conferences and events aimed at engaging educators and young people to promote the docutube workshop model and the RETOPEA resources to the wider public. This included a presentation on 'Methodological impulses for communicating research results on religious toleration and peace in European educational contexts' at an online event organized by the Kreisau Foundation (Fundacja Krzyżowa) in Poland on the 26th of November 2020, an online seminar entitled 'Can History Help? Creative approaches to peacemaking and tolerance in Europe' on the 24th of Feb 22, presented as part of the URI Europe/ BARAZA webinar series on the occasion of World Interfaith Harmony Week 2022, as well as online information sessions on 'Making docutubes' organized by the RETOPEA team and advertised to a wide range of European teaching networks. One of these sessions (held on the 8th of June 22) was specifically targeted at teachers and a further session (on the 22nd of June 22) was targeted at educators working in moreinformal settings, such as museums or youth clubs. Members of the RETOPEA team also held a docutube taster workshop on 'Engaging with history through filmmaking: The RETOPEA project' with 19 participants (aged 18-30) from all over the world as part of histoCON, an international history festival for young people, organized by the Federal Agency for Civic Education in Germany (Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung) and held in Berlin on the 7-10 September 2022.

Next Steps and Recommendations

The unavoidable delays, consequent on the pandemic, in completing the pilot workshops and the online short course limit opportunities for further dissemination and impact within the funded lifetime of RETOPEA. However insofar as other commitments allow, the team intend to continue to promote the methodology after the end of the project encouraging and facilitating further

workshops. Opportunities for exporting the concept beyond Europe will be explored, and indeed interest has already been shown by educators in the United States, and a firm invitation (via Baraza) has come for a member of the project team to attend a workshop in Oman organised Baraza and the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MARA) in celebration of the UN Day of Tolerance in November 2022

We offer the following recommendations for educational practice and policy:

1. **That the docutube workshop methodology as outlined above and explained in detail in our online course should be widely adopted in both formal and informal education.** We recognize that running a successful workshop requires a substantial investment of time by both leaders/facilitators and by participants, but the overwhelmingly positive feedback we have received demonstrates that they bring comparable benefits to the young people involved. The initial evaluation highlights the value of the 'docutube method' as a creative, hands-on approach to learning with history, stimulating critical thinking about the past and present and supporting the development of a wide range of skills (incl. team working, presenting/ public speaking, filmmaking/ editing skills) as well as literacies (incl. cultural, historical, religious and media literacy). While the model needs to be adapted to circumstances, it has proved successful with different age groups, with a variety of modes of delivery and both in schools and with youth organizations outside school.
2. **That young people should be given 'safe spaces' to discuss issues of religious diversity and toleration among themselves**. Contrary to initial concerns that participants would be reluctant to take part in such conversations, or that they would offend or provoke each other by differing views, the conversations we have facilitated have consistently prompted enthusiastic and collaborative participation. It is, however, important to establish clear ground rules and a neutral point of departure for discussion, such as that provided by the RETOPEA clippings collection. Adults should facilitate the discussion, but ensure young people feel able and encouraged to express their own views.
3. **That consideration be given to revision of history curricula to stimulate students to apply examples of religious toleration and diversity to thinking about their own present-day contexts.** RETOPEA has demonstrated the potential of history to provide significant positive examples (as well as 'cautionary tales') to prompt 'outside the box' thinking about contemporary situations, but students need time and encouragement if these are to be fully understood and appropriately developed. It is important, moreover, not to impose particular

readings of the past: young people should be prompted to learn **with** (rather than from) history.

4. **That further consideration be given to the balance of risk and benefit in engaging with youth culture in matters of religious toleration and diversity.** RETOPEA's potential to engage young people through film has been constrained by ethical concerns about inappropriate online sharing of personal or controversial material, which have in particular prevented us from permitting participants to use their own mobile phones. Our experience, however, has been that legitimate though these concerns are, they can be overstated, and that if we are to inspire young people to further the cause of religious toleration and peace, we need to be prepared to trust them more than we have done. We therefore recommend that the way forward lies in promoting awareness of risks, not least to themselves, and carefully monitoring their activity, but avoiding the kind of close adult control and supervision that limits their own creativity and enthusiasm.

That to obtain full benefit from the work that has been done and the resources produced, there should be further investment in dissemination, promotion and evaluation. While the pilot workshops have demonstrated the viability and value of the methodology, the pandemic has limited the range of workshops that we have been able to run within the funded lifetime of RETOPEA. The requisite resources are now available, but further work to raise awareness of their availability is essential. We also need to carry out further evaluation, to assess the longer-term impact on participating young people, and to test the methodology in differing social contexts. As stated above The Open University team is seeking further funding to pursue such work in the UK, and we strongly recommend that other RETOPEA partners explore comparable opportunities in their own national contexts and at European level.