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Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools

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Foreword

In a context of extreme digitalization and fragmentation of knowledge, education is facing epochal changes, new challenges, and serious tasks. The so-called liquid society seems to disintegrate any point of reference, and some traditional disciplines have either lost their value or are no longer taken into consideration. This philosophical mainstream is not only changing the general mentality but it is also modifying the *curricula studiorum* – both in schools and at the university level – with the significant consequence that "a legitimate plurality of positions has yielded to an undifferentiated pluralism, based upon the assumption that all positions are equally valid, which is one of today's most widespread symptoms of the lack of confidence in truth" (Pope John Paul II, 1998, para. 5).

Such paradigmatic models, engendered by the modern evolution of agnosticism and skepticism (Pope John Paul II, 1998), have stifled the highest ideals giving them the value of a mere contingency or driving them toward the domain of relativism. Such a secularized approach generates a sort of inescapable moral confusion. The dangers presented by a nihilistic mindset oblige us to reflect again on the formative and inspiring approach offered by the Catholic Church's religious education as a fundamental resource for an integral development.

The Church's theological, anthropological, and pedagogical foundations serve as a common path for an interdisciplinary attitude, underlining the basic rules of the *natural law* and giving the dialogue between different cultures a necessary basis and an effective starting point. In the light of the *lex naturalis*, "it is possible to construct a platform of shared values around which can be developed a constructive dialogue with all people of good will and, more generally, with secular society" (Pope John Paul II, 2004).

The "temptation of a facile pragmatism" (Pope John Paul II, 2004), along with a categorical refusal of metaphysics, has drastically reduced the horizons of education, confining it within the narrow bounds of strict accuracy or of a sophisticated technocratic mentality. The first goal of religious education is to reaffirm the *person* at the center of any pedagogical discourse contrasting the positivistic illusion of absolute independence. This is a service offered to reason itself, which becomes

open to the *other* in a dialogical vision. The person has a plurality of dimensions that cannot be ignored in the name of a secular reductionism, which disregards any spiritual and religious dimension.

A *natural inclination to the truth and the good* belongs substantially to each person, and it is of great assistance for the development of personal and social responsibility. A fruitful connection between knowledge and action should go beyond the functional paradigms of competitiveness and efficiency:

> education works to achieve unity amongst different forms of knowledge and pursues consistency. It encompasses the affective and emotional domains, and is also endowed with an ethical dimension: knowing how to do things and what we want to do, daring to change society and the world, and serving the community. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2014, para. 14)

A radical and irrational indifference to such an inspiration deprives the person of that central convergence of *rational and spiritual*, *cognitive and emotional* which forms a "vital harmony between faith and culture" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, para. 10). A formative dialogue and a peaceful confrontation help to avoid separating individuals into autonomous and impenetrable worlds and favor encounter and reciprocal transformation (Pope Francis, 2013).

From a pedagogical perspective, the teaching of Catholic Religious Education is by no means a fortress in the desert. Its own nature is multidisciplinary, with a clear openness to the universe of all the disciplines, thus forming a bridge toward intercultural and mutual understanding. Where religious education is taught,

> school and society are enriched with true laboratories of culture and humanity in which, by deciphering the significant contribution of Christianity, the person is equipped to discover goodness and to grow in responsibility, to seek comparisons and to refine his or her critical sense, to draw from the gifts of the past to understand the present better and to be able to plan wisely for the future. (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009)

As the different articles of this publication demonstrate – through a series of interesting and critical points of view – Catholic Religious Education is confronted with many challenges from the risk of marginalization to the confusion produced by a religious indifferentism leading to a strictly comparative or neutral method in the study of religions (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, para.12). It is essential to take into account in our research perspectives that Catholic Religious Education is not only a subject but also a mission in the light of the *diakonia* of truth in the midst of humanity (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009). The Church, with her perennial teaching, "offers to each generation the revelation of God from which it can learn the ultimate truth about life and the end of history" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, para. 20).

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Preface

Reading this book is like looking through a kaleidoscope. Its 24 essays are like so many pieces of the whole whose brilliance is enhanced by their ever-changing relationships with others within the whole. As with a kaleidoscope whose slightest twist of the hand yields new patterns and possibilities, so too with Catholic Religious Education in schools as seen through the lenses of multiple countries, cultures, ethnicities, languages, and theological and educational thought.

In this millennium we are witnessing the collision of people of faith and new thresholds, both of which require new ways of seeing, speaking, and acting. The collisions occur when communities of faith or factions within them become estranged. Also, boundaries separating religious groups have become more porous in this globalized contemporary world. There are many who worry that such blurring of identity weakens religious belonging especially among youth.

As these essays reveal, religious education is deeply affected by the complex problems and practices which result from encounters with "strangers" who attend Catholic schools alongside Catholic students and those who are responsible for administering, evaluating, funding, and teaching them. Questions then arise such as how should teachers pass on a Catholic *heritage* as a *living tradition* in such diversely populated schools.

How is it possible to teach both for commitment and critical thinking? And just what does it mean to be Catholic in a postmodern world?

Several authors affirm that Catholic Religious Education makes sense only in terms of a vibrant Catholic intellectual life. No Catholic school can claim Catholic identity unless a critical mass of faculty is intellectually committed to Catholicism. This is especially true in Catholic schools whose student body includes children and youth from multiple religious traditions. More than tolerance is necessary in such situations. Genuine hospitality is needed, as is emphasized by several of the authors. The root *hospitare* is "to receive a stranger." And as many Church documents instruct, and as the current Bishop of Rome, Pope Francis, models, encounters with those from various religious traditions should be characterized by mutual respect, reverence, and openness to the truth and grace of the other. Catholic schools could

serve as compelling examples of how life can be lived harmoniously amidst marvelous differences.

To do so religious educators should not resist the unprecedented diversity of belief systems that permeate contemporary existence, but should face the challenge head on and recognize that each provides opportunities for deepening religious insight, understanding, and respect. A twin voyage into the Catholic tradition and into other religious traditions is worth the effort. Teaching students well about their own faith tradition and that of others, that is, in an intellectually honest way, will help students stay the course. Further, the continuities and discontinuities present in contemporary Catholic Religious Education should be allowed to emerge so that we all might better critically engage our own belief systems and practices.

The authors in this collection present some of the educational theories that are currently dominant or emerging in religious education. They show that although there are obvious overlaps, each country represented has a distinctive approach to these theories. Some have tended to fully adopt one or to favor one and then blend others into it. Other authors propose new models which are active, critical and imaginative, and open to new ways of thinking. The reader can quickly realize that ideas about Catholic Religious Education in schools are not necessarily Eurocentric nor should they be. Several authors urge that religious education processes could give more emphasis to complexity and ambiguity in dealing with matters of religion and life. This implies a willingness to have and to bear tension, both by teachers and learners. Some authors suggest that teachers can enhance the religious learning process by widening their methods to include much more than cognitive interpretations of doctrines, symbols, rituals, and practices. Based on various empirical studies, they propose that nurturing the religious imagination through art, music, drama, dance, and the like can greatly enhance students' ability to see the world with "eyes wide open." The arts enrich the deep structures of religious belonging and openness. And some assert that even the youngest of children deserve to be helped to live with mystery and wonder.

In many places Catholic schooling is no longer considered as the primary agency for the formation of Catholic identity; there is a shift from schooling to socialization. Authors demonstrate that religious identity cannot be separated from religious belonging and assert that Catholic schools are privileged spaces for showing how nurturing identity is a responsibility of all teachers, staff, and departments. To be sure, while religious education is not responsible for all of the problems and dilemmas that confront Church and society, it is responsible for some. Religious education teachers cannot by themselves overcome the ills of society, but religious education must provide solutions to religious educational problems, and it can help to create better citizens of the world as some authors argue.

Teaching is an intentional activity which is differentiated from other activities such as propagandizing, conditioning, and indoctrination. It is aimed at the achievement of learning in such a way as to respect the students' intellectual integrity and capacity for critical thinking. Teaching is also proposing. Whether we approach knowing analytically or phenomenologically, there is no datum unpatterned, no figure without ground, and no fact without theory. There is no way to look at the world

with eyes that are wholly pristine. The images, models, ideas, and expectations which we bring to learning come from a number of places, function in a variety of ways, and have a significant influence in shaping our experienced world. Religious education helps students to recognize how religious symbols and images provide the fundamental archetypes for organizing and shaping their religious environment. These principles are explicitly addressed by some of the authors and implicitly affirmed by several others. Such congruency highlights and affirms the relevance of this work for Catholic Religious Education in a globalized world. Just as a kaleido-scope continues to delight and surprise with new patterns and connections, so too will this volume continue to enrich readers who return to the articles.

"The future belongs to believers whose hope will not deceive them" (Romans 5:5). It calls for a bold and daring spiritual imagination. While the future guarantees no kindness to those who in the name of reasonableness or practicality fail to make the larger proposals so that children and youth will have faith, the authors in this volume do much to ensure that:

> What we have loved,
> Others will love,
> and we will teach them how.
>   William Wordsworth, *The Prelude*

We could not ask more of such a timely and provocative collection. It is a gift to the profession and to Catholic Religious Education.

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Contents

Contributors

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Rev. Prof. Mario O. D'Souza CSB has published widely in international journals. His research interest focuses on Catholic education in a philosophical context. Though hermeneutics and contextual theology have drawn our attention to particular history, time, and culture, Mario remains interested in the universality of Catholic education and exploring Catholic education across boundaries and borders. He has a special interest in the thought of Jacques Maritain, Bernard Lonergan, and Josef Pieper.

Paul Faller taught in Catholic primary and secondary schools before taking up his present position at the Catholic Institute of Education, South Africa. From 1998 to 2003, he played a key role in two ministerial committees in South Africa where, representing Catholic education, he helped shape the religious education policy of the country. From 1999 to 2007, he chaired the African Curriculum Consultation on Religious Education in Schools in various countries on the continent. He has coordinated the development of policy and curriculum for religious education in Catholic schools, in both primary and secondary contexts. He also delivers and has helped design courses for religious educators at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in collaboration with St Augustine College. His current work includes the promotion of meditation in schools, the development of distance learning in religious education, and research into a new curriculum for Catholic primary and secondary schools.

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Chapter 1
Contextualising the Catholic Religious Education Project

Adrian-Mario Gellel and Michael T. Buchanan

In an era where globalisation has brought the contemporary world together in previously inconceivable ways, the impetus to find the means to communicate on common ground has contributed to a reorientation towards intercultural and interfaith dialogue. This has also led various policy makers to either implement a policy of a separation of church and state, resulting in either not providing for the teaching of religion in the classroom or the promoting of a multifaith approach in religious education that fosters social conviviality among people of different faiths. Within such a context an edited collection on *Global Perspectives on Catholic Religious Education in Schools* may appear to be confronting in contemporary times.

However, this endeavour is necessary both for the catholic community as well as for religious education scholars, teachers and those interested in religious education. Although the teaching of religion in the classroom has a long history, the development of religious education as an academic discipline is in many ways a fairly recent one. The developments in pedagogy, catholic theology and the human sciences, the widespread adoption of compulsory schooling, as well as the rapid changes in societies have contributed to the renewal of the discipline. This renewal has become somewhat more tangible through such initiatives as the Religious Education Association in the US and the Catechetical movement in the Catholic Church, both initiated a century ago. Furthermore, this renewal is also reflected in the developments that occurred in religious education in the UK in the second half of the twentieth century as well as the recent official Catholic Church pronouncements

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on the identity of Religious Education in schools (see for instance Congregation of Catholic Education, 2009).

Yet, one must not forget that the basic sources of Catholic Religious Education go back to well before the beginning of the twentieth century. Like the other Christian churches, the Catholic community treasures teaching as one of its core ministries (see for instance Eph 4:1; 1Cor 12:28–29; 2 Tim 2:2). Christ's commandment to make disciples, literally to develop master-student relationships, and to teach all nations (Mt 28:19–20) has spurred generations of believers to reflect not only on the content but also on the pedagogy of how to share the message with different audiences. From the very beginning, we find various examples of the intimate place of pedagogy in the life and mission of the Church. For instance, van den Hoek (1997) suggests that by the mid-second century the Churches in Rome, Alexandria, and possibly also in Jerusalem, a number of house churches actually developed into school churches. The school churches consisted of members who gathered around an elder (presbyter) who was also the designated teacher. In these school churches, the faithful met to study the Scriptures, to eat meals together and to celebrate the Eucharist. Both Markowski (2008) and Young (1997) point to the centrality of the teaching ministry in constructing a Christian culture. At a time when Christians were a minority in a pluralistic and pagan society, Christian scholarly and pedagogical reflection was not done in isolation from the literature and thought of the prevailing culture. This dialogue between the Christian and the other worldviews was already present in the process of writing the New Testament where one finds evidence of the influence of Hellenistic thought and theology (Pilgaard, 1997; van der Horst, 1994). For instance, in his Gospel, Mark presents Jesus as a figure who could have been easily identified by first century readers as an itinerant preacher of salvation common in the Mediterranean region (Pilgaard, 1997; Robbins, 1984).

By the second century, the Church developed a pedagogical sensitivity towards different audiences. Thus, we do not only find a catechectical itinerary for neophytes, and another for the maturation of one's faith but also itineraries intended as protocatechesis as well as a means of conversing, arguing and exposing the message to non-Christians (van den Hoek, 1997). A glimpse of the will to dialogue and to present a worldview that is different from the predominant one may be noted in the exposition of the teachings of Christianity by Origen to the mother of the emperor, Julia Mamaea, well before Christianity was even tolerated by the Roman empire (van den Hoek, 1997).

Consequently, a commitment to be authentic to the message received through the previous generations, but at the same time an openness to the worldview of the other as well as an awareness of the multilevel reality of constructing and sharing our worldview, may be found at the very basis of the theological and pedagogical endeavour of the apostolic and post apostolic church. Notwithstanding any other examples which may point to the contrary, it is contended that this is main paradigm that is at the heart of Christian theological and pedagogical reflection. Well before any 'scientific' discourse on psychology or education, believing scholars and practitioners, such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Ignatius of Loyola, Jean Baptist de La Salle and Montessori, developed, in dialogue with the knowledge of the time, the

pedagogical as well as psychological concepts and theories in order to facilitate the teaching ministry of the Church. Their endeavour would not have been possible were they not passionate about the Word that they received and their openness to explore new frontiers.

The germ that sprang out from the nascent Church has contributed to a plurality of good fruits. This collected volume is motivated by the same paradigm that moved elders and teachers in the apostolic and post-apostolic ages. In an age of globalisation where plurality of cultures, faiths and ideas is so evident, we wish this book to contribute to:

1. Further clarify the identity of Catholic Religious Education in schools;
2. Explore means of being authentic to the message received through theological and pedagogical reflection;
3. Be open to dialogue, first and foremost with other Christian scholars and Religious Education colleagues as well as policy makers and practitioners.

In our encounters with colleagues, especially during conferences, we were always struck by how Catholic scholars are easily identifiable through their particular stance in research. Yet there is still no systematic way for Catholics working in the field of Religious Education to come together to share and discuss. The desire to facilitate this coming together is not spurred by sectarian motivations. This would indeed be going against what it truly means to be Catholic. There is a need for scholars, church leaders and practitioners contributing to the field to share their own experiences, reflections, research, difficulties and hopes within a community that shares the same language. This is, first of all needed, because there is an urgent need for catholic scholars to become more aware of the different realities and expectations in various contexts. The presence of the church in different parts of the globe over the past two millennia brings about a richness of practice, research and expertise that is in urgent need of dissemination. School-based Catholic Religious Education is accessible to millions of students worldwide, not only Church Schools but also in many State schools. Furthermore, there is a need for various stakeholders to understand and rediscover the identity of this ministry within the Church. Context influences the model and type of religious education that is conducted in school. The place and understanding of Religious Education in the wider society and within the believing community is a contested one. Even though Church documents have been paving the way for a clear distinction between religious education and catechises, we still meet with many instances where the local magisterial often reflects a lack of clarity about the distinctiveness and at times the interplay between these paradigms.

To be Catholic means to embrace universality. This should influence the way we understand and approach knowledge as well as the way we relate with the world. Consequently, a second impetus that moves this collection is to respond to pope Paul VI's invitation to be truly faithful to both message and to students with whom we are to share it (Pope Paul VI, 1975, para. 4). This implies that we need to continue in our endeavour and commitment to reflect both through pedagogy and theology. To study and work in the field of Religious Education means to be conversant

with a myriad of subjects ranging from educational theories, to sociology, to psychology and above all the different theological and religious studies and trends. On the one hand, this could be remarkably stressful for scholars and practitioners alike yet, on the other hand, it offers the possibility of approaching knowledge, and life, through a creative lens. It requires scholars and those committed to religious education to be constantly aware of change and hopeful that our work with students will make a difference in their lives and their meaningful communities.

We trust that this publication may contribute to develop a community of practice among catholic scholars working in the field of Religious Education. In the long term, it can contribute not only to enhance and strengthen the mission of the Catholic Community, but above all it can contribute to strengthen the process of dialogue with the wider community of scholars and practitioners working in the field of religious education.

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Part I
Theoretical Foundations

Just a little less than a third of the papers in this collection have been identified as being more theoretical in nature than the rest. Theory and practical implications are two sides of the same coin that should interact with each other. Thus while theoretical reflection should help us clarify our goals and actions, practice should move us to ponder on what we are doing in order to improve. It is only in this dialectic space that we can hope to progress in the discipline.

Unlike the second part of the edited collection, where the editors felt it necessary to include papers that represent all the major six geographical regions of the globe, the context of the contributors is not given priority in this section. However, in reading these papers, one should not be naïve and assume that the context does not influence the way that theory is shaped. It should be noted that the six authors hail from all the three geographical regions that are prevalently Western in outlook. Yet it is argued that the Catholic, universal, dimension of the theoretical insights are more evident.

The first four papers written by D'Souza, Gellel, Roebben and Kieran respectively deal with the nature and goals of Catholic Religious Education. It is striking the way how the four authors overlap in their reflections. The four authors concur on a number of subjects, especially on the importance of the concept of person for Catholic Religious Education, the advancement of the identity of discipline as well as the holistic understanding of knowledge.

The section is introduced by D'Souza who reflects on how the universal Church developed and clarified its understanding of Religious Education. D'Souza does this by focusing on how the themes of person, worldview, culture, justice and common good as well as the understanding of teachers and students found in education post Second Vatican council documents contributed to the construction of the Catholic meaning of Religious Education. This unusual approach allows the reader to reflect on how the slow and progressive unfolding of different themes contributed to the distinctive development of Catholic Religious Education. D'Souza firmly believes that in the context of cultural transformations, Catholic Religious Education must dialogue with other 'secular' disciplines in order to transform the world and equip

students with a strong conviction in the dignity of the human person so as to "bring about a synthesis between faith and culture and faith and life".

Gellel continues to explore this need for dialogue with all branches of knowledge. He argues that an understanding of the identity and nature of the Catholic Religious Education is not only determined by the way the believing community defines the concept of human person but also by the way it understands and lives the way of being Church. The developments in public education, society at large as well as the shift of emphasis in ecclesial models have brought to the fore the need for dialogue. In his reflection, Gellel claims that dialogue is not only a need but that it is an intrinsic element of the identity of Catholic Religious Education in a post-Second Vatican Council period. He argues that this discipline should be tripartitely dialogical, namely with students, with the fragmented disciplines of knowledge and internally with its own pedagogical development.

Basing on the centrality of the dignity of the human person in Catholic tradition, Roebben requalifies the role of Religious Education in contributing to the integral growth of the human person in and through the project of the school. It is precisely because education needs to cater for the holistic development of the student that Religious Education is duty bound to put theology at it centre. If it fails to do so the student will be deprived from the possibility of finding "a safe space for understanding oneself as a vulnerable pilgrim in life". He argues that children and young people are doing theology in their effort to understand their attachment to "ultimate concerns". Religious Education should become a space where students find teachers who stand with them in their search for meaning. Thus, Roebben suggests that we should conduct theology with students in order to help them use the language of faith in order to have access to soulful experiences.

Scott takes a more direct approach in making evident the difficulties that underpin any common discourse or practice in the field of Catholic Religious education. He notes that little progress can be made in the discipline unless we seriously tackle the underlying language games. Different contexts both geographical terms and in spaces as well as educational or ecclesial environments weigh heavily on the development and practice of the discipline. Scott argues for the need of a common international integrated framework for Catholic Religious Education based on educational reasons.

The logic of the following two chapters by Altmeyer and Hackett respectively within this section may be understood as bridging between the purely theoretical and the practical issues that emerge from the context. Altmeyer's contribution is both an investigation on the communicative language and processes of Religious Education as well as an interdisciplinary exercise. The implications of this study are far reaching for the methods and pedagogy adopted in Catholic Religious Education. Altmeyer argues that if we take the aesthetical dimension of Religious Education seriously we will be enabling students to search and find an adequate way of expressing their spiritual dimension and ultimate concerns. Aesthetic learning in Religious Education helps students decipher meaning and make sense of reality. Thus poetry, art, films and music are not ephemeral means but they become central to Religious Education process itself.

The last chapter in this section is more practical in its approach. Hackett embraces an interdisciplinary approach through a dialogue with Positive Youth Development (PYD). He notes that the theory behind this psychological model is in line with the Catholic understanding of the human person and of knowledge. He translates the theoretical frameworks of PYD into an acceptable language for Catholic Religious education. He convincingly posits that by adopting PYD in Catholic Religious Education we would be contributing to a more holistic approach to education and would enable students to better integrate their spiritual dimension with their every-day living.

Chapter 2
The Progression of Religious Education Since the Second Vatican Council as Seen Through Some Church Documents

Mario O. D'Souza

The Context

This chapter examines some key Roman Catholic educational documents as a means to understand how Catholic Religious Education has developed since the Second Vatican Council. Some key themes emerge, and it is proposed that they constitute the distinctive features of Catholic Religious Education, as understood by these Roman documents. The documents will be examined under each of these themes, rather than being considered individually.

The Second Vatican Council's document *Gravissimum Educationis: Declaration on Christian Education* refers to "religious education" only once and that too in relationship to moral education (Second Vatican Council, 1965, G*ravissimum Educationis,* para. 7). Not considering religious education in particular, but commenting on the document as a whole, the future Pope Benedict XVI declared this declaration to be "weak" (Briel, 2008, p. 389). The Council's other documents on the Church's understanding of herself, on religious liberty, on ecumenism, on divine revelation, on the liturgy, on the laity and the Church's relationship to non-Christians and to the modern world were far more influential in shaping religious education for Catholics, and this overall influence has been succinctly captured: "Vatican II as a whole was an exercise in Christian or religious education" (Moran, 1997, p. 152).

Particularly influential also was the emphasis on the study and theological understanding of scripture and its implications for the whole of Christian life (see Morrison, 2003). Since the Council, there are those who maintain that the teaching of doctrine weakened subsequent to the Council, leading to the need for *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1994 (Leckey, 2006, p. 92), and those describing the state of religious education in the postconciliar years as a "creedless catechesis" (Wrenn,

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1991, p. 29). Others, helpfully, call for distinctions between "catechesis," "catechetics," and "religious education" that are necessary for Catholic education, as well as for the wider mission of evangelization and the more particular attention to religious education and catechesis (Rossiter, 1982, p. 24). Some criticisms seem unfair and appear to misunderstand the nature and the mission of the Catholic Church to the world, for example, that

> "while the Roman Catholic Church is trying to bring its Christian education up into the 20th century … it still clings to an autocratic, dogmatic, infallible system of teaching content. ... Does the teacher, and therefore the student, have a right to criticize freely the doctrines and dogmas of the church? Do teachers and students have the right not only to seek the truth but to follow it—particularly when it contradicts the specific teaching of the church?" (Stuber, 1966, p. 344).

This view seems unbalanced; the purpose of the Catholic school, as distinct from the Catholic university—which must engage in more contextual, critical, and historical study and inquiry—is to impart education according to the various stages of growth, intellectual, moral, spiritual, etc., which are more rapid and pronounced in the young and adolescents. In addition, children and the young must be taught the elements of their faith and *why* and *how* these elements form part of the *whole* of faith. Certainly, teachers must engage with and respond to students, especially older students, when they raise critical questions regarding faith and personal belief. However, surely the emphasis must be on understanding one's faith and one's personal response, with particular attention, of course, to one's cultural context and historical situation. Stuber's position suggests that students would become more cognizant of their teacher's disagreement or dissent with the Church—school students are hardly in a sufficiently sophisticated intellectual position to dissent—than what the Church actually teaches. This issue will be revisited in the section on the teacher. On the other hand, Hobson and Welbourne (2002) offer a helpful and a concise account of the "shifts and challenges" for religious education since the Council, particularly the educational place of religious education within the school curriculum.

The Church's educational documents do not often make clear distinctions between catechesis and religious education, the former being referred to more frequently than the latter. Nevertheless, it appears, at least to this author, that these documents show a progression of the understanding of Catholic Religious Education, particularly in reference to the integral formation of the student. The documents do progressively develop in outlining the elements of a *Catholic Religious Education,* without necessarily using that term.

The themes pertaining to religious education that run through these documents are neither the direct focus of catechesis—the "education of children, young people, and adults in the faith, which includes especially the teaching of Christian doctrine imparted … in an organic and systematic way, with a view to initiating the hearers into the fullness of Christian life" (Pope John Paul II, 1979, para. 18), nor the direct focus of evangelization—"proclaiming Christ to those who do not know him, of preaching, of catechesis, of conferring Baptism and the other sacraments" (Pope Paul VI, 1975, para. 17). Nevertheless, for Catholics, there is a close relationship between all three, but particularly between catechesis and religious education; the

young need to be initiated into their faith according to the various stages of growth. They must also learn about the communal, social, intellectual, ecclesial, and moral dimensions of their faith as a subject of the curriculum, including the study of other religions and learning to live amidst religious, cultural, and moral diversity. Distinguishing between "religious instruction" and "catechesis," is, per se, outlining the elements of *religious education*. Thus, the document on General Catechesis maintains that such a discipline must penetrate "a particular culture," is "defined by knowledge and values offered by scholastic disciplines," is "systematic and rigorous", keeps in touch with "the other elements of the student's knowledge and education" and "makes present the Gospel in a personal process of cultural, systematic, and critical assimilation", and should engage in "necessary interdisciplinary dialogue" and be complemented by "catechesis, homilies, and liturgical celebrations" (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 73 & 74). This seems to be a comprehensive expansion of the constitutive elements of *Catholic Religious Education*.

Methodology

Rather than examine each of the educational documents, in separate sections, for the progression of religious education since the Council, several key themes are identified and offered as the main building blocks for an integral Catholic Religious Education. Space does not allow an expansion of why the Church has paid increasing attention to the concepts of *persons* and *personhood* in the context of Catholic education; these matters have been explored elsewhere (see D'Souza, 2013, pp. 45, 47, 49–51, 55–57, 60). Suffice it to say that the Christian anthropological concept of the person dominates its educational documents, and there is a chronological expansion of the understanding of *persons* and *personhood* in the context of Catholic schools. Thus, the progression of Catholic Religious Education in the Church's educational documents will be examined thematically, and it is hoped that this will reveal the building blocks of religious education as envisaged by the Catholic Church. Finally, of course these themes have to be considered and applied within local and national situations according to the particular cultural historical, social, and the other factors that shape the local and national Churches of different regions. Such an elaboration is not the purpose of this chapter, crucial as it is for a credible and convincing Catholic Religious Education. The intention here is to extract themes that go up to make a *Catholic Religious Education*, as understood by the universal Church.

The Person

Catholic education, of which religious education is an integral part, gives primacy to the person; such an education is more than "a human activity; it is a genuine Christian journey toward perfection" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988,

para. 48). The earliest document calls for a systematic formation of the student, the formation of the "whole person," both "psychologically and morally" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 29 & 9). Such formation situates the person as a "new creation" in relation to "culture" and is undertaken as an "integral formation" encompassing human development in all its aspects, including preparation for professional life and inculcating ethical and social awareness. This is only possible when secured upon a Christian conception of the person; every educational system is based upon its own conception of the person, implicitly or explicitly. The Christian conception includes a "defense of human rights"; sees the student as "a child of God," "freed from sin" and invited to "an exalted destiny"; and proposes Christ as the perfect "model and means." The concrete living of Christian life, personally and communally, requires a wider conception of personality than the purely psychological. Thus, a well-rounded formation must be comprised of theological, philosophical, ethical, and the social teachings of the Church (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, para. 38, 17, 18, 69).

A Christian anthropology becomes progressively personal and communal (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, para. 76), culminating in the call that "the person is formed for *being-with* and *being for others* which is realized in love" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2007, para. 44). It is the document on sex education that makes a strong contribution to a Christian anthropology, stressing human corporeality as revealing the person in a distinct way, a corporeality that discloses "the meaning of life and of human vocation." The totality and complexity of the person is thus "the principle subject of education," and so, students must be incrementally introduced to "personal responsibilities associated with adulthood." An integral sex education is always a religious undertaking and part of a larger whole and will depend upon "specialists in moral and pastoral theology, catechists, educationists and catholic psychologists" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1983, para. 22, 37, & 76). Finally, while sensitive to the importance of "interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue," the confessional dimension of religious education is not to be neglected by reducing it only to a "presentation of the different religions in a comparative neutral way." This "creates confusion or generates religious relativism or indifference" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2013, para. 75). The understanding of *person* and *personality* presented is synthetic, and bringing the elements together is vital to what is often described as *the education of the whole person.* The student's personality, which is ultimately spiritual in nature, "is transcendental and yet historical, cultural and yet created, intellectual and yet practical, free and yet contained within the contingencies of space and time" (D'Souza, 2012, p. 97).

Worldview

A worldview frames religious education, and while the Vatican documents would not wholeheartedly endorse a "transition from a classicist world-view to historical mindedness" (Lonergan, 1974, pp. 1–9) that frames the discussion of some schools of theology, the documents outline a vision that is by no means static or *classicist*

(see Lonergan, 1972, pp. 300–302 for his understanding of *classicist*). An earlier document states that "total formation" must be guided by a "Christian vision of reality" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 36), which cannot be borne from "indifference, syncretism, or accommodation" given an increasing "dechristinization of the social order." Distinctions are made between secularization, "incompatible with faith or religion," and secularism—"a concept of the world according to which the latter is self-explanatory, without any need for recourse to God, who becomes superfluous and an encumbrance" (Pope Paul VI, 1975, para. 50, 52, 55). These worldviews must be countered by a "common outlook on life" through "an adherence to a scale of values." After all, the school is "a privileged means of promoting the formation of the whole man, since the school is a centre in which a specific concept of the world, of man, and of history is developed and conveyed" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 29, 8). While the key elements of this Christian vision of existence, of living and being in the world, are maintained, the progression is seen in calling for the engagement with this vision at all levels, from "elementary evangelization all the way to communion in the same faith." However, it is not an intellectual vision separated from the tonus of life; its success is witnessed when students embrace this vision and make it a part of themselves, integrating it into their lives (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, para. 28). A later document lists the features of its age that are cultural, economic, and social in nature, particularly a "radical instability" and a "narrow and one-dimensional universe." Students, in the midst of diversity and plurality, discover the world through their own choices, decisions, and actions. Truth can be known at different levels of existence, and personal responsibility renders truth incarnate; responsible choices and decisions make truth alive in the person, thereby leading to the unity of the person. The responsibility of personal choices, decisions, and actions enable students to "be open more and more to reality and to the meaning of life" leading to the development of a Christian vision of reality (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, para. 10, 57; The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, para. 17).

There is an urgent need for a Christian vision of the world, particularly as the observable, the empirical, and the measurable have become the guiding posts of consumer culture. Today, and particularly in the West, the public square is increasingly burdened by a materiality and a market corporeality of physicality. Citizens are situated within an economy, mass media, and an electronic and visual culture defined by materialistic mindset. On the other hand, religion is deemed to be intellectually unfit to contribute or comment on the cultural and material diversity of the public square. Cardinal Ratzinger confronts this reduction of the world "through the universalization of the scientific objectification of the world and the goal oriented rational organization of life" (Ratzinger, 1994, p. 127). One cannot claim to possess an integral knowledge of the created order and the truths contained by confining reality to that which can be looked at, claiming "that knowing is [only] like looking" (Lonergan, 1972, p. 238). The worlds of immediacy and meaning are related, certainly, but knowing can never be confined to sense experience alone. The document's vision of the world affirms the layers of human knowing and its implication for a vision of existence.

Culture and Synthesis

This theme pervades the documents; culture is envisaged as the theater where human persons either grow or diminish; it is the arena of their salvation. While quoting *Gaudium et Spes*, the Council's document *On the Church in the Modern World*, a later document states "the human person…can achieve true and full humanity only by means of culture." The call to evangelize culture is made knowing that "the human condition is … located between universality and particularity" (Pontifical Council for Culture, 1999, para. 1 &10).

An earlier document states that the school is one venue for the "dialogue with culture," a dialogue that is framed in the context of integral human formation which is only possible through "a systematic and critical assimilation of culture." However, this attention to culture must be directed to the lived and concrete experience of students, relating their experience to truth (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 15, 26, & 27). Given the special attention needed for the preparation of Catholic teachers, human formation and the communication of culture are linked by the role of the teacher, for "the Church not only influences culture [but] is, in turn, conditioned by culture" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, para. 20).

A synthesis that has become increasingly more prominent in the documents is between *faith and culture* and *faith and life*. Particularly striking is the assertion that "a faith that does not become culture is faith not fully accepted, not entirely thought out, not faithfully lived" (Pontifical Council for Culture, 1999, para. 1). What is rejected—and we find much evidence to the contrary in parts of the world eager to isolate religion from the public square—is that culture and religion are not "two parallel lines that never meet; points of contact are established within the human person" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, para. 51). The synthesis that is called for is both an engagement with the positive values and aspects of culture and a rejection of all that runs counter to the Gospel. It is understood that the school is not the ultimate and only forum of this synthesis, but it is a "privileged place" for such dialogue and synthesis. The school must present the Christian life systematically where the "life of faith is expressed in acts of religion." Christian formation is ultimately much more than developmental theories, useful as they are. Recognizing that such formation is a "human formation," there is the wider recognition that this formation that occurs in the context of culture and history must be focused on the ultimate goal of becoming a new creation, the seeds of which are sown at baptism. Educationally, the integral and all-encompassing process of Christian formation depends upon the realization that the "Catholic school … is a centre of life, and life is synthetic" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, para. 52, 53, 83, &109). Hermeneutics teaches us that human beings are always situated within frameworks of interpretation and understanding (Rush, 2004). Nonetheless, the Catholic engagement with culture is always located between the particular and the universal. The conviction that the *person* is the intersection between religion and culture, and that persons either unite or fragment culture within themselves, has been explored in the fourfold transcendental process: be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible (Lonergan, 1972, pp. 13–20).

Justice and the Common Good

One avenue of the Church's relationship with the world is found in the rich expression of the social encyclicals, some of which precede the Second Vatican Council: *Rerum Novarum* (Pope Leo XIII, 1891) and *Quadragesimo Anno* (Pope Pius XI, 1931) are two such examples. The social context for religious education, however, can be framed from one of the principal documents of the Second Vatican Council: "the council focuses its attention on the world of men, the whole human family along with the sum of those realities in the midst of which it lives; that world which is the theatre of man's history, and the heir of his energies and his triumphs; that world which the Christian sees as created and sustained by its Maker's love …" (Second Vatican Council, 1965, *Gaudium et Spes,* para. 2). Thus, the Church is consistently reminded that the "Christian community is never closed in upon itself" (Pope Paul VI, 1975, para. 15).

The earlier documents situate themselves in the context of cultural pluralism and, while recognizing the corrosion of relativism, call attention to build "secular society through cooperation." The Catholic school is increasingly envisaged as a community and in working to build the Kingdom of God contributes to "the common good" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 12, 14, 60 & 62). However, again in citing the Council, one document stresses that the community dimension of the school is a "theological concept rather than a sociological category" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, para. 31). This conviction is later reiterated with an important nuance: "this community dimension in the Catholic school is not *merely* a sociological category; it has a theological foundation *as well*" [emphasis mine] (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1997, para. 18). The *merely* and *as well* indicate an expansion of the social dimension when compared with the earlier 1988 document. The school must prepare students to take their place in society in working "for the improvement of social structures … conformed to the principles of the Gospel." Promoting the betterment of the whole of society, an integral betterment, is affirmed in the conviction that "religious and human freedom, the logical fruit of a pluralistic society, is not only defended in theory by the Christian faith, but also concretely practiced" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, para. 19 & 50).

Much research has appeared on the relationship between religious education and citizenship education. The documents also take up this theme, always situating Catholic citizens within the wider context of faith and an integral education. There is a call to respect state laws and those called to serve in public office. Particular civic values are identified: "freedom, justice, the nobility of work and … [pursuing] social progress … [and] a awareness of international society," all as means to the collective "search for the common good." In addition, Christian social ethics is established upon faith, and this discipline is therefore in an advantageous position to "shed light on … law, economics, and political science, all of which study the human situation." In sum, the injustice in society is to be traced to men and women who act contrary to the will of God, thus drawing attention, once again, to individual and communal

freedom (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, para. 45, 88 & 89). Social and economic injustice leads to "spiritual poverty" where citizens become "slaves to the new idols of a society which, not infrequently, promise them only a future of unemployment and marginalization." Finally, Catholic schools are places of "inculturation, of apprenticeship in a lively dialogue between young people of different religions and social backgrounds" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1997, para. 15 & 11). Christian religious educators have stressed that reality is not just some empirical block; it is also constructed by one's social environment (Boys, 1989, ix). Learning theories have confirmed that people construct "themselves through interaction with their social environment" (Le Cornu, 2005, p. 426) and that we understand ourselves in relationship to others (Euade, 1999, p. 231). It is clear that the documents, as they balance the universal perspective on Catholic education, increasingly come to recognize and appreciate the findings of modern Christian educators, and how their research can enrich Catholic education in general but its religious education in particular.

The Teacher and Students

The Church's understanding of Christian formation and instruction has evolved from a catechetical method, with a heavy reliance on apologetics. That method could be communicated generationally through teaching and instructional manuals, and while such teaching would, of course, require teachers, teaching manuals would lay out what needed to be taught and they did not necessarily have to pay too much attention to the teacher, whose faith and religious practice were taken for granted. The educational documents realize that in the face of seismic social and cultural shifts, commitment to faith and religious practice can no longer be secured upon external securities, either institutional or cultural, nor can such faith and practice be taken for granted. The faith commitment and worldview of the teacher must now be attended to in an intentional manner.

The documents begin with stressing an attitude to life, a "*Weltanschauung*" where teaching and a Christian outlook are united, a unity based upon a "scale of values;" this is what "gives teachers and adults the authority to educate." All this is directed toward the conviction that an integral education is always "the development of man from within," which is what becoming a "fully integrated human being" depends upon. The possession of Christian wisdom is what must inspire teachers, whatever they teach, recognizing, of course, that "individual subjects must be taught according to their own methods. It would be wrong to consider subjects as mere adjuncts to faith or as useful means of teaching apologetics" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 29, 41, & 39). However, the pivotal role of the teacher is found in one particular article: "the specific aim of the Catholic school depends not so much upon matter or methodology as on the people who work there.... The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in

the person of the teacher" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education 1977, para. 43).

One of the few direct references to "religious education" is a call for unity among such teachers and a "humble communion" with the Pope, thus linking the teaching office of the Pope and teachers. The teacher's role is particularly crucial in the context of wide and diverse knowledge where the young find it increasingly difficult in "ordering or prioritizing" such knowledge; they often encounter a world in which "human values are in chaos." What is needed, therefore, is human conviction in the midst of such diversity, and so the "prime responsibility for creating this unique Christian school climate rests with the teachers." The authenticity of the Christian teacher is the vital causal agent of Christian formation. The education of teachers is also noted, acknowledging that an "unprepared teacher can do a great deal of harm." Fundamentally, teachers are called to "love their students" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, 43, 9, 10, 26, 96 & 110). Another direct reference to "religious education" enjoins those responsible to teach this subject "within the timetable of the institution and within the cultural program." The teacher can introduce students not only to the perennial questions regarding the meaning of life, but also to experiencing reality and how that reality can be transformed in light of a faith commitment to the message of the Gospel (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2002, p. 54).

One document, *Lay Catholics in Schools: Witnesses to Faith* (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982), deals exclusively with the mission of Catholic teachers in light of the decreasing number of priests and religious women and men teaching in Catholic schools. It confirms that the teaching of religion and catechesis is now almost exclusively in the hands of lay teachers; "religious education," a term used at least five times, must be assumed by such teachers. This new responsibility is framed within the context of the special vocation of the laity of engaging with "temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God." It is because such teachers "live in the midst of the world's activities and professions, and in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life … and by being led by the spirit of the Gospel … [that they] can work for the sanctification of the world from within." This gives the teacher a specific social role, particularly toward justice and the common good. This call for the laity to transform the world in light of the Gospel is also a cultural task, one that must be "organic, but also critical and evaluative, historical and dynamic." While teachers must keep the spirit of inquiry alive and be open to questions and objections, they must remember that it is not their own ideas or convictions that they impart, or indeed that of some other teacher, but the teachings of the Son of God himself. Consequently, and in keeping with the delicate task that teaching is and the great responsibilities contained therein, teachers are reminded "to refrain from upsetting the minds of children and young people…with outlandish theories" (The Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, para. 57, 7, 20, 59).

The role of the teacher thus becomes increasingly more prominent as the focus shifts from a conception of education as stayed and enduring, and thus simply communicated from one generation to the next, to education and teaching as human

formation in the changing context of culture and history while recognizing that "classes and lessons are only a small part of school life" (Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, para. 47). The documents, then, present a broad understanding of education, particularly religious education, as human formation. The teacher is called to unify the human experience of students, the individual student, and also the community of learners. It seems that as education becomes more specialized and more demands are put on the curriculum, religious education gets marginalized if it is not imparted comprehensively. The documents call not only for the integral role of religious education but the integral role of the teacher as well. In a Catholic school, religious education can never be marginalized, for not only does it compromise the unity of the curriculum but the synthesis of faith and culture as well. Such a synthesis depends upon a unified curriculum where the teacher's worldview and convictions are nourished by a religious conviction, but such conviction can never only be the responsibility of the teacher of religious education. An older text declared that the Catholicity of a school is ensured by much more than that it is "staffed with Catholic teachers, offers facilities for the frequentation of the Sacraments, and has each day half-an-hour's doctrinal instruction sandwiched in between the other subjects of the scholastic programme" (Leen, 1947, p. 79).

Some Conclusions

This chapter has attempted to provide a thematic progression of a *Catholic Religious Education* since the Second Vatican Council as seen through some of the Church's documents, mainly her educational documents. There are other ways that this could have been done; for example, an examination of each document individually as to how religious education was understood as a whole. The thematic approach was chosen because it responds to how these documents are laid out. The documents elaborate upon religious education, even though that precise term is not often used. They situate religious education within an "integral education" and "Christian formation." Second, the documents show that religious instruction or religious education has a wider social, cultural, intellectual, and formative role.

The documents also show a very decisive shift away from a catechism-style religious instruction, though there is a clear appreciation of the role of catechesis and the place of a comprehensive catechism. A letter from the Congregation for Catholic Education to the presidents of bishops' conferences elaborates on the distinctions between catechesis and religious education (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2009). In addition, religious instruction, being an integral part of institutional education, must take its rightful place as a distinct subject in the curriculum of the Catholic school. This call is not only in response to the necessary comprehensive diversity that Catholic Religious Education must exhibit, but also because the cultural and social shifts that Catholics encountered after the Council were tumultuous. Such shifts meant that the institutional Catholic Church could no longer provide a universal cultural and social identity; too much had happened and changed to make

that possible or, indeed, desirable. No longer was the school situated in an environment where its Catholicity was ensured by a cohesive institutional Catholic worldview. All three agents of Catholic education: parents, the Church, and the Catholic school experienced institutional, cultural, and social changes. In such an environment, and given the various intellectual responses to these changes, it was now necessary that the Catholic schools offer a comprehensive and distinct subject that would attend to faith and religious practice, but also what that faith and practice looked like, and how it would form Catholic students, future citizens, to take their place in the world and the public square, where they must transform themselves and the world. The world was no longer divided between a Catholic world and "those others." Rather, the secular transformation of the world must be nourished by the light of the Gospel and assisted by research in the social and empirical sciences and theology, philosophy, and other disciplines to transform the world. This transformation is according to secular lines; it is not aimed at the Christianization of the world, narrowly understood. Rather, Catholic men and women in taking their place in the world and in living out what human dignity means and what the primacy of the person means, in ways more than just narrowly religious, bring about a synthesis between faith and culture and faith and life. A Catholic Religious Education must assume the leadership of such a crucial and timely task.

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Chapter 3
The Interdisciplinary Imperative of Catholic Religious Education

Adrian-Mario Gellel

Introduction

Amongst the Pope's titles, that of Supreme Pontiff is probably the most well known. The title of *Pontifex Maximu*s has most of the time been understood to mean a bridge builder. In Catholic circles, this has been mainly interpreted in terms of the Pope's role of acting as a bridge between humanity and God. Lately, it has also been interpreted with reference to the will and the need to dialogue with the world and to facilitate dialogue amongst humans. Truth be told, for most part of modernity, this has definitely not been the case. With the advent of enlightenment, secular humanism and the emergence of secular nations, Catholicism entrenched itself within secure confines, viewing change as a threat and therefore militantly condemning it and working against it.

However, as Casanova (1996) notes, these past 140 years have been crucial for the Catholic Church to its becoming a transnational entity capable of establishing a globally recognised moral authority. While it is true that various sectors of society, including media and secular groups, tend to question, if not ridicule, the Church's positions, particularly on gender and sexuality, it is also true that the teachings and actions of the Church have left an impact on societies. The encyclicals *Rerum Novarum* (Pope Leo XIII, 1891), *Mater et Magistra* (Pope John XXIII, 1961) and *Caritas in Veritate* (Pope Benedict XVI, 2009), just to mention a few, influenced concrete economical market and labour conditions, just as the persona of the recent popes have been crucial in preventing wars and facilitating international dialogue and change. Likewise, society at large acknowledges the 1,001 voluntary Catholic entities that give an invaluable service in various sectors in all four corners of the earth.

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All this would not have been possible had the Church not taken to heart its mission to be truly the salt and light of the earth and consequently to dialogue and journey with humanity. The apex of this will to dialogue is summed up in the documents of the Second Vatican Council and specifically in the Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et Spes* (Second Vatican Council, 1965a). Indeed, it is when the Church embraces the challenges of a dialogue with humanity that it can make a significant contribution to humanity. As the Fathers of the recent Synod of Bishops proclaimed, the New Evangelisation,

> carefully cultivates the dialogue with cultures, confident that it can find in each of them the "seeds of the Word" about which the ancient Fathers spoke. In particular, the new evangelization needs a renewed alliance between faith and reason. We are convinced that faith has the capacity to welcome the fruits of sound thinking open to transcendence and the strength to heal the limits and contradictions into which reason can fall. (Synodus Episcoporum, 2012, para. 10)

Most post-Second Vatican Council documents dealing with evangelisation and education emphasise the special place dialogue has, or should have, in Catholic schools and in religious education. The Church has developed the notion that schools and religious education are the privileged spaces where the encounter between faith, reason and the sciences is fostered (see, for instance, Pope Frances, 2013; Pope Benedict XVI, 2009; Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977). Such an understanding automatically calls for the need of interdisciplinarity. Yet, such a call is not always wholly heeded in the development of concrete curricula and textbooks. Although the reasons for this are varied and complex, one may claim that this difficulty is mainly due to the tension that exists between different models of Church and of its interaction with society and, consequently, a lack of clarity in the nature of scholastic Catholic Religious Education.

Being Church

While it is true that the notion of religious education is grounded in the Church's understanding of the human person (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2009; Pope Benedict XVI, 2009), it is also true that the way the Church conceptualises itself has an equal impact on the definition of the teaching of religion in schools. Regrettably, the latter truth has not received much attention. Our way of conceiving ourselves of being Church determines our epistemological understanding and consequently influences the content and methods of religious education.

Bernini's Chair of St. Peter at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome may illustrate the point. The monument, which dominates the Basilica's apse, is a large reliquary for a wooden chair which was purportedly used by St. Peter when teaching the Romans. It is a symbol of Peter's teaching authority as well as his primacy over the other apostles. The first symbol that meets the eye is the sumptuous stained glass window depicting the Holy Spirit in all his glory surrounded by a multitude of angels. The rays coming from the light emanated by the Holy Spirit, and the glory of God,

symbolised by a gilded cloud, crown the throne. The throne is suspended above four figures representing four doctors of the Church: St. Athanasius and St. John Chrysostom, hailing from the Eastern Churches, and St. Ambrose and St. Augustine, representing the Western Church. The four saintly bishops look down at the faithful while pointing to Peter's Chair. The symbolic and theological significance of the monument is clear. Revelation comes from the Holy Spirit who guides Peter and his successors. The teaching is then passed immutably from generation to generation, from the bishops to the faithful.

The hierarchical model of the Church, or as Avery Dulles (2002) labelled it, the institutional model, is evident just as much as the epistemological understanding that truth and doctrine come from God and are handed on unchanged from the apostles to their successors, to the laity. The monument perfectly emulates the model of the Church that has dominated the modern period and was so well reflected in the age of the catechisms. Dulles pointed out that through this model, bishops were considered to possess the truth which they had the duty to impose on the faithful through juridical and spiritual functions. Since one needs only to repeat the truth handed down by the institution, one does not need to understand it. Indeed, this relationship between ecclesiology and the notion and methods of religious education was made evident in the studies conducted by both Rummery (1977) and Baumert (2013) while researching the history of Catholic Religious Education in Australia and the United States, respectively.

The advent of the catechetical movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, that is, when there was evidence of some dialogue between pedagogical approaches and the systematic way of presenting truths, coincided with the appearance of the first cracks in the fortress mentality of the Church (Buchanan, 2005). Together with the catechetical movement, the liturgical, the biblical and the ecumenical movements pointed to the need for renewal or for rereading reality through the sources and to the need for dialogue with the real world as well as with the world of academia. Change did not happen overnight. Those who advocated for dialogue with the other sciences were most often lone voices. For instance, Rummery (1977) notes that in the Australian context, the voice of Br. Hanrahan was in total dissonance with the rest of his colleagues at the Catholic Teacher's Conferences of 1922, 1928 and 1936. While he advocated the use of the best pedagogical sciences, others insisted on morality and religious principles, with Br. Placidus insisting in 1936 that revelation and authority are more important than the human way of reasoning.

A debate within the Church on the way it conceives itself occurred during a new phase of modernity, at a time when nation states were now established, when the industrial and technological revolutions were taking place, when Western nations were becoming urbanised and above all when schooling was becoming available (and compulsory) to all citizens of Western societies. Since the Church understood itself to be a militant Church continuously under the attack of secularism and the new sciences (Pope Leo, 1897), it understood the catechetical method that had been in use for more than three centuries as the most appropriate approach to combat heresy and defend the faith (Buchanan, 2003). Catechisms were originally developed as a means for the faithful to know their identity and the truth and for the Churches to delineate what is acceptable and what is not.

During the modern period, the Catholic Church made formidable use of the tools of printing, catechetical confraternities and social networking. Yet, in employing such tools it impoverished the creative force of the Word. Truth was now contained in a book which had a beginning and an end and that followed a logical sequence. The Catechetical Method was in many cases reduced to rote learning. Knowledge rather than wisdom was privileged. The affective dimension was taken care of through socialisation and piety activities organised by the parish. The tragedy of this was that this paved the way to a reductionist understanding of Truth and worst still to a further dualistic understanding of cognitive and affective knowledge.

The slow but steady change within the preconciliar Church led to an exploration of different models. As Dulles (2002) aptly pointed out, there is a plurality of models of church and indeed even various ways of conceptualising the same model. This signifies the plurality and catholicity of the Church. In its recent documents, the magisterium tends to point more towards the mystery and communion aspects of the Church (Pope John Paul II, 1988).

Precisely because the Church is a mystery, no one model fully encapsulates the nature of the Church. In this understanding, different models complement each other, thus allowing a multitude of ways of being Catholic, of being Church and of acting in the world. Dialogue, respect and a childlike trust in God's providence are indispensable to this understanding, since it intrinsically acknowledges that God is eternal and that no human reasoning and language may fully explain Truth. Likewise, and exactly because the Church is Christ's mystical body incarnated in so many diverse spatial and temporal contexts, both ad intra and ad extra dialogue are essential in order to have a more complete understanding of the whole of reality and Truth. The implication of this way of conceptualising the Church for Catholic Religious Education is that religious education cannot ever be presented as the bearer of truth that is to be handed down to students, but rather that it should be proffered as a space for communal pilgrimage, where, in dialogue with past generations and contemporary humanity, as well as with the different fields of knowledge, we discover and reappropriate meaning together with a healthy understanding of reality as always intended by God.

Nature of Catholic Religious Education

While the post-Second Vatican Council Church has been rather fast-paced in insisting on the need for dialogue and in reconsidering its anthropological and ecclesial models, the same may not be said for the rethinking of the nature of Catholic Religious Education.

A quick browse through Church documents of these past five decades shows that a new understanding of religious education as a discipline in its own right, distinct from catechesis, has been very slow to take ground. Thus, for instance, while the Synodal Fathers of the Second Vatican Council were agreeing on the need of open-

ing the Church to dialogue, they still understood the teaching of religion in schools in terms of "giving the doctrine of salvation in a way suited to their [students'] age and circumstances" (Second Vatican Council, 1965b, *Gravissimum Educationis*). It therefore transpires that the Synodal Fathers still valued cognitive knowledge that needs to be transmitted and adapted to the requirements of students.

Likewise, although *Catechesi Tradendae* (Pope John Paul II, 1979) gives specific attention to the issue of religious instruction in schools, it is evident that it still considers it to be part of catechesis. It advocates for the respect of religious liberties of students and for their right to advance in their spiritual formation and more specifically to their right to be educated in faith. It was only in 1981 when Pope John Paul II was addressing the priests of his own diocese that for the first time the principle of distinction and complementarity between catechesis and religious education was acknowledged. Pope John Paul II maintained that religious education should be marked by the aims and structure of the school. Such a religious education carries out the dual role of fulfilling the right and obligation of every human person while at the same time it is a service that society renders to catholic students. Yet, the Pope insisted on the intimate relationship between catechesis and religious education since both disciplines have the same audience and the same content. Religious education, thus understood, may be considered to be both a pre-catechetical activity as well as an opportunity for one to delve further into specific themes of catechesis (Pope John Paul II, 1981).

However, this elucidation took quite some time before finding a definite place in the official Church's position on the subject (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997; Congregation of Catholic Education, 1988, 2009). Then again, notwithstanding the elucidations of the Circular letter on Religious Education, some feel that the repeated indications on the distinction, yet complementarity, between religious education and catechesis still lack clarity (for instance, Franchi, 2013).

This feeling has thus given leeway to national episcopal conferences to interpret these indications in their own way. True enough, in his first Apostolic Exhortation, Pope Francis (2013) called for less centralisation and for the need to find ways of how episcopal conferences may, without diminishing the Petrine Ministry, live the autonomy enjoyed by the ancient patriarchates. This call would seem to legitimate the more catechetical and cognitive-oriented approaches adopted by a number of national episcopal conferences. However, it is questionable whether these localised decisions respect the proper vocation and true nature of Catholic Religious Education as developed in a post-Second Vatican Council era.

The Changing Nature of Religious Education

Spatial and temporal contexts influence identity. This is especially true for the ministry of the Word since it takes on the same method adopted by the tripersonal God whose words

> … expressed in human language, have been made like human discourse, just as the Word of the eternal Father, when He took to Himself the flesh of human weakness, was in every way made like men. (Second Vatican Council, 1965c, *Dei Verbum,* para. 13)

Likewise, just as Christ took on the limitations of human flesh, so the eternal Word continues to take on the limitations of human language. This limitation is consequently, and apparently paradoxically, the very source of the creativity in which it is communicated. For while the Word remains one, it takes on the limitations and diversity present in humanity.

Given that pedagogical methods and tools are developed to respond to the requirements of a specific context and age, understanding religious education through a contextual lens appears to be the most appropriate way. Thus, for instance, the Catechumenate responded perfectly well to the needs of the emerging Christian communities which were as yet minority groups and whose main audience were adult converts. Likewise, during the middle ages in Europe, preaching became the preferred catechetical method, given that the majority where illiterate and given that society was predominately Christian. Although catechisms already existed in the fifteenth century (Braido, 1991), these became the preferred catechetical method of the modern period due to the invention of print and due to the perceived need to control and delineate what is acceptable knowledge. The logic of the catechism follows the logic of the printing medium. The medium of the book may provide the illusion that truth may be contained. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, this tool was accompanied by a variety of community initiatives including the catechetical confraternities, an increase in sacramental practices and piety. Yet, in adopting and privileging the tool of the catechism, the Catholic Church was falling prey to reductionist logic.

The catechism responded perfectly well to the new instructional ethos that was being developed. As Hamilton (2003) noted, the sixteenth century was a turning point in the history of instruction. Indeed, this century was not only characterised by the catechisms of Luther, Canisius, Auger, Trent and Bellarmine but also by the educational ideas of Pierre de la Ramée, also known as Peter Ramus, a sixteenth-century humanist converted to Calvinism.

Ramus was pivotal in proposing a method of instruction that organised knowledge in small pieces and he also developed textbooks. For Ramus, summarising, connecting and breaking knowledge in small, efficient and effective pieces served the purpose of useful instruction needed for a quick digestion of knowledge (Hamilton, 2003, April; Triche & McKnight, 2004). His method led to the separation of knowledge from orality and the organising of knowledge in hierarchical steps. This continued to reinforce his modernist dualist conception that the mind is superior to the body which led him to equate thinking with dichotomising knowledge (Triche & McKnight, 2004). Such a way of thinking and methodology led to the fragmentation of knowledge and consequently difficulty to view and understand the whole.

Ramus's method was popularised by Calvinist and Puritan universities to such an extent that it found its place at the basis of modern public schooling (Doll, 2012;

Triche & McKnight, 2004). As Doll (2012) aptly noted, curriculum is the product of Protestant culture.

From a Catholic stance then, while it is legitimate to creatively adapt according to the geographical contexts of where Catholic Religious Education is being imparted, the Catholic understanding of knowledge and the new understanding brought about by the Second Vatican Council lead the context of time to take precedence over the spatial context. This is especially so with regard to what makes religious education distinct from catechesis.

The School as the Source of Identity

The events that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century and at the first half of the twentieth century, together with the inventions in the field of communication, have brought about a transformation in the way society is structured, in the relations between people and their environment and in the way we conceive knowledge. Late modernity, post-modernity, post-post-modernity, hyper-modernity and meta-modernity are a few newly coined terms that point to a general sense that the current period is different from the previous one.

The nature and purpose of schools has changed drastically during these past one and a half centuries. While it is true that during the early modern period, literacy did not occur mainly in schools, most of the schools of this period emphasised religious and moral instruction (Maynes, 1985). By the late eighteenth century, as the State introduced public and compulsory schooling, the aims and nature of schools changed. These were mainly influenced by the changing milieu of the period. In Europe, the urbanisation, the enlightenment and the rise of capital brought about various discussions on philosophies of education and schooling, amongst which the control of governments over the population and the economic benefits of education (Maynes, 1985). Religious instruction served as a means of bringing about homogeneity as well as creating moral order (see, for instance, Morandini, 2003).

The identification of education with schooling has led schools to become compulsory in most countries. Consequently, the audience and objectives of schools were amongst the first elements to change. While it is true that international declarations speak of the right for an education that fosters holistic development (see, for instance, United Nations, 2001), it is also true that many governments have recently been focusing the aims of education mainly on economic requirements (see, for instance, Council of the European Union, 2011; Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, 2010). The understanding that investment in education is directly proportional to an increase in the country's GDP and that further investment in quality education could yield profits led to a more competency-based education. Thus, for instance, in a paper presented to the OECD, it is suggested that the aim should be to boost the average scores of the international assessment

programme The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by 25 points. The authors suggest that such a measure would increase the GDP of OECD countries by between 90 to 123 trillion dollars (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2011).

These considerations have an obvious impact on the teaching of religion in schools since religion is not normally considered as an economically utilitarian subject. It tempts countries to take a utilitarian stance in the development of curricular frameworks. Issues related to time allocations, amount of resources and, to a lesser extent, learning outcomes in religious education come to the surface. These considerations influence State schools as well as faith schools.

Due to historical and contextual reasons, a number of countries still offer a denominational religious education in their State schools. Thus, although it is safe to state that Catholic Religious Education is predominantly found in Catholic schools, one should not dismiss the considerable catholic population that receives its religious education in State schools. Consequently, the aims and nature of religious education are influenced by, if not largely dependent on, the purposes of the school, the school climate as well as the school population.

While it is true that the Church requires parents to choose schools that cater for the catholic education of their children (Congregation of Catholic Education, 2009), this is often not the case. As research constantly shows, there are various factors that influence parental school choice, chief amongst which is quality education (see, for instance, Denessen, Driessena, & Sleegers, 2005). The audience that is present in schools, including Catholic schools, is thus diverse and not necessarily pertaining to the practising catholic community. This renders the teaching of religion in both Catholic and State schools less and less part of the catechetical mission of the Church since, by its own nature, catechesis requires a believing community that has already been converted to Jesus (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). The final goal of catechesis is to help the individual enter into full communion with Jesus Christ (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997). Indeed catechesis should be rooted in a process that facilitates the deepening of faith.

This condition is most of the times difficult to fulfil in a Catholic school context, let alone in State schools. Although most students might have been baptised, they are often not in contact with the faith community. Even though the school population is composed of a considerable number of students and families who can be described as culturally Catholic, this does not necessarily mean that they have made a clear and conscious decision to live the Catholic faith to the full.

Both the school population and the aims of education are being developed by the different stakeholders, making it difficult for religious education to operate in catechetical terms. This, together with the Church's renewed understanding of itself and of its role in the world and in the context of a nonfragmented notion of knowledge, requires a clear definition of religious education. In this reality, while still holding its place within the evangelising mission of the Church, religious education will be better placed within the diakonia ministry of the Church rather than within the realm of the ministry of the Word.

The Dialogical Imperative

Pope John Paul II (1981) claimed that religious education in State schools is a service that society renders to Catholic students. This, he argued, respects their rights of freedom of conscience and religion. Furthermore, it may also be argued that given that the State has the duty to educate students holistically, formal education has to nurture every student's transcendental dimension. In a changing global scenario and with the Church's commitment to dialogue, Catholic Religious Education in Catholic schools and especially in State schools should be mainly conceived as part of the pre-evangelisation mission of the Church that is to contribute to the renewal of humanity (Paul VI, 1975, para. 24).

Humanity yearns for meaning. Yet, with the fragmentation of reality, it finds it difficult to translate this yearning into a concrete language. As part of its service to human renewal, the Church needs to contribute towards the awareness and understanding of those tools that have sustained and contributed to the development of individuals and society. Consequently, the Church is duty bound to help individual students access, understand and take advantage of the wisdom that different generations of believers have put together in the quest to make sense of reality and live the good life.

If the Church wants to be true to its dictum, that

> the joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Gaudium et spes,* para. 1),

it must use and speak the same common language of humanity and, through dialogue, facilitate an understanding of the whole. Humanity has been wounded by the fragmentation of knowledge and consequently by the fragmentation of reality itself. By presenting a religious education that adapts the catechism of the Catholic Church, the Church is reinforcing the fragmentation of reality. It continues to present a specialised knowledge and to impose the jargon of the faith community that developed over the span of 2,000 years.

The aim and nature of Catholic Religious Education in a post-Second Vatican Council period should be tripartitely dialogical, in that it is called to dialogue with students, with the fragmented disciplines of knowledge and internally with its own pedagogical development. None of these dialogues precedes the other but they must be conducted simultaneously.

First of all, dialogue with students necessarily means a dialogue with the reality they live in. Rather than simply transmitting, or at best helping them to make sense of the language of faith, religious education should move a step further and facilitate a process whereby they get a language that equips them to critically engage with their experiences and reality. In and through dialogue, one discovers the seeds of the Word and the consequences of reading reality and acting with or without the Word of God.

Secondly, dialogue with other disciplines is conducted in the knowledge that as Catholics we developed a language through which we could perceive, interpret and creatively construct the reality we live in. Catholicism holds that, as the mystical

body of Christ, we are helped through the grace of the Holy Spirit to understand and see creation through the lens that the Father originally intended it to be. The consequences of our beliefs have influenced the course of history and civilisation itself. Orphanages instead of infanticides, corrective facilities, hospitals, the arts, scientific endeavours, diplomacy and the development of such concepts as person and rights are only a few of the many areas to which the Catholic community has greatly contributed.

The contribution that the Catholic community has made during these past two millennia not only equips religious education with a language that enables it to dialogue with a diversity of disciplines, but it could also promote dialogue amongst disciplines. Indeed, most of the concepts and discoveries were made in a belief that just as the triune God is one, so is the apparent diverse reality.

Thirdly, there is also a need for an internal dialogue conducted through the belief that religious education is inherently interdisciplinary. On the one hand, due to its religious nature, religious education is called to draw from the wisdom, the reflections and theology constructed by the believing community. However, being a pedagogical discipline, religious education is also called to take note of and follow the advancements made in the educational sciences. Grounding religious education in the current theories and practices of theology and the educational sciences enhances the credibility of the subject. If no real dialogue is initiated, the subject risks irreversibly enter into a ghetto reserved for irrelevant scholastic optional choices. Furthermore, due to its audience and their own reality, besides engaging with research in the fields of instructional science, it is also called to enter in dialogue with and to integrate the knowledge learnt from such humanistic disciplines as sociology, philosophy and psychology.

Conclusion

Catholic Religious Education is either interdisciplinary or it is not Catholic at all. The developments that occurred in the Church and in society offer clear opportunities for the Church to render a service to humanity through dialogue. Although connected to each other, the school (and more so the Catholic school) and the faith community have distinct responsibilities and finalities. These differences, together with a fragmented way of conceptualising life, should make us acknowledge the necessity of the definite separation of catechesis from religious education. The Church in its desire to enter into a new phase of evangelisation should welcome the opportunity offered by religious education to prepare the way for explicit proclamation of the Word for those who consciously and willingly wish to be initiated in the listening of the Word through catechesis.

Just like her Master, the Church walks with, serves and dialogues with humanity. It is in these processes that it can share the light of Divine Wisdom and invite humanity to a renewal of personal and communitarian life. This may be achieved if Catholic Religious Education were understood as distinct from catechesis and faithful to its true nature and thereby be dialogical.

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Chapter 4
How Much and Which Theology in Religious Education? On the Intimate Place of Theology in the Public Space of the School

Bert Roebben

Introduction

The starting point of this chapter is the contemporary school in Europe. It has been developing in recent years into a highly organized institution with many procedures of professionalism and accountability. Every school (private or public) is expected to contribute to the common good and to demonstrate the adequacy of its contribution. Schools prepare children and young people to participate with their competences and skills in the society of the future. When this condition is fulfilled, knowledge can accumulate and wealth can grow. Children and young people will then, in their turn, enjoy the commodities of this knowledge and wealth. In this chapter I raise serious questions about this instrumentalisation of young people and their talents in school and society today.

In the light of the human dignity of the person – including that of every child, adolescent and young adult – the aim of education should not be socialization into consumer society, but humanization, understood as 'growing in shared humanity' (Roebben, 2013, pp. 201–204). In the framework of a compendium of Catholic voices in education, I believe that this prophetic stance should not be neglected. Moreover, it is my firm contention that Catholic Religious Education (Catholic RE) can fulfil this critical role within the school and can make others (and itself!) aware of the permanent need of broadening the educational scope – from socialization to humanization. In the European learning space, there is a long-standing tradition of churches and faith communities affiliating with schools and educational institutions to reach this scope. The interesting part is the re-conceptualization and re-vitalization of these (in Europe mainly Catholic, Protestant and Islamic) faith-based voices in schooling today. The author of this paper is a Catholic theologian and has been for

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many years involved in the praxis and scientific study of RE teacher education in the Dutch-speaking (Leuven in Flanders/Belgium and Tilburg in the South of the Netherlands) and German-speaking (Dortmund in the German Ruhr-area) parts of Western Europe. The least that can be said is that the body of knowledge in RE is growing steadily against the backdrop of the developments described above. Theologians and educationalists are meeting regularly in international RE conferences and research groups (such as ISREV, EUFRES, EFTRE, etc.) and have been influencing in many ways the broader educational discourse going on in the post-secular society.

One has however to admit that it is mostly Protestant scholars who are pushing forward this discourse and that their Catholic colleagues are often lacking. Unveiling the reasons for this relative absence would be another paper to write. Personally I believe that a specific approach to theology in Catholic RE, namely, a dogmatic-affirmative approach, cannot address adequately the contemporary complexities of RE which teachers and students have to deal with. What is needed today is a more biographical-explorative understanding of Catholic RE to face the moral and religious reality depicted above. *Fides qua* (the life of faith) can challenge and reframe *fides quae* (the content of faith) today. They are complementary. In the past, the content-of-faith dimension of Catholic RE was overstressed. On reading this chapter it will hopefully become clear what a new theological orientation of Catholic RE, based on the life-of-faith dimension, could look like. There is still of lot of work to be done: e.g. the fundamental-theological implications of this orientation have not been sufficiently considered yet. Therefore, this paper is an invitation to Catholic as well as non-Catholic colleagues in the field to delve deeper into this difficult practical-theological and fundamental-theological issue.

This chapter starts with exploring the thesis that in the field of tension between the intimacy of theology and the public discourse of the contemporary school, the public-theological role of RE needs to be reconsidered. Again, this effort can be made on the basis of a reflection on the dignity of the human person, fully flourishing in his/her own right and in the light of solidarity understood as 'intersubjective creativity' (Helmut Peukert, as cited in Grümme, 2013, p. 61). The point will be made in three steps by (1) requalifying the German concept of 'Bildung' in school and RE, (2) reconceptualizing the role of theology in RE and finally by (3) proposing a kenotic-theological concept of RE.

Requalifying Education in School

The German concept of *Bildung* [edification] thoroughly relates to the concept of responsibility – the 'ability to respond' authentically as a particular human being to the universal questions facing humanity (Mette, 2005; Schweitzer, 2003). This responsibility is of course always located contextually and developed gradually – on a specific place on earth and within the specific life span of the person (Roebben, 2013, pp. 43–63). As was argued in the Introduction, this personalist concept of

education is deeply contested in today's society (Roebben, 2011, 2012a). Human beings have the right to grow up as human beings, to live and to die as human beings. This generic goal may not be understood and instrumentalized as a means for something else. There is always a human being behind/in the pupil attending school. Good education or *Bildung* should contribute to the integrity of this human being, should empower him/her to become the narrator of his/her own story – coherent and fulfilled. This educational ideal needs to be reformulated over and over again.

No human being is complete, everybody is vulnerable. Moreover, human beings are not exchangeable. Everybody is unique and radically different from the other. These two characteristics – vulnerability and uniqueness – culminate in the basic experience of the otherness of the other. Human beings are radically strange to one another, and precisely in this regard, they are 'delivered' to each other in language and communication. There is no other way to become human, unless by education and dialogue. It is contended that in a globalized world, which is struggling vehemently with an economic but above all a spiritual crisis, a renewed reflection on 'living and learning in the presence of the other' (Roebben, 2012b) is urgently needed. Solidarity is not only a moral educational goal; it is an indispensable character trait of human flourishing, of humanity and therefore of human survival (Roebben, 2011, pp. 43–60).

In European educational policy, this awareness is not absent, but is snowed under other regulations. For instance, in the PISA research (measuring the 'first grade' skills of European pupils such as reading, writing, counting, observing natural phenomena, etc.), the 'second grade' competences (such as responsible and meaningful action) are mentioned as prerequisites for integrating first grade skills into a solid personhood, but are not evaluated as such in concrete school situations throughout Europe (Grill, 2011, pp. 230–231). They are seemingly not in the statistical picture. Everybody however knows that 'personal competence' – being 'a person of one piece', being 'a plain, downright fellow' – is a necessary prerequisite for the good life, but is to be considered at the same time, and also paradoxically, the aim of the good life (see the works of Alasdair MacIntyre) and of good education (see the works of Richard S. Peters). Becoming a human being is a lifetime learning process.

The teacher, who carefully and responsibly accompanies children and young people in their search for the good life and who brings them together with fellow human beings in meaningful learning circles, needs to support them and confront them with deep layers of existential orientation. This is the main reason why I sincerely believe that we need to reframe our learning circles into 'spiritual' learning communities (Roebben, 2014), in which the biographies (the 'talents') of children and young people are made accessible through narration, communication and imagination, in which they explore and learn to articulate the mystery of their bios. This is what I meant originally – and what was often misunderstood – with a mystagogical-communicative or narthical approach to (religious) education (Roebben, 2013, pp. 111–126). It is not an issue of going back to a premodern concept of (catechetical) instruction as the basis of general education. It is all about the question into what kind of hermeneutic space we are welcoming our future generations. Do we have a clue? As far as I can see, a young person has the right to 'soul food'. When he/she is hungry, the teacher should not explain how the digestive tract works

(A. Biesinger, as cited in Roebben, 2013, p. 17), but should be providing soul food on the table of learning!

Reconceptualizing Theology in RE

The aims and processes of RE have been discussed over and over during the last decades, as was argued in the Introduction. The body of (empirical and hermeneutical, philosophical and theological, psychological, sociological and educational) research in RE is immense and need not be repeated here. In line with my argument, namely, that, for the future of the globe, personal human flourishing needs to be thought of and executed in radical solidarity with fellow human beings, I believe we need to learn to readdress our deeper convictions 'in the presence of the other' (Roebben, 2013, pp. 161–164). Discovering orientation in a variety of belief systems and world views is the huge RE project for the coming era. In some countries in Europe the aim of learning about world views' is of central importance. In other countries the personal 'learning from world views' is more at stake. But in most cases, teachers and scholars are aware of the dialectic of the two – how the 'adolescent lifeworld curriculum' interferes with and shapes the 'religious lifeworld curriculum' and vice versa, to put it in the words of the English RE scholars John Hull and Michael Grimmitt (see Bates, 2006, pp. 20–22). The pivotal point in all of this is the connection of values and norms with 'world views' (van der Kooij, de Ruyter, & Miedema, 2013), with deeper existential layers of decision making and orientations in life. Young people do ask for a place in school where this existential competence can be learned and appropriated, as the evidence in empirical research is showing us (just to mention three Western European examples: Gates, 2006; Miedema, 2013; Riegel & Ziebertz, 2007).

But does the school need theology for this kind of 'world view' RE? In some European countries (such as Albania and France), RE and theology are completely absent in school. In other countries (such as Slovenia), RE is reduced to a mere catechetical approach only in a small number of denominational schools, which then implies that an official church theology or catechism is taught. In several countries, RE is under pressure and replaced by other subjects, such as ethical formation, education for democratic citizenship, human rights education, etc. In these cases world views and religions are then, when relevant to the topic, considered from a mere 'religious studies' point of view. Theology is then seen as too sectarian, too much inner circle and in some cases indoctrinatory.

Even in countries such as Germany with a traditional but open-minded confessional approach to RE, the question is raised whether or not theology still can be the connective science (*Bezugswissenschaft*) for RE, whether or not it is still able to address educationally the changing position of religions and world views in society (Mette, 2012, p. 338). In the United States, with its constitutional separation between church and state, some authors contend that RE should not be taught at all as a separate school subject, let alone as a theologically rooted school subject. It is held that it should only be mentioned as a cultural phenomenon in history, culture and social

science classes, in order to overcome 'religious illiteracy' (Moore, 2007). Even when RE is taught in private Catholic schools as a separate subject in the United States, it should not have a theological foundation, because of the same anxiety, namely, that this RE could then be sectarian, read catechetical, according to Kieran Scott (2001). So, theology seems to be dangerous when it enters the school yard!

A completely new approach is urgently needed. Instead of adjusting an academic and/or official church theology to the RE classroom, we need to head for new and exciting theological ways of dealing with the (religious and nonreligious) world views of children and adolescents in RE. It implies another, radically opposite mindset. Our students are already using and producing theology in their own right. They create their own theologies – visions on how the human being with his/her existential questions and answers is relating to the universality of the earth and the cosmos, visions on response-ability for the well-being of oneself and others and visions on the deep sanctity of personhood between birth and death (Sellmann, 2012). One must admit that these visions are often not reflected, unarticulated, not filled with language and with traditional elements of religious socialization and performative action. It is true that these visions often remain blind and thus cannot deliver their full human potential. RE can then offer a language to create a safe space for understanding oneself as a vulnerable pilgrim in life. RE can then be considered to be 'the process of exploring spiritual experience through the conceptual frameworks provided by religious texts', according to the Jewish religious educationalist Deborah Court (2013, p. 254). This process can even create new religious language and, in a reflected way, also new theological patterns. The crucial issue is however that teachers ought to listen carefully to the voices of their students, to theologize with them and to focus with them on the 'expressive aims' (p. 257) of their various existential visions. It is precisely there that lies the challenge for the revitalization of theological intimacy in the public realm of RE in school.

The German research project ROTh (*Religionsunterricht als Ort der Theologie*: RE as the space for theology) is based on this assumption. It argues that within the realm of the public school, the intimacy of theology has its legitimate place. At school four different educational rationalities or logics are functioning and being taught: the cognitive logic (e.g. natural sciences and mathematics), the aesthetic-expressive logic (e.g. arts and languages), the evaluative-normative logic (e.g. social sciences) and the religious-constitutive logic (e.g. religion) (J. Baumert, as cited in Mette, 2012, pp. 349–350). In the RE classroom this latter logic is taught *sui generis*, when deep existential questions and 'ultimate concerns' (see. Paul Tillich) are formulated and discussed. The language of theology is the specific vehicle for this logic. It provides biblical, systematic, historic and practical arguments for the ongoing reflection on life and death, on good and evil, on past and future, etc., but it especially makes the user of this language hermeneutically aware of the vulnerability of his/her reasoning when facing life in this respect (Englert, 2007, p. 215). The language of theology (*fides quaerens intellectum*: faith seeking understanding) is a rather 'soft' language and has been in recent RE too often replaced by other 'hard' language games, especially by empirical, aesthetic, semantic and didactical shortcuts of RE. Too much data and actions, too many words and methods were

adopted in RE, so that the original theological questions of young people themselves could often not surface and were neglected (Englert, 2013, pp. 36–50). The 'how' and 'what' questions in RE threw the 'why' questions into the shadow. The German religious educationalist Rudolf Englert (2013) proposes therefore a return to a sound theological language system, in which the questions of young people can resonate.

The German movement of children's theology *(Kindertheologie)* has for many years attracted attention to the right of children to theology that is deeply connected to their everyday existential concerns and their (absent or present) religious language (Roebben, 2013, pp. 127–141). The so called *Jahrbuch für Kindertheologie* (Annual for children's theology) has been published for the 14th time. In 2013 the first *Jahrbuch für Jugendtheologie* (Annual for youth theology) saw the light. The least one can say is that this ecumenical-theological movement is challenging in many ways the academic and official church theologies. It supports an emancipatory, democratic and biographical-explorative (instead of a dogmatic-affirmative) approach to RE. Theology is not the privilege of academic theologians or church ministers, but lies in the hands of every person who seriously tries to understand his/her attachment to 'ultimate concerns'. This can happen in the RE classroom.

Understood as 'lay theology' (Schlag & Schweitzer, 2011, pp. 22–24 and pp. 47–51), as god-talk in the hands of ordinary people (Astley, 2002), children and young people do have the right and do have the abilities to 'use and produce' theology (or better: theologies). The German religious educationalist Friedrich Schweitzer has coined the three moments of this process of theologising: theology *of* children (listening carefully and empathetically to their religious language, the way they understand revelation and God's presence in our world), theology *with* children (helping them in finding good questions and solid appropriate answers, or when the answers cannot be found, to leave these good questions open) and theology *for* children (showing the courage of one's own convictions as an adult and telling them about the solid answers one has found as an adult).

My personal stance as an RE scholar is situated in the 'theology *with* children' part. I truly believe that through authentic religious communication in RE, the often implicit theology of children can be made explicit and can be confronted in a fruitful way with more systematic elements of theology for children. Implicit and explicit are two subjective dimensions of the personal reflection on one's own faith. Interpretation and argumentation of this faith on the basis of academic and official church theologies are two more objective steps in this process (according to Schlag, 2013, p. 16). What is the chronology of this enterprise, of this 'doing theology' in RE? What comes first, what comes later? Here is my proposal: (1) Start with an experiential awareness and performance of the sacred with kids, (2) invite students to come up with 'thick descriptions' of these experiences and (3) develop together with them a theologically reflected language on the basis of this learning process. Religious communication (theology *with* children) should be maximized in all the three steps. This *with* dimension should be the pivotal point of the whole learning process.

Religious learning *in the presence of others*		
Theologizing *with* children and young people		
RE that *rocks* – in three steps		
Experience	Interpretation of this experience	Theological conceptualization of this interpretation
Performance	Thick description	Meta-reflection
Playing (*on stage*)	Storytelling (*back stage*)	Discussing and writing (*after stage*)

It is a misunderstanding to think that within this process every external input should be kept aside. It is indeed even more complicated: Within every step of the communication (of the *with* dimension), input should be given. Religious experiences should be made possible, thick descriptions should be exemplified, and theologically reflected language should be handed over (Schweitzer, 2013, pp. 19–20) – so that the maximum can happen. Without 'expressive aims' (see above) the vague experiences would remain blind and unarticulated. Thus, children should not be left alone in their search for meaning. Within the complexity of late modern (detraditionalized and multireligious) societies, RE teachers are not allowed to leave students alone with their own moral and religious identity formation but should bring them didactically into exciting 'narthical playgrounds' (Roebben, 2013, pp. 111–126), into enriching 'green pastures' of (1) performance, (2) thick description and (3) meta-reflection, where their imagination is stirred up by Bible and other faith stories, classical texts, meaningful others and sacred spaces and practices, to mention only a few.

There are too many strategic voices on RE being uttered in the public space of the school these days. In order to justify or to safeguard the subject RE in the curriculum, huge concessions with regard to a personal appropriation of the content are being made. On both sides of the spectrum, at the catechetical (for instance, Franchi, 2013) and at the religious studies side (for instance, Vermeer, 2013) of RE, the risk occurs that the subject becomes empty, a mere transmission of external information, a mere cognitive reproduction without inner appropriation of the central 'soul awareness' of RE. The subject could then be saved within the public realm of the school, but would lose its intimate soul.

Towards a Kenotic-Theological Concept of RE

The reader of this chapter has hopefully become convinced of the need of 'lots of theology' for a good and soulful RE. The question however is: *Which* theology is needed? This is not an easy question and depends largely on the epochal position of theology within society, church and academia. Basically, it is clear that this theology should be a comprehensive theology, approachable through many gate ways, genuinely vulnerable in its exposures, as it is handed over in the hands of ordinary or lay people (see above in para. 2 the qualifications of Astley and Schlag/Schweitzer), as it is entering the public space of the playground of the school and the stage of the classroom.

My proposition is a kenotic-theological concept of RE, modelled by and analogous to the incarnational dynamic of the revelation (see Roebben, 2013, pp. 201–211). In the Christian tradition, God becomes human in Jesus Christ and radically shares our vulnerable human existence. In involving himself in the lives of ordinary (or 'lay') people, he expresses his solidarity with them and his promise of ultimate healing and eschatological sanctification. Jesus is the exegete of God; in the gospel we learn from him what it means to be 'a plain, downright fellow' (see above, para. 1) and where this brings us.

The kenotic dimension of the Christian revelation gives shape to a specific theology for RE. In RE we paradoxically teach 'letting go', we exercise ourselves in listening to the voice of future generations and their interpretation of the good life. According to the American practical theologian Tom Beaudoin (2008), as Christians we witness permanently this act of kenosis or 'dispossession', in 'learning to participate in handing over. Or better, learning how to rehearse through the hands what has already been given over' (p. 144). In this respect, the RE teacher should not 'transmit' or 'bring' the tradition, but should rather 'bear' the tradition. He/she does not have to inspire people, but has to gather them already inspired. He/she provides room for the creative work of young people, for their craving within a creation that is groaning as in the pains of childbirth (Van Erp, 2007, p. 28). This 'practice of dispossession' (Geerinck, 2004) within RE is, according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a 'descent into secret discipline' (see Beaudoin, 2008, pp. 144–147) that is even hidden for the teacher in RE. What the child or the young person finally appropriates out of the learning process, what he/she takes away as soul food from the table, cannot be planned in RE. Taking away is an act of freedom. The RE provision only needs to prepare the table of the secret discipline.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church acknowledges the kenotic dimension of religious tradition and religious learning. When discussing the language of faith, it argues:

> Non in formulas credimus, sed in res quas illae exprimunt et quas nobis fides *'tangere'* permittit. "Actus autem [fidei] credentis non terminatur ad enuntiabile, sed *ad rem* [enuntiatam]." Tamen ad has res adiutorio formulationum fidei *appropinquamus.* Hae permittunt fidem exprimere et transmittere, illam in communitate celebrare, illam facere propriam et ex illa magis magisque vivere. (Catechismus Catholicae Ecclesiae, 170)

The translation says: We do not have to believe in formulas, but in the soulful realities that are expressed in these formulas and that are allowed to be *touched* by us. The act of faith does not accumulate in what can be said, but in what can be *experienced*. We only use the language of faith *to have access* to these soulful experiences. Language is the only vehicle at our disposal to understand our faith. But nobody can stop us from accessing God in our own voice and nobody can force us to believe in God in the framework of one specific (theological) voice or language. We are allowed to access the realities of faith as children: in a deep state of vulnerability and receptivity, in our own experience of 'relational consciousness', without being forced and in our own right (Hay and Nye, 1998). This is precisely what Karl Rahner meant when he argued that we need a theology of childhood, of vulnerabil-

ity and radical openness, when it comes finally to the act of faith, to the double act of 'decentration and dedication' (Roebben, 2014, p. 307). This disposition of receptive learning, of learning with 'open hands', is at the centre of a theology of 'Bildung'. In this respect RE will always need to be open for encounter (communication), for personal storytelling (narration) and for the existential dimension of human life (spirituality) – briefly for the 'spiritual learning community' (Roebben, 2014). Authentic RE is in this regard always a soteriological act (Astley, 2012, p. 259) or an act of 'healing'. In the end good RE restores the communication, narration and spiritual flourishing of the person and the community.

Conclusion

There are at least three remaining questions. Where and how does the RE teacher find the necessary spiritual resources in order to survive the school system (see para. 1), in which he/she is caught between the 'large and undefinable human possibilities and for ever-present constraints'? How can he/she cultivate a state of 'tenacious humility' (Hansen, 2001, p. 167), in addressing children in their spiritual journey? This is even more an issue for the RE teacher: Where can he/she find a space for his/her personal theologising? Often it is the case that the teacher only can do so in the classroom, together with the pupils. Is that a healthy situation? I would answer: not at all. Teachers deserve better: they need more support in their spiritual and theological quest.

A second question relates to the specific historical and contextual character of the RE provision: How can Catholic RE (and any RE!) consolidate its risky position in schools in Europe? My proposal to revitalize the theological dimension of RE needs to be addressed in every country and school system separately – be it confessional or non-confessional. My contention was and is that children and young people have the right to address the depth of life in a spiritual way and that they are allowed to develop their own praxis, language and even conceptual theology within the framework of the given RE provision.

And finally: How can this new approach to RE – a new practice of theology in RE considered to be constitutive for a new *Catholic* RE – open a deeper conversation on the fundamental theology of Catholics? As I argued in the beginning of this paper, a lot of work still needs to be done. The groundwork is there though. The Second Vatican Council has opted for an idea of 'risky revelation' (Sellmann, 2012, p. 88; Roebben, 2013, pp. 240–241), revelation in the hands of human beings, with the risk of tragedy, open to understanding and misunderstanding, but at least open for the authentic human journey. The Second Vatican Council has argued that the *fides qua* (the life of faith) should challenge and reframe the *fides quae* (the content of faith). The Second Vatican Council thus affirmed the *pastorale Grammatik der Lehre* ('the pastoral grammar of its teaching', according to Hans-Joachim Sander) or its *pastoralité* (Christoph Theobald). This is also how I understand Pope Francis' pastoral words in an interview with the *New York Times* (19th of September 2013).

In line with my schema above, I consider these thoughts as the theological conceptualization of the interpretation of the religious experience of Pope Francis. They can be read at the end of this chapter as the meditation of 'a plain, downright fellow' in faith,

> If one has the answers to all the questions – that is the proof that God is not with him. It means that he is a false prophet using religion for himself. The great leaders of the people of God, like Moses, have always left room for doubt. You must leave room for the Lord, not for our certainties; we must be humble. (…) Our life is not given to us like an opera libretto, in which all is written down; but it means going, walking, doing, searching, seeing. … We must enter into the adventure of the quest for meeting God; we must let God search and encounter us. (Pope Francis, 2013)

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Chapter 5
Problem or Paradox: Teaching the Catholic Religion in Catholic Schools

Kieran Scott

Introduction

Teaching religion in Catholic schools has undergone significant developments in the last 50 years. Catholic schools do a better job of teaching religion today. They are better at placing the Catholic Church in relation to alternative religious traditions. Curriculum materials and resources have expanded and been transformed. Pedagogical strategies and processes are more creative. And the classroom subject is no longer on the outer fringes of the school curriculum. Yet, in spite of these advances, confusion reigns across the globe as to how this practice applies today to Roman Catholic schools. A variety of different and conflicting perspectives currently operate at every level of the Church's life—internationally, academically and pastorally. Different sets of assumptions, presuppositions and purposes give rise to pedagogical dilemmas—if not contradictions. This chapter seeks to untangle this web and shed light on the nature and role of teaching religion in Catholic schools.

The thesis of this essay may seem strange to some Catholics in some parts of the world. My claim is: teaching religion in Catholic schools is an enterprise that needs to be justified on educational—not evangelical or catechetical—grounds. In other words, its rationale must be justified in the context of educational theory. Initially, this claim may appear to be a contradiction in light of the mission of Catholic schools. The task of the essay is to change the "contradiction" into an apparent contradiction, namely, a paradox. To build a case for my thesis, however, requires an examination of the global state of religious education and the complexity of Catholic schools and their role in teaching religion. In light of this task, the essay is divided into three parts: (1) Linguistic Clutter: Multiple Games—No Common Rules examines the global problem of the current lack of common discourse in the

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field of religious education; (2) Communicative Practices: Religious Education and Comprehensive Meaning proposes an integrative framework for our conversation; and (3) Living in the Paradox: Teaching Religion in Catholic Schools seeks to move this issue from problem to paradox in Roman Catholic schooling.

Linguistic Clutter: Multiple Games—No Common Rules

No universal language of religious education currently exists. This reality struck me forcefully some 15 years ago when I participated in an international and interreligious conference in San Francisco, CA. Scholars came from both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Religious education was a programmatic component throughout the 4-day event. What struck me throughout our conversation was that we were not dialoguing about a common topic. On the US side of the Atlantic, the assumption was that religious education is a faith-based sponsored enterprise located in the parish/congregation/synagogue/mosque. Whereas on the UK side of the ocean, it was clear religious education is nearly the opposite, namely, a subject in a classroom in a school sponsored by the government. People were using the same terms, but there was no common reference for what we were talking about. We were "divided" by a common language and repeatedly talking past each other. The lesson learned was: to attend to the meaning of our words (e.g. religious education) requires us to notice that other people are using the same words but with different meanings. Failure to attend to this leads to linguistic clutter and confusion. This is a major problem in our current religious education discourse across the globe, and it has major practical consequences.

The linguistic turn in modern thought has enormous consequences for religious education and its future. Heidegger and Wittgenstein are central figures here. "Language", as Heidegger notes, "is the house of Being" (Heidegger, 1971, p. 63). We live, move and have our being within linguistic systems. Our thinking (and practice) is curtailed within the perimeters of our language. Language reveals and conceals. The limits of our world are linguistic limits.

Wittgenstein began his career by describing language as the logical representation or "picture" of the world (Wittgenstein, 1981). He understood words to be kinds of windows or instruments through which to view reality. Later, Wittgenstein came to think of language more as a set of related practices than as a picture. He examined language as a "game". To understand a language (word/term), we first need to understand the "game" in which it is situated, with its rules, boundaries and back and forth flow. We understand the meaning of a word (or term) only when we understand its use in a particular context or game. Included in that context are practices related to the communicative act. Language, then, is a practice (game) of life (Wittgenstein, 1953, pp. 10–11; 22–23). Words are wells of meaning. We understand in and through language. Our languages are social and historical carriers of memories, images and insights. Wittgenstein's sketching of the plurality of language games (and the plurality of life forms) freed language from a positivist and

instrumental reading. It also opened up the social and historical character of all understanding through language. Wittgenstein's metaphor of language games is a fruitful prism through which to view current religious education discourse. With the above linguistic turn in mind, this essay claims that multiple linguistic games are currently being played, under the canopy of the term religious education, with no common rules and no common reference. In Roman Catholicism, the same situation prevails. No consistent language of religious education currently operates in the Roman Catholic Church in its official ecclesial document or in its scholarly community. I turn now to briefly examine representative examples in each.

Catechetical language has acquired an ascendency over the past 30 years in the Catholic Church on the pastoral level and in its official documents. It has become a linguistic form to describe the educational work of church ministers. It is its internal language behind the wall (Brueggemann, 1989, pp. 3–34). Religious education, if the term is used at all, tends to be used interchangeably with catechesis or relegated to the classroom of the school. A blurring and inconsistency prevails.

However, some recent ecclesial documents seek to distinguish catechesis and religious education and recognise their two distinct purposes. In the context of Catholic schools, for example, the Congregation for Catholic Education, The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School, affirms, "There is a close connection, and at the same time, a clear distinction between religious instruction and catechesis". The document notes, "the aim of catechesis" is "the handing on of the Gospel message ... the aim of the school, however, is knowledge" (1988, para. 32). It is the latter, it asserts, that makes it possible for a school to remain a school. Similar sentiments are expressed by the Congregation for Catholic Education in its Circular Letter to the Presidents of Bishops' Conferences on Religious Education in Schools (2009). Catechesis, it states, aims to foster Christian living, whereas religious education aims to give pupils knowledge of the Christian life (2009, para. 17). Echoing the same viewpoint, the General Directory for Catechesis emphasises that "the relationship between religious instruction in schools and catechesis is one of distinction and complementarity" (1997, para. 64). In these documents, it should be noted how religious education is exclusively identified with the instructional act directed towards knowledge.

However, in spite of these official attempts at clarification, confusion persists especially at the episcopal level in the United States. In the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' (USCCB) National Directory for Catechesis, no distinction is made between religious instruction in schools and catechesis. It asserts, "Religion teachers in Catholic schools have the same responsibilities and perform many of the same functions as parish catechists" (2005, para. 232). This blurring of distinction is carried over into the USCCB's Doctrinal Elements of a Curriculum Framework for the Development of Catechetical Materials for Young People of High School Age (2008). Academy purposes and pastoral formation purposes get mixed to the detriments of both. In Wittgenstein's terms, different language games are played here and there are no common ground rules. And no one is quite sure, on a consistent basis, what to make of religious education.

In the mainstream Roman Catholic scholarly community, efforts to honour a distinction also seem to waiver, if not collapse. It may be helpful to enter this vibrant community of discourse and dialectically engage its conversational partners. This selective engagement may be a constructive way to untangle our current linguistic clutter and point the way towards common ground rules in teaching religion in Catholic schools. It may also be a way to open up a much needed worldwide conversation on religious education. I offer three examples from scholars in different geographical regions: the United States, via Thomas Groome; Canada, via Richard Rymarz; and Scotland, via Leonard Franchi. While the works of these three scholars are in no way restricted to these particular geographical areas (or fully represent what is operating there), they do represent some of the current state of the discourse. Within the limited space available, I will zero in directly where they specifically address the issue at hand.

Since the publication of his book *Christian Religious Education* (1980), Thomas Groome's shared Christian praxis approach has received international attention and application. On a number of occasions, Groome has directly addressed the linguistic problem in the field of religious education. Initially, he relegated the "language debate" to a footnote in his book (1980, p. 17). However, in response to Graham Rossiter's call for a "Creative divorce between Catechesis and Religious Education in Catholic Schools" (1982), Groome has directly engaged the debate. He firmly rejects Rossiter's proposal of a "divorce" between catechesis and religious education. "They can and should be held together", he states, "even as 'an exam' subject" (2002, p. 588). In terms of what each represents, he writes,

> authors identify religious education as the more academic study of religion(s), whereas Christian education or catechesis is the intentional process of socializing people into Christian identity. The first is more academic, the second more ecclesial; the first more intent on information, the second on formation. (2006, p. 766)

Groome sees a dichotomy here. He proposes a merger. "Within my Catholic community of discourse", he notes, "I often write and speak of 'catechetical education' to signal my conviction that we need both religious education and catechesis" (p. 766). He offers his "shared praxis approach" as the effective way to the merger. The net effect, in my view, compounds the current linguist situation.

Groome's proposal plays into and accepts the standard international linguistic dualism, namely, religious education exclusively identified with the academic study of religion and the acquisition of knowledge. Catechesis, on the other hand, is formation in Christian identity. His attempt to merge the two into "catechetical education" collapses the distinction and confuses the two processes and purposes (see also Groome, 2002, p. 588). In effect, Groome's work and project become a form of critical catechesis put to a five-step process. Its assumptions, processes and purposes do not match the goals and academic aims of the Catholic school classroom with its diversity of religious adherents. Religious education, in all but name, gets absorbed into a catechetical framework.

Richard Rymarz and Leonard Franchi, in recent publications, address the linguistic debate specifically from within their own geographical contexts, namely,

Canada and Scotland. While their positions diverge at times, when it comes to the meaning of religious education, they share the same "family resemblance". Both are heavily influenced by elements of the British meaning of religious education.

Richard Rymarz critiques current official documents on Canadian Catholic school education (2011). Many, he claims, closely associate catechesis with religious education and fail to sufficiently distinguish between them. Catechesis operates with a pre-existing faith, response and commitment on the part of the student. Religious education, on the other hand, is a scholastic discipline. Its origins and intentions are educational. Its focus is on knowledge. Rymarz has support for this position from universal church documents—some of which are noted above. Consequently, he asserts, in light of contemporary culture's secularisation impact on religion and the lack of firm religious commitment of many students, a strong catechetical focus in the classroom is incongruous with our postmodern social imagining. His solution is to separate "the cognitive and affective goals of religious education" (p. 544). The affective goals are assigned to catechesis and the cognitive goals to religious education in the classroom. "This helps to ensure," he writes, "that the focus of classroom learning remains on the cognitive but at the same time acknowledge that affective goals that often correlate with catechesis are not overlooked"(p. 544). He sees them as complementing each other in Catholic schools.

Rymarz's insistence on distinguishing catechesis and religious education is well founded historically and in contemporary practice. His extensive work in Australia also honours this communicative practice. However, once again, the language games get muddled here. Three brief points seem in order. Rymarz exclusively identifies religious education with a subject in a school classroom and with cognitive outcomes. This is the UK reductionist meaning of religious education now undergoing challenge in continental Europe (see Jackson, 2007). Second, to assign the affective alone to catechesis does it no favours. Catechesis is a form of education. It is education as nurture and formation, frequently coupled with catechetical (cognitive) instruction. Finally, Rymarz's proposal hides a neo-confessionalism. "If the cognitive goals are reached," he writes, "there is a possibility that the more affective dimensions of learning, which often have a catechetical intent, will also be addressed" (p. 545). This, he notes, could be "a moment of evangelization…for those students who come from non-Catholic backgrounds or where the religious affiliation is essentially nominal" (p. 546). Is the ultimate purpose, then, to evoke a faith response from the student—even the non-Catholic student? Is there a confessional hook, however freely offered, in our intentions here? This, I believe, would not be "synergy". Rather, such intent is at variance with the purpose and role of academic instruction in the classroom, even the Catholic school classroom.

Leonard Franchi laments the fact that the magisterium of the Catholic Church has not yet produced "an authoritative document on the aims, purposes and challenges of religious education in the Catholic school" (2013, p. 468). On the other hand, this conceptual gap, he proposes, frees up local Catholic Churches and their educational agencies to create "religious education syllabi that are suitable for their own network of Catholic schools". "One such locally produced syllabus", he notes,

"is the Scottish initiative This Is Our Faith" (p. 468). The document is the fruit of collaboration between the Scottish government and the Scottish Catholic Education Service. It is a landmark document, Franchi claims, offering "a new model of school-based religious education" (p. 468). It does so by explicitly uniting catechesis and religious education. The model is (unabashedly) confessional, firmly grounded in catechetical principles to ensure doctrinal orthodoxy. In terms of content, the dominant partner is theology, or more specifically, Catholic theology. The curriculum is exclusively doctrinal centred. The religious educational process is inductive, drawing on Thomas Groome's "shared praxis", which seeks a personal response in faith and faith nurture. Cognitive and affective approaches to learning merge in the context of a distinct faith tradition. The model, Franchi asserts, "has the potential to become a distinct and internationally significant model of religious education for the 21st century" (p. 468). He sees it as a significant contribution to the wider debate on the appropriate conceptual framework for religious education.

Franchi's claims, I believe, are overstated and his analysis and advocacy misguided. Many of the reservations noted above with regard to official Church documents and Catholic scholars apply here also. In addition, let me mention three. First, Franchi collapses the distinction and tension between catechesis and religious education (see also Franchi, 2011). In effect, This Is Our Faith becomes a catechetical project with an academic cognitive dimension. Second, the classroom teacher is seen as a catechist promoting faith formation. In my view, this is a misconception of the role of the school teacher of religion. Finally, with its catechetical underpinnings and purpose, it is difficult, if not impossible, to imagine how this model could be compatible in the pluralist context of contemporary Catholic school. Franchi, appropriately, wants to honour the (exclusive) confessional distinctiveness of the Roman Catholic tradition. However, this tradition has much to learn from the history of liberal religious education and contemporary secular culture. The exclusive and the inclusive need to be held in a relational paradoxical tension. Franchi's proposal, I believe, fails that test.

This section of the paper sought to draw attention to the absence of a consistent language of religious education globally and, in particular, in the Roman Catholic Church. We have been and are in a state of, what the Australian scholar Michael Buchanan calls, "pedagogical drift" (2005, pp. 20–37). Buchanan employs the metaphor relating it to how international trends have influenced the delivery of curriculum in Australian Catholic schools. However, this "pedagogical drift" has given rise to multiple language games with no common reference. No international integrated framework of religious education has emerged outside or inside the Roman Catholic Church. This can have damaging practical consequences in schools and parishes. In the second part of this essay, we explore an integrative conceptual framework of religious education. Within this conceptual frame, we become aware of different linguistic games, with different forms and processes of religious education. The interplay between these respective forms and processes offers a common reference for our discussion. The consequences could revolutionise our practice.

Communicative Practices: Religious Education and Comprehensive Meaning

Simply offering a definition of religious education abstractly from on high is not what is offered here. Good theory looks at what people are already doing, reflects on it and proposes that there is a better way to describe their activities. If it is good theory, the language set forth will be comprehensive, consistent and precise. In a steadfast, thoughtful and creative manner, this has been the lifelong work of Gabriel Moran. In an extensive corpus of writings, he has sought to create a language of religious education, within which are some key distinctions that could lead it to become the name of a comprehensive and consistent field of activity. His aim has been to find a language that is (1) consistent with the texture of past meanings of religious education and (2) makes theoretical and practical sense today across the globe. He takes seriously Wittgenstein's insight: the meaning of words is found in their use. They emerge in the lived lives of people. Moran points out how the term religious education operates with two different and contrasting meanings on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. He writes, "Religious education in the UK usually means a subject in the curriculum of the state school; in the US, religious education never means that" (1989, p. 88). The latter is a faith-sponsored activity located in parish, congregation and synagogue. Both meanings operate in their respective areas with little or no relation to each other. In Moran's assessment, both suffer from a problem of narrowness. The richest and deepest meaning of religious education is found on neither side. Yet each side can contribute to a comprehensive meaning of the term. On the basis of logic, history and present need, Moran proposes what religious education could and should mean.

Religious education is dual in nature. It has two very distinct parts or "faces". The two faces are related, but one must first distinguish them within the meaning of religious education (Moran, 1997a). A premature synthesis weakens religious education, both theoretically and practically. On the other hand, keeping them in separate compartments leads to dualism and operating worlds apart. "Religious education", Moran writes, "has to do with the religious life of the human race and with bringing people within the influence of that life" (1989, p. 218). The word "education", he notes, indicates the way it seeks to do so. It is an educational approach to religion. To pull back the veil on Moran's proposal means honouring the rich ambiguity in the words education, teaching and religion. The ambiguity built into each of these important words opens up a plurality of forms and processes in each. In recent years Moran has succinctly stated his thesis: religious education is composed of two sharply contrasting processes—(1) to teach people to practise a religious way of life and (2) to teach people to understand religion. The first aims at careful assimilation into a concrete and particular set of religious practices (that a Roman Catholic, a Jew or a Muslim performs). The second aim or focus is the single act of understanding. Understanding begins with careful and critical comprehension of one's own religion. But to understand one's own religion involves

comparing it to some other religion. So the second aim has a plural object (Harris and Moran, 1998, pp. 30–43; Moran, 1989, pp. 216–223). These two very different aims seem almost contradictory. This has led some scholars (for instance, Groome) to see an epistemological dichotomy between the two. But the two processes have an inner connection. But they must first be distinguished—not blended—if they are to be brought together in a careful and intelligent way.

The first aspect or face of religious education is ancient and familiar and functions on the US side. It is a faith-sponsored project of religious groups trying to form new members into the practices and mission of the group. In recent years, it has been expanded to lifelong faith formation. The educative process here is formation and nurture. These are the two guiding metaphors for educational ministry on the Catholic and Protestant sides, respectively. Religious neophytes learn the practices of a religious (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, etc.) community by immersion in the experience of the life of the community. They learn to perform (sacramental) rituals and (service) practices. They also learn by catechetical doctrinal exposition. The (religious) teacher here is parent, preacher, catechist or community. They intend to shape/form the neophyte into being religious in a particular way. They provide affection, support and (cognitive) identity to the individual. The primary locations for this side of religious education are the parish/congregation, family, liturgical settings and outreach forums for works of justice. Some dimension may also function in church-affiliated schools—particularly outside the classroom of the school.

The second component or face of religious education is teaching religion. This aspect of religious education is modern and well established and functions on the UK side (Harris and Moran, 1998, pp. 37–41; Moran, 1989, pp. 87–113). Religion here is not a way of life or a set of practices but an object of scholarly and academic inquiry. It is an academic construct and the name of a subject in the school curriculum. This meaning of religion was adapted as a neutral term by scholars who sought to study particular (religious) communities. The meaning implies plurality. The aim and focus is to provide an understanding of religion. The understanding can begin with one's own. To understand, however, is to place in context. Today, the context is a world of religious plurality (and secular life).

The modern concept of religion implies understanding one (or one's own) religious position in relation to other possibilities. Some degree of otherness, some degree of comparison, is necessary for understanding. This is the process of examining, observing, critiquing and comparing. The effort involves stepping back from our immediate involvement, bracketing out practice and trying to understand the inner logic of the human experience grouped under the term religion. This is mostly a matter of the mind. It is academic, intellectual, abstract and (to a degree) distancing but not detaching. It presupposes a sympathetic readiness to listen attentively, reflect calmly and judge fairly. It is in opposition to the alternative: to attack, belittle, condemn or dismiss. The teacher here is the (academic) teacher of religion. The language forms of dialectical discussion and academic discourse hold centre stage (Moran, 1997b, pp. 124–145).

What is the appropriate setting for this form of inquiry? The modern classroom in the school is surely one place where it belongs (Scott, 2005, pp. 145–173). "It is

practically invented for the classroom", notes Moran; "there is no place where religion more comfortably fits than in the academic curriculum" (Moran, 1989, p. 124). But the capacity to understand religion takes many years. To concentrate on the elementary school years makes no logical sense in terms of educational readiness or need. The high school years are the age-appropriate time to begin to seriously engage this vital intellectual venture (Moran, 1997a, p. 155).

At this point, a legitimate question can be raised: why do these two distinct components or faces need to have the same name? Could not "religious education" serve for one or the other? The answer is: they already serve for both aspects in different parts of the world. What the world urgently needs in the twenty-first century are both faces of religious education within a comprehensive meaning of the term. This would open up a linguistic bridge and a fruitful dialogue between the two of them. Not everyone has to do both kinds, and one of the processes may take precedence at a particular moment in one's life. But while working at one kind, the educator should be aware of the other aspect at work.

Finally, it is important to note that these two aspects of religious education are not simply parallel processes to be engaged in by different populations. This is to dichotomize the components. The educational task is to distinguish, not to separate. We distinguish in order to bring back into an integrated whole. They are necessarily bound together with an inner connection. We cannot (intelligently) practise a religious way without some understanding of religion. Likewise, we cannot (adequately) understand religion without some internal feeling for its practice. We must crossover into the other area, holding a tension between them, as we integrate them into our personal lives and the lives of our religious communities. The next section explores the possibility of integrating the two components into Roman Catholic schools.

Living in the Paradox: Teaching Religion in Catholic Schools

Schools are complex and perplexing institutional forms of life. They house a bewildering set of activities—a plurality of teaching forms and languages, social and recreational events, artistic and athletic performances, etc. When we insert the prefix Roman Catholic before school, the complexity, and, at times, the perplexity, multiplies. Things do not get any simpler when the teaching of religion is part of the curriculum of this rich mix. It can further enrich the mix or muddy the waters. It can pose a problem or give rise to a paradox. The latter should be the intended outcome.

Catholic schools have usually been established because of the Catholic community's wish to pass on its way of life to the next generation. In this regard, nationally and internationally, they have been a significant success story. In spite of significant changes since the Second Vatican Council, including a reduction in both the number of schools and enrolment, a crisis of identity, a diversification of its student body and a reshaped sense of mission, it constitutes the largest private school system in

the world. Students have over time imbibed the ethos, values, ritual practices and commitment to service that permeates the ecology of the school. They, at their best, are "communities of faith" in action. In so far as the school is a community that socialises young people, it has and does maintain the tradition.

But central to school and schooling is teaching–learning to read, think and understand. At a certain stage, this can become dangerous and a counterforce to the received tradition and its resources. Students may begin to raise challenging and critical questions—not foreseen by the elders or the guardians of orthodoxy. The natural place for this to emerge is in the classroom of the school. When the subject in the classroom is religion, or specifically the Catholic religion, this may disturb some parents, principles and church officials. At times, teachers of this subject may feel caught in a quagmire between competing loyalties to the school's overall mission of wanting to pass on the tradition and, simultaneously, maintain the integrity of classroom teaching. However, that is the tension that needs to be held. When teachers of religion are facilitating these classroom discussions and living in the paradox, they are simply doing their job. The Catholic school's task, then, is to coordinate complementary forms of teaching–learning. Its task is to navigate the alternating currents of (1) teaching students to be religious in a Catholic way and (2) teaching (the Catholic) religion. Both forms of religious education can and should be housed in Roman Catholic schools. And neither should overwhelm the other.

The first task or form of religious education in Catholic schools is to teach students to be religious, i.e. to show them how to live the Roman Catholic way of life. This form of teaching–learning is mostly by example. Religious traditions have honoured this form of pedagogy from ancient times. People are invited into a set of practices that initiate them into and deepen their affiliation to a particular way. Students in Catholic schools experience this form of education mostly through community rituals and community practices. The whole life of the school community teaches, i.e. shows a way of life. The two key components of it are liturgical service(s) and service in the works of justice. Students learn the Catholic way by living in a Catholic community, participating in the liturgy and following the moral guidance of the tradition. At their best, liturgical experiences teach, inspire and direct. They teach by being what they are—public enactments of the community's story and vision of life. They are not a means to education; they are educational. Closely related to liturgy, but not synonymous with it, is catechesis. Catechesis belongs with liturgy, to shed light on its practice by sounding the message and explaining its meaning. The practice of liturgy, particularly its proclamation, followed by explanation, can be viewed as an aspect of catechizing, i.e. liturgical catechesis. When the liturgy is alive, it will flow over into works of service. This is a movement outward to the dispossessed and suffering. Catholic social teaching and service learning projects have had a significant educational impact on student formation in the Christian life. They have cultivated both orthodoxy (right believing) and orthopraxis (right action). The education is in the doing.

The first form of religious education has a crucial role to play in Catholic schools. It correlates well with its mission. Here, education is a form of nurture and formation, deepening initiation into the Catholic way. The language game here is

intimate, caressing and the first language of faith. Of course, students not affiliated with the Catholic tradition ought to have a personal choice to abstain from some of these practices. In addition, proselytising, indoctrination or subtle coercion should have no place on this side of religious education. They are, of their nature, antieducational.

Small elements of catechesis have a place in schools, but this is mostly the work outside schools of parents and parish. The scope of catechetical activity has been significantly expanded in contemporary church documents to embrace message, community, worship and service. Such an expansion, etymologically and historically, is not well supported. Catechesis is rooted in "echoing the word", to be followed by explanation of Christian doctrine. When it becomes an all-embracing term, it undermines and swallows up the full range of education in the life of Catholic schools and parishes. Catholic schools have to avoid letting teaching be (exclusively) absorbed by nurture and formation. They must fulfil the second function of education, namely, academic instruction. This compliments the first component of religious education and maintains a healthy tension with it. The proper place for this form of education is the classroom in the school. And teaching religion can be a litmus test as to whether the balance is maintained.

This second form/face of religious education, to teach (the Catholic) religion, is critical. It is critical in two senses. It is critical in importance as a unique schooling form of education. And it is critical in terms of the school's main role to be critical. Ironically, schools, and Catholic schools in particular, are almost self-contradictory. The community supports them to pass on the tradition. On the other hand, the modern classroom of the school is a free zone of inquiry that stands in tension with the Catholic tradition. It makes the tradition vulnerable to doubt by probing, searching and criticising. It casts a sceptical eye on everything assumed to be true. It's where students come to think and question what is assumed to be true. It is a time to pass upon, that is, to critically examine, the tradition. This examination calls for a different language game of academic discourse (Moran, 1997b, pp. 124–145). The content of the first component (Roman Catholic practices and doctrines) overlaps the second (academic study) but not the method or approach to it.

In some parts of the world, religious education is (exclusively) equated with the teaching of religion in state and religiously affiliated schools. This creates an inseparable barrier to conversation with the first component. In the classroom of the Catholic school, the teacher does not teach religious education. This use of language confuses and lacks appropriate distinctions. He or she teaches religion, the Catholic religion. This is the academic subject in the curriculum. Its subject matter content (Catholic beliefs, sacred texts, ritual practices, polity and history) stands beside other curricular subjects for exploration and interpretation. The process, akin to other subjects, is dialogical and dialectical. Its singular aim is to understand the elements of the Roman Catholic religion, to affirm what makes sense and to critique what does not. Classroom texts (print or visual) mediate between the community of the past and the community of the present. The teacher's task is to see that he/she fulfils that role for the student. To facilitate understanding for the student, the teacher must be willing to approach the texts/documents with reverence and sympathy. The

discipline of the teacher is crucial. It must be done with fairness and fullness, with disciplined intersubjectivity. Catechetical formation is put on hold and an imagined distance created. Usually (but not always), the subject matter content is the teacher's own religion. In this case, the examination is from both inside and outside. This examination works best when the first component is operative and the student possesses firm beliefs and is rooted in the Catholic tradition.

The starting point in understanding religion is one's own religion. However, to understand is to compare. Some degree of otherness is necessary for understanding anything. To understand one's own Catholic religion, then, involves comparing it to some other religion. This does not have to involve a phenomenological course on world religions. A good place to begin is with a dual perspective: Roman Catholic and Jewish, or Roman Catholic and Islam. This recognition of religious plurality, when sensitively explored, relativises one's religion, that is, places its way, truth and life in relation to the other's way, truth and life. Here, the plural and the relative are understood positively. An appreciation of the other frequently rebounds to a better understanding of one's own. For example, when a Catholic student acquires some limited understanding of Judaism, they do not convert to Judaism. Generally, it leads to a better understanding of their Catholicism.

In this context, heresy and orthodoxy are irrelevant terms. The truth or falsity of the church's teaching is not a direct concern of the classroom teacher or student. These concerns are on a different wavelength. They operate in a different linguistic game. Of course, the teacher of religion must clearly present "what the church teaches". But this is a preliminary step in teaching the Catholic religion. The teacher's next step is to create an intellectual clearing for teacher–student exploration of the teachings/texts. What do they mean? What is their origin? How did they develop? How are they changing? What are their limitations? This hermeneutical conversation can—literally—go on without end. No word is the final word. No meaning is permanently fixed. The best insights of today are subject to re-examination tomorrow. One does not teach orthodoxy. One does not teach dissent. One teaches the conversation to facilitate deeper understanding. The aim, then, is not to evoke a personal faith response from the student but to enable him or her to articulate their own convictions and, on educational grounds, evaluate the persuasiveness of the teachings in his or her life. The practice of the religion is the concern of the student alone, not the teacher. In this regard, Moran writes,

> "A good test of whether religion is being taught to Catholic students is whether the class is appropriate for non-Catholic students. If the school has to exempt the non-Catholic students from religion class, that would be an admission that what is going on in those classes is something other than instruction proper to a classroom" (1989, p. 158).

The student, then, who walks into classroom in a Catholic school, ought to enter a world of academic discourse. The teacher is a teacher of religion—not a catechist (or a theologian). School teachers in a classroom work in the context of an academic curriculum. Catechists work in the context of sacramental life. School teachers teach (the Catholic) religion. Catechists teach the Gospel and Christian doctrine. When the two language systems/games get mixed up, confusion and con-

flict reign to the detriment of both. Teaching religion in Catholic schools, then, ought to be justified on educational grounds. And the teacher is judged by academic standards—not standards set by ecclesial orthodoxy. The work is part of the modern project of education. We can say it is one of "The Blessings of Secularity" (Hull, 2003, pp. 56–58). When it is held in creative paradoxical tension with the other face of religious education, the Catholic school can house a comprehensive theory and practice of religious education. This theory and practice offers the possibility of directing students, in an integrated manner, to learn to live religiously in the modern world.

Religious education, then, is one of the most important rubrics under which Catholic schools and teachers of religion can engage in the urgent worldwide work that is education. Under its canopy, it gives Catholic schools and teachers of religion credibility and legitimacy as it encounters the non-church world and the world of religious plurality. Ironically, it may be the surest guarantee for the passing on of the tradition.

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Chapter 6
The Aesthetic Dimension of Believing and Learning

Stefan Altmeyer

Aesthetics: Only an End in Itself?

Aesthetics is a big word laden with manifold meaning. Like most philosophical key terms, it sounds equally programmatic as overawing. It may trigger positive connotations, just as it can give rise to suspicion. It is often connected with promises but also generates misgivings as we are inclined to admire high *aesthetic quality* and usually turn away if a solemn message proves to be only *pure aesthetics*. This general ambivalence may even grow if we combine aesthetics with other terms which can be considered equally normative or emotionally charged like religion, faith or theology, for example (Brown, 1990, pp. 1–5, 2000, pp. 3–4; Cilliers, 2011, p. 267). The connection of aesthetics with faith, religion or RE easily brings to mind in a critical way the sociological tendency towards total aestheticization of our entire life sphere (Berzano, 2011, pp. 70–72) which might result in a preference of form over message, package over content.

This and similar misgivings are in line with a common stereotype according to which in RE classes, students surprisingly often study paintings or paint pictures, analyse poems or write creative texts, sing or do handcrafts, etc. The question is whether these aesthetic educational methods are only an end in themselves and compete negatively with a more content-oriented form of RE. Against such misunderstandings, this chapter aims to argue that both areas of faith and aesthetics should be seen as, first, inseparably linked and, second, deeply rooted in everyday forms of communicative action having but little to do with a banal aestheticisation of everyday life. The thesis is that religiosity and faith as life-relevant orientations which become concrete in everyday forms of communicative action always have an aesthetic dimension. Consequently, aesthetic actions are to be understood as essential

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building blocks of being religious and learning about, respectively from religion. Or, as Katherine Douglass (2013) recently argued: '[B]ecause of its ability to aid in expression, connection, and opening, the aesthetic can be engaged as an integral dimension of Christian formation' (p. 456).

In the following, the argumentation of this essay aims to correlate philosophical (most precisely epistemological), theological and pedagogical perspectives in order to identify a general aesthetic dimension of believing and learning which finally boils down to two elementary guidelines for RE.

The Aesthetic Within an Epistemological Approach

From the eighteenth to the twentieth century, aesthetics was widely narrowed to the philosophical reflection of arts (Brown, 1990, p. 5; Kivy, 2004, pp. 1–4). Its primary notion could vary between a pessimistic and an optimistic alternative, both rooting in contrary anthropological presuppositions. While the former goes back to Plato's theory of beauty whereupon the phenomena of beauty are to be understood as a faint mirror of true ideas (Gaut & Lopes, 2001, pp. 3–13), the latter refers primarily to Aristotelian thinking emphasising the cathartic role of art in the human approach to the good, true and beautiful (Gaut & Lopes, pp. 15–26). The educational impetus behind the latter led thinkers of the European Enlightenment, above all Friedrich Schiller, to believe in a prominent role of art in education. What henceforth, following Schiller (1967), has been called aesthetic education in a wide sense follows the idea of fostering educational goals – like 'harmony in the individual' bringing 'harmony into society' (p. 215) – with and through arts (Viladesau, 1999, pp. 6–7). This also holds for almost every approach to aesthetics in religious education (e.g. Durka & Smith, 1979; Harris, 1988; McMurtary, 2007; Miller, 2003; Pike, 2002), while only little attention has been drawn to the aesthetic practice of children (Altmeyer, 2006; Douglass, 2013; Heimbrock, 1999).

On the basis of such approaches, we may identify another notion of aesthetics as rooted in the literal meaning of the Greek term αἴσθησις (perception). In this line of thought, aesthetics no longer means to focus exclusively on fine arts, but points to the sensual dimension of human cognition. The centre of interest of aesthetics then lies in 'the general study of sensation … in the wider sense of non-conceptual or non-discursive (but nevertheless "intellectual") knowledge' (Viladesau, 1999, p. 7).

In order to illustrate this epistemological approach to the aesthetic, one could refer to the Belgian surrealist René Magritte (1898–1967) who worked on this topic in a series of paintings titled 'La condition humaine' (the human condition). In one of these paintings from 1948 (print in: Grunenberg & Pih, 2011, p. 198), we see a realistic picture of a mouth of a cave, the viewer's look going from the dark inside to the light outside adumbrating a mountain scenery. On the left edge, a campfire is burning. Only one object does not fit into the image: In the centre of the mouth of the cave, Magritte placed an easel with a painting on it. Being also realistic, this painting shows an identical copy of the view from the cave to the light outside

which painter and spectator share. It is only through the perspective of view and the spectator's aesthetic cooperation that it becomes possible to distinguish between picture and picture-in-picture. In an absolutely surprising and vivid way, this painting points to the difference between reality and its appearance in human sensual cognition. One could indeed think of Plato's allegory of the cave: Where human beings are looking to the outside of their cave and where they reflect on their own perception of the "real world", the double ground of all human cognition which is always sensually mediated comes out. 'That's how we see the world. We see it outside of ourselves while only having an inner representation of it' (Magritte, 2001, p. 144, my translation).

The example of Magritte's painting has opened epistemological processes that may lead us to a notion of aesthetics in a fundamental manner: *Aesthetics means reflecting about sensually mediated receptive and productive human actions of cognition*. To see, to hear, to smell, to taste and to touch are always already actions of interpreting understanding. And, at the same time, speaking, writing, forming and so on are always already expressions of our own understanding which can only be perceived via interpretation. 'I learn about the world by constructing it through aesthetic objects' (Viau, 2002, p. 20). There is no object of reality that cannot be seen aesthetically (as expression of our senses), just as our picture of reality is always aesthetically mediated (as perception of our senses). To speak about the aesthetic dimension of human cognition, therefore, implies distinguishing between receptive and expressive (productive) communicative actions. 'In aesthetic work, action and perception are *both* at work in giving meaning and form to something' (Douglass, 2013, p. 454, my emphasis).

Theological Reflections

Taking this general notion of aesthetics as a starting point, it's not a long way to understand why and how faith and religiosity are intrinsically linked to such aesthetic actions. In order to show this, I will comment briefly on some key issues of a theological aesthetics which argues in favour of thinking about Christian faith as a specific way of living and acting for which a 'centrality of sensibility' (Viladesau, 1999, p. 77) has to be asserted. There is a fundamental aesthetic dimension within faith which is to be found in everyday forms of communicative action. Relating faith and RE to the field of aesthetic actions does therefore not mean giving preference to secondary aspects of form over primary aspects of content and, as even Pope Francis (2013) argues, it 'has nothing to do with fostering an aesthetic relativism' (para. 167), but leads to the heart of the matter of faith itself. Both 'spheres overlap and interact in ways that we have barely begun to appreciate' (Brown, 2000, p. 23).

To give an example for what it means that there is an aesthetic dimension in every religious act, I will provide an interpretation of the famous statement of Paul in the letter to the Romans whereby 'faith comes from what is heard' (Rom 10:17; Hultgren, 2011). From the perspective of a theological aesthetics, one could

hypothesise that what Paul is describing here points to what we have called the aesthetic dimension of faith: Faith is neither a construction of human imagination nor a projection of needs, but it is characterised by receiving something that humans cannot imagine and by the fulfilment of a hope being far beyond all human desires. Faith is rooted in a human experience with the word of God that addresses him or her. The Greek ἀκούω, to hear, also transports the meaning of 'to experience'.

Thus, what do we 'hear' if faith comes from what is heard? According to Paul it is 'the word of God from hearing us' (1Thess 2:13). Three levels of aesthetic actions are combined here, comparable to the three pictorial levels in Magritte's painting (picture, picture-in-picture, viewed picture):

1. First of all, there is Jesus Christ, who is to be heard, as 'what is heard comes through the word of Christ' (Rom 10:17). He is the one who brings the word of God to all humans, being at the same time identical with this divine word. As Hans Urs von Balthasar argues in his theological aesthetics, Jesus Christ is in his living and dying 'the Expression and the Exegesis of God. … He *is* what he expresses – namely God – but he is not whom he expresses – namely the Father' (von Balthasar, 1982, p. 29; Murphy, 1995, pp. 131–194).

2. Thus, God is speaking through Jesus Christ, so that looking on his deeds and hearing what he is saying 'provide a paradigm for speech about God, about our relation to God, and about the human community called into being by God's love' (Viladesau, 1999, p. 96).

3. That is again, what Paul is passing on in his proclamation of the Gospel. He is handing down to us what he himself has received (1Cor 15:3). That faith comes from what is heard therefore implies that there is a human being who makes this message audible by expressing what he or she has received him- or herself. In which form do we hence hear God's word of revelation? 'God's word', as the Belgian-born theologian Edward Schillebeeckx (1974) precisely formulates, is 'a human word, spoken by real men in their own language' (p. 47, see Boeve, 2004).

Taking the perspective of what Richard Viladesau (1999) called a 'theological aesthetics … 'from below'' which inquires 'into the conditions of possibility in humanity for the reception and interpretation of a divine revelation' (p. 37), we see again here the aesthetic dimension of faith. Through the permanent interplay of hearing and saying, perception and expression, the dynamic of faith and tradition is initiated. In Magritte's painting, we could observe the same interplay. We became aware of how much painter and spectator rely on each other in building the meaning of a painting by changing their roles – active/receptive – permanently. In total, the example of Paul's famous tenet *fides ex auditu* shows the intrinsic interconnection of receptive and expressive aesthetic actions in the context of faith. Faith comes from what is heard in words with which human beings express their perception of experiences interpreted as the healing closeness of God. Faith begins with aesthetic perceptions such as hearing God's word, seeing his deeds or feeling his presence and longs for aesthetic 'response' (Brown, 2000, p. 11). But the word of God is only to be heard through human words, his deeds can only be perceived in human actions,

and his presence can only be felt in the personal attention of a concrete other. What we can perceive of God is what people make perceivable for us, meaning to what they give expression. Bringing the fundamental theological argument for this position to the point, Viladesau states 'God is knowable through word and image *because* and *insofar as* the human being is itself the 'image' of God' (p. 90). Following Karl Rahner's *Grundkurs des Glauben*s (1978), he claims that human beings and their relations have to be understood as 'embodiment or 'expression' of God's life shared with humanity and 'paradigms' or 'images' of how God acts and what God is for us' (Viladesau, p. 94).

Believing and Learning

Through the above presented epistemological and theological reflections of the aesthetic dimension of faith, we have come to a notion of the aesthetic as part of human cognitive and religious actions. In order to proceed from this to genuine educational aspects of religious learning, we have to take a more systematic look on communicative actions underlying these processes (for the following: Altmeyer, 2010, pp. 632–633; Mager, 2012). Since learning can be defined 'as the growing capacity or the growing competence of students to participate in culturally structured practices' (Wardekker & Miedema, 2001, p. 27), a theory of religious learning in its aesthetic dimension must be based on an analysis of the structures underlying explicitly religious practice. To this end, I will provide an analysis of the human practice *believing* by means of a theoretical framework derived from the theory of communicative action according to the Frankfurt school (Habermas, 1984–87). This concept is primarily based on the assumption that communication forms a central building block to understand and describe human lifeworld encompassing quite opposite areas of action like social, professional, family and even religious life. For this end, the theory goes beyond the simple sender-receiver model of communication and moves towards a model of communicative rationality. To concentrate the complex theoretical framework in its basic idea, one could say in straightforward terms that each communicative act can be differentiated into five dimensions summed up in the following mnemonic: *I communicate – about something – with others – under contextual conditions – by using a specific form.* In detail, the five constituents of each communicative action described herein, are: (1) the autonomous subject that is communicating ('I communicate'), (2) the content of communication as its objective-material aspect ('about something'), (3) the subjective counterpart of communication building its intersubjective dimension ('with others'), (4) the social lifeworld in which the action is situated ('under contextual conditions') and (5) the aesthetic dimension concerning the perceivable form of communication ('by using a specific form'). According to Habermas, a successful communication oriented towards the ideal of total absence of domination has to guarantee certain claims in all five of these dimensions, ranging from truthfulness in the subjective dimension to aesthetic coherence in questions of form.

Central to our question is the insight that there is an aesthetic dimension in every human practice which is not to be understood as perchance or arbitrary, but which forms a relevant and not to be neglected part of communication. Everything we say and hear, express and perceive is bound to the form it comes with. And if this form is not coherent to even one further dimension (to the subject, the content, the counterpart and context of communication), communication is in danger of coming to grief. If you *shout* at your students to *calm* them *down*, the success of this pedagogical intervention would scarcely be of high sustainability.

By means of this general model of communicative action, it also becomes possible to analyse the specific religious act (thus completing the previous epistemological and theological arguments from a social perspective). Focusing on Christian faith, a short mnemonic parallel to that above seems appropriate: *I believe – in God – who confronts me in the person of my neighbour – under the conditions of today's life – by using condign forms of expression.* The first (and subjective) dimension refers to the inner reality of faith that motivates an individual's free decision of living in the gifted relationship to God (in the traditional terms of Augustine: *fides qua creditur*). The second (objective-material) dimension forms the necessary corrective of subjectivity and highlights the aspect of belief; no faith act could be imaginable without content (*fides quae creditur*). The third (and intersubjective) dimension describes the relational reality of Christian faith – insofar as the vertical relationship to God is not to be separated from the horizontal relationship realised in human relations. The fourth (contextual) dimension extends this relational aspect of faith to the conditions of history and everyday life. The historical situation of faith is to be understood not only as the contingent conditions of the pure ideas of truth and good but as a *locus theologicus* (Pope Francis, 2013, para. 126; see also Viladesau, 1999, pp. 15–19) where the decisive 'test of truth' (Pope Paul VI, 1975, para. 24) of faith is taking place. Every faith act, finally, has to be situated in a medial frame by the use of certain subjectively authentic, intersubjectively suitable and materially well-grounded forms, which constitute the fifth (and *aesthetic*) dimension of faith.

Parallel to the general, the specific model of faith as communicative action also points to an aesthetic dimension which is reciprocally linked to personal, material, intersubjective and contextual aspects. Once again and in short terms: form matters (Wolterstorff, 2004, pp. 325–328). It is not interchangeable in which form a truth of faith is formulated (e.g. as creed, hymn, parable or picture), or how we share our faith with others (in the form of prayer, life witness or instruction). Looking at the aesthetic dimension reminds us that there is more about faith than cognition (*fides quaerens intellectum*), practice (*fides quaerens actum*) and attitude (*fides quaerens corporalitatem*), but also the form through which it is perceived and expressed: *fides quaerens expressionem* (Altmeyer, 2006; Cilliers, 2009, 2011).

These theoretical reflections on Christian faith on the basis of a general theory of communicative action allow the formulation of a competence model for RE encompassing all five dimensions (Altmeyer, 2010, pp. 633–634). Especially the aesthetic dimension is now integrated and linked with all other aspects of religious learning. RE seeks to develop *spiritual sensitivity* (subjective dimension of believing and

learning), *religious knowledge and ability of reasoning* (objective-material dimension of believing and learning), *ability of relating* (intersubjective dimension of believing and learning), *capacity for action* (contextual dimension of believing and learning) and *faculty of perception and expression* (aesthetic dimension of believing and learning). Religious learning in its aesthetic dimension encourages people to search and find an appropriate form of expressing their personal faith by bringing them into contact with religious expressions of others, first and foremost but not exclusively with traditional religious forms. Within this model RE aims to develop a comprehensive competence which is characterised by the ability to make use of religious rationality in its five communicative dimensions, i.e. by returning to subjective points of ultimate concern, by reasoning in connection with religious tradition and creed, by relating to others as representatives of God, by substantiating options for action through religious claims and by using religiously relevant and coherent forms receptively and expressively. Aesthetic learning forms an integrated part within this comprehensive competence development.

Aesthetic Learning Processes in RE

Correlating these hitherto presented epistemological, theological and pedagogical reflections, we are now able to conclude that by performing receptive or productive aesthetic actions, students train their aesthetic competence in the matter of religion. 'There is an aesthetic dimension to practical reason, and without the acknowledgement of this dimension, epistemological claims about experience (including experiences of God) are incomplete' (Douglass, 2013, p. 449). Consequently, such educational methods are well justified by the matter of religion itself. The question remains, which educational means would be most appropriate for a more systematic development of aesthetic competences in RE. To this end, I will recommend two general guidelines which aim to combine receptive and productive aesthetic practices as a circling movement. While the first guideline lays emphasis on perception in RE (receptive aesthetic competence), the second is focused on expression (productive aesthetic competence).

Providing Space for Impression: Medial Reduction and Retardation

The first guideline draws attention to the dramaturgy of teaching processes. As psychology of learning shows, educational processes should be structured on correlation to the students' phases of attention. This means that every subject of teaching has to be seen as something foreign whose encrypted meaning needs enough time for decryption and acquisition (Pike, 2002, pp. 18–19). Thus, before students are able to unlock meaning autonomously, they must be given the appropriate time for

attentive perception. That is why against omnipresent tendencies of acceleration and medial flooding, teaching needs a concentration of a key medium (Caranfa, 2010, p. 78). Only by means of such medial reduction and systematic retardation of perception a space is opened where the media of teaching can achieve any effective impression on the students. Aesthetic learning in RE in this context means to implement a structured, retarding and aware process of perception which prepares the ground for individual proactive expressions of students. The aim is to help students 'to indicate and create or to decipher meaning within the contexts of our essential reality, to *make sense out of reality*' (Cilliers, 2009, p. 43; Groome, 1998, pp. 433–436).

The German religious educator Joachim Theis (2013) has developed a teaching tool for working with the biblical text which may serve as an example for illustration and concretion. Against the background of Wolfgang Iser's (1997) theory of aesthetic response, he proposes the following sequence of five steps and guiding questions for exploring the Bible in RE aesthetically: (1) What am I reading? (spontaneous perception). (2) How is the text worked? (full outside concentration). (3) What does the text trigger in me? (inner perception). (4) What does the text mean? (text interpretation). (5) Where am I within the message of the text? (textual identification). While the first and third steps emphasise the perspective of the learner – as his or her instantaneous and uncensored statement after first reading (1) or as experiential or emotional impressions of the text (3) – the second and fourth step switch to an exact analysis of the text, concerning its linguistic form (2) and theological message (4). The fifth and final step aims to correlate the personal and textual perspective and initiate a dialogue between both. 'Encouraging readers to allow a text to function as a 'stimulus' is a key process in facilitating personal response … as this enables them to present themselves' (Pike, 2004, p. 52) before and finally within the text. This example illustrates what it means to profile a clearly content-oriented RE as aesthetically deepened: Teaching religion (e.g. the Bible) involves to practice perception by providing space for personal impression – What am I religiously perceiving, what does religion mean to me and where am I within the religious message?

Implementing an Interplay Between Expressive and Perceptive Actions: Encircling Learning

The second guideline gives emphasis to the point that every learning process has the task of enabling a reciprocal dynamics between learner and content. It's necessary that students become aware of their own experiences and questions in order to connect them with the teaching subject. And vice versa, cultural possessions or scientific knowledge are educationally valuable if they are able to speak to adolescents' experiences and life or future questions (Groome, 1998, pp. 434–436). Learning has to be understood 'as a productive and creative process that shapes [students'] own
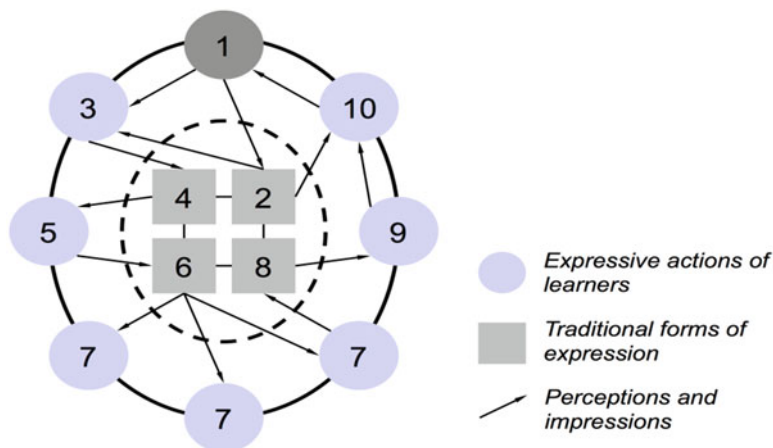
Fig. 6.1 Encircling learning (Altmeyer, 2006, p. 383)

personal religiosity and builds their world view, their religious ideas and practice' (Heimbrock, 1999, p. 52; Pike, 2002, p. 13). In the context of aesthetic learning, we find the same reciprocal dynamics within the poles of personal expressions of learners and teaching subjects which can be understood as traditional (or cultural) forms of expression (McMurtary, 2007). The point is to structure the learning process as an interplay of expressive actions of learners and traditional forms of expression that realise a kind of encircling learning as outlined in Fig. 6.1.

The heart of this concept lies in a permanent alternation between expressive actions of learners and presentation of traditional forms. The following short example of a unit for primary school students on the topic of prophets may serve for better understanding (Altmeyer, 2006, pp. 382–385, picking up suggestions of the German teacher trainer Rainer Oberthür). The unit starts with a creative task (1 in Fig. 6.1). Within a playful scenario, the pupils are asked to write a so-called speech to humanity: Imagine you have the possibility to speak to all the people on earth, what would you say? After that, the teacher presents a collection of short quotes from prophets' words together with the task to pick out one quote fitting their own speech (2). In the next step, the pupils are invited to create pictures about their speech and the selected quote (3), followed by the presentation of prophet paintings of artists (4). Students are asked to associate what such people as those illustrated in the paintings are doing (5). Only after all these creative, receptive and reflective actions is the term 'prophet' together with elementary factual information introduced (6). By that time, the pupils have already acted out as a prophet (speech to humanity) and reflected on what prophets are doing, thinking and feeling. This is not the place for a detailed presentation and evaluation of the whole unit, but I hope the crucial point of my second guideline has become clear. This basically concerns giving high priority to learners' expressive activities through which they can anticipate or work up the human experiences condensed in traditional religious forms of

expression. By this, we offer students the opportunity to enter the religious world by 'reflective expression' (McMurtary, 2007, p. 88; Pike, 2002, p. 10). Teaching religion (e.g. the Prophets) involves practising aesthetic competence by providing space for personal expression: How would I express my own spirituality, what do traditional religious forms mean to me and how would I transform them into something like a personal religious lifestyle?

After all, coming back to the initial question of whether and why it should be reasonable to say that students in RE classes sing, compose poems, engage in creative writing, paint or analyse and meditate on pictures more often than in other school subjects, we can finally conclude: Such receptive and expressive aesthetic actions must not be an end in itself or pure educational methods regardless of the content dimension of RE. On the contrary, if they are connected to the development of the aesthetic dimension of religious competence, meaning the twofold capacity for perception and expression, they can be understood and concerted as a real trademark of RE giving justice to the principal 'family alliance' (Clive Bell quoted in Wolterstorff, 2004, p. 328) between aesthetics and religion in general and the Catholic tradition in particular. Thus, Catholic RE participates in the general task of evangelization, seeking 'ways of expressing unchanging truths in a language which brings out their abiding newness' (Pope Francis, 2013, para. 41; especially on language: Altmeyer, 2015). To this end, providing space for the impression of selected key media through medial reduction and educational retardation and implementing an interplay between expressive and perceptive class actions seem to be two appropriate means.

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Chapter 7
Positive Youth Development and Religious Education

Chris Hacket

Introduction

This chapter explores the complementary role of positive youth development (PYD) in the context of religious education (RE) taught in Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. The term 'religious education' is used here to refer to the whole school religious education curriculum that includes the teaching of religion as a classroom activity and catechetical activities that occur outside of the classroom. In Western Australian Catholic secondary schools, religion classes are compulsory for all students, and participation in catechetical activities is expected to the extent to which the students are affiliated with the Catholic tradition. The chapter will firstly outline the characteristics of positive youth development and the contribution PYD can make towards young people's spiritual well-being and religious commitment. Next, the chapter will discuss Catholic secondary school examples of how RE can promote PYD traits as part of a whole school programme that includes classroom learning, retreats, liturgy, prayer and student ministry. Lastly, the chapter will conclude how a focus on PYD may enhance the learning outcomes of religious education in Catholic schools.

What Is Positive Youth Development?

A positive youth development approach to young people's well-being is focused on developing their inner strengths or traits to deal with the challenges of life. The aim of PYD is to promote a thriving personality buoyed by positive environments

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experienced through the family, school or local community (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2012, p. 167). Essentially, PYD is like a 'vitamin C' tablet to counter the negative influences of unhealthy risk factors such as alienation, depression or disenchantment. There are five traits that PYD seeks to develop within young people: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring (Warren, Lerner & Phelps, 2012, p. 5). Competence refers to ways young people view their personal, social and academic capabilities. Confidence means young people can see themselves as possessing self-worth or self-efficacy. Connection refers to the network of positive relationships young people can have in their lives. Character relates to the sense of integrity and uprightness young people can develop, and caring means the capacity for young people to be empathetic towards others and their environment (Bowers et al., 2010, Table 1). For young people to thrive, these traits need to be developed in an integrated fashion and especially by creating an outward looking world view through engagement with their communities.

The focus or 'hub' of this integration is on building empathetic character (Lovat & Toomey, 2007), or what is called 'great love-compassion' [GLC] (Warren, 2012, p. 94). GLC is about the universal desire of people '… to have freedom and joy, and the complementary wish born of clear perception … to be relieved of their pain and suffering' (p. 94). It is what drives people to action, to serve and create a better world for themselves, their loved ones and the local and global community. For many young people during their teenage years (Good & Willoughby, 2008), they are awakened to this desire as they become more conscious of the potentiality of what they can commit to and be capable of doing. They are able to move away from excessive self-absorption (Hodder, 2007) to a greater concern for the welfare for others. They can become happier and healthier or, as stated in the *Melbourne Declaration on the Educational Goals of Young Australians,* '…become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens' (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2008, p. 7). In particular, a PYD approach can help young people:

- have a sense of self-worth, self-awareness and personal identity that enables them to manage their emotional, mental, spiritual and physical wellbeing;
- have a sense of optimism about their lives and the future;
- develop personal values and attributes such as honesty, resilience, empathy and respect for others;
- have the knowledge, skills, understanding and values to establish and maintain healthy, satisfying lives;
- relate well to others and form and maintain healthy relationships; and,
- [become] well prepared for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members. (MCEETYA, 2008, p. 9)

Links Between Positive Youth Development, Spirituality and Religiosity

Young people today in Australian secondary schools, known as Generation Z, face extraordinary challenges psychosocially and technologically. McCrindle Research (2013) suggests they are 'the most materially endowed, technological[ly] saturated,

formally educated generation [the] world has ever seen' (2. Generationally defined, para. 1). However, even with so much, they continue to long for acceptance, confidence, identity, independence, love, responsibility and a positive world view (*Raising Children Network, Australia,* 2013).

There is evidence to suggest that when young people have a strong sense of their spirituality such as by making commitments beyond self-interest (Lerner, Roeser & Phelps, 2008, p. 3) and/or demonstrate an active religiosity such as by regular Church attendance (Good & Willoughby, 2006, p. 41), then they achieve better at school, are less likely to exhibit risky behaviours, are able to become more actively involved in their communities, tend to volunteer more and become more engaged in the social and political fabric of society (Checkoway & Gutiérrez, 2011, p. 2; Good & Willoughby, 2006; Putnam & Campbell, 2010). Such traits would sit well with a philosophy of Catholic education that seeks to promote the whole person from within (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 29) towards a 'new life which has been given them in baptism' (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 259). Catholic schools can do much to promote PYD through religious education where expressions of spirituality and religiosity are important aspects to the curriculum of these schools.

Positive youth development is possible when young people can access outlets for developing its five traits. Strongest among these outlets are opportunities for spiritual and religious practices (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2012, p. 168). Social and civic engagement, socio-emotional management, delayed gratification, discipline, gratitude, healthy lifestyle practices, quiet time, mindfulness and acts of generosity and service, to name a few, could form the basis of spiritual practices for young people to experience. Furthermore, young people in Catholic schools could be introduced to religious practices such as Bible reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation, fasting and acts of mercy and social justice, liturgy and sacramental preparation for PYD. Such practices would enhance the personal and social capability of young people (Australian Curriculum Assessment & Reporting Authority, 2012) at a time in their lives when they are open to change or 'plasticity' (Bowers et al., 2010, p. 721) and when religious commitment may be seriously considered (Good & Willoughby, 2008, p. 32).

Positive Youth Development and Religious Education

Programmes that promote positive youth development for great love-compassion work from Neo-platonic dimensions of the human person: the head, heart and hands (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2008, p. 329). The 'head' represents the cognitive domain, the 'heart' the affective domain and the 'hands' behavioural domain (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2012, p. 169). Spiewak and Sherrod (2008) proposed that these three dimensions apply similarly to spirituality and religiosity. If religious education is an education that includes expressions of spirituality and religiosity, the 'head' could refer to the teaching of religion and religious awareness in the classroom; the 'heart' could refer to the school-based experiences that raise religious sensitivity (new

evangelisation) or catechesis; and the 'hands' could refer to the service and leadership opportunities available to students. To distil the three dimensions does not suggest they operate in isolation from one another. On the contrary, they interact with each other with a focus on great love-compassion. The foundation of this great love-compassion would focus on Jesus Christ, as the 'way, truth and life' (Jn 14:6). Just as 'PYD relies heavily on sparking adolescent initiative or motivating youth to engage in healthier activities or lifestyle' (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2012, p. 170), so too can religious education potentially aim to do the same. The hallmarks of this religious education would be one that aims to be compelling (head), inspiring (heart) and engaging (hands) for young people.

PYD and the Teaching of Religion and Religious Awareness in the Classroom (Head)

The head dimension of religious education seeks to develop competence in knowledge and understanding of religion and a critical appreciation of the role of religion in the lives of people and society. PYD studies in religious or spiritual engagement usually include a survey based on a scale of belief to be used for the 'head' dimension (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2012, p. 173). Good and Willoughby (2008) point out that during adolescence, young people have an increased capacity for abstract thought, deductive reasoning and metacognition (p. 33). Given challenging moral and social issues or 'big' questions on life (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006, pp. 394–396; Erricker, 2010; Holohan, 1999, pp. 28–29; Rossiter, 2010), young people are capable of critically evaluating their own and other's ideas about themselves, the world around them and about God. They are able to intellectually engage into the human quest for meaning and purpose and critically evaluate how people and teaching of the Catholic faith tradition address this human quest. Rymarz and Graham (2006) observed that young people had a 'lack of sophisticated knowledge of a Christian overview of the world' (p. 87). To counter such a trend, Rymarz (2012) suggested that young people need an approach in teaching religion of 'knowledge to be discovered' (p. 173) in the search for truth on which to build a 'cognitive religious framework' or 'critical religious literacy' of a Catholic/Christian world view. This religious literacy would be more than knowledge of key terms, people or practices; it would include a critical understanding of religious concepts, issues and culture. One attempt to develop a more critically inquiring approach to teaching religion in the classroom is a senior secondary course recently developed in Western Australia (WA).

In 2009, a new course of study called 'Religion and Life' (RAL) was introduced by the Curriculum Council of Western Australia (renamed now as the School Curriculum and Standards Authority), the state government authority charged for overseeing the senior school curriculum in WA. RAL was part of a suite of courses that were introduced for senior secondary students that included the opportunity to

study the course for university entrance (School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2013). The first cohort of predominately Catholic students completed the course in 2010. Berlach and Hackett (2012) invited teachers and students of this cohort to evaluate whether the outcomes of RAL had been achieved. The three outcomes related, firstly, to the interplay between religion and life; secondly, to the search for meaning and purpose; and thirdly, to the role of religion in society. These outcomes were focused around the rationale that the Religion and Life course was about the 'interplay between religion, individuals and society' (p. 9). Students were required to explore how religion interacts with and influences people, not only personally but also culturally and contemporaneously. To do so, students learnt to use inquiry and research skills to critically interpret the source materials available to them. The responses from teachers and students were very positive; in particular, the students surveyed indicated that they '… enjoyed exploring the issues' (p. 11) with the following responses: 61 % for outcome one, 77 % for outcome two and 70 % for outcome three, respectively. Albeit there were 'teething problems' with a lack of resources and professional development, as well as adjusting to changes in assessment. Overall, both teachers and students felt that the course was worthwhile. Berlach and Hackett noted that, 'Students …, although not shying away from criticism, found the course to be compelling… it appears that the RAL course proved to be both challenging and thought-provoking.' (p. 14). From a PYD perspective, the course seems to have assisted many students develop academic competence and confidence. However, while the 'head' may have been well fed, 53 % of students reported that the course was unlikely to have '…contributed to [their] personal growth and development in the area of religion' (p. 14). Perhaps, this response is an indicator that other dimensions of the 'heart' and the 'hands' need to come into play to complement the 'head' for positive development to occur (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2012, p. 175). The role of the heart and the hands in religious education will now be discussed in the next section.

PYD and the Experience of Catechetical Activities (Heart and Hands)

To develop young people positively, traits like connection, character and caring are emphasised by providing opportunities for young people to perform and reflect critically upon acts of generosity or service (Lovat, Toomey, Clement, Crotty & Nielsen, 2009). In Catholic secondary schools in WA, these opportunities are part of schools' evangelisation plans called 'activities of catechesis' which include liturgies, prayer time, retreats and Christian service learning (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia [CECWA], 2008). There is 'at least 60 mins per week of such experiences averaged over the particular year level's academic year' (CECWA, 2008) separate from the time allocation given to teaching religion in the classroom. As pointed out by Benedict XVI (2005), like the Church, the Catholic

school in providing these activities has a 'three-fold responsibility: of proclaiming the word of God (kerygma-martyria), celebrating the sacraments (leitourgia), and exercising the ministry of charity (diakonia). These duties presuppose each other and are inseparable' (para. 25). Hackett and Lavery (2011) have reported on a small number of Catholic secondary schools in WA who have sought to promote these activities as 'student ministry' through active participation and servant leadership by students.

Student ministry is about personal, spiritual and religious formation of young people ('heart') through critical reflection of acts of service ('hands'), often by taking leadership roles or through service-learning (Hackett & Lavery, 2011, p. 4). An important qualifier is that schools plan these acts systematically for evangelisation (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 20) and that students performed them in a process akin to 'an apprenticeship process of formation' (Holohan, 1999, pp. 23, 65). Students are encouraged to take the initiative (Smith & Denton, 2005) where appropriate and safe to do so with the teaching staff adopting a 'travelling companion' stance (John Paul II, 1993). Importantly, the principal and the school leadership team are seen to actively support student actions (Hart, 1992). In two Catholic secondary schools, all students were required to do service from years seven to twelve. The hours of service consisted of during school hours and out-of-school hours. In the junior secondary years, the emphasis was on service at home or at school, while the senior years emphasised broader community actions such as charity drives or immersion experiences. A crucial feature to these actions was the critical reflection that accompanied them. Students were provided with the opportunity to journal their personal reflections of their experiences, to share their reactions and insights to these experiences in small and larger groups and to participate in formal and informal moments of prayer. For the heart and the hands dimensions to become influential in the lives of young people, then '…time devoted to God in prayer not only does not detract from effective and loving service to our neighbour but is in fact the inexhaustible source of that service' (Benedict XVI, 2005, para. 36). How sustainable though this influence may have on students still remains promising but tentative (D'Agostino, 2010; Furco & Root, 2010). Conversion remains an aspiration rather than an outcome. Nonetheless, school leaders consistently observed profound moments happening for their students (and themselves) as a result of service learning. One school leader commented that sometimes the depth of insight does not happen at the time of the experience but may occur later, perhaps because of a growth in maturity (Hackett & Lavery, 2011, p. 58). As another school leader commented, the value of student ministry was 'more than doing good…it was a *way* of doing good' (p. 59). There seemed to be an interplay between the 'heart' and the 'hands' dimensions that later involved the crucial participation of the 'head' through critical reflection (Spiewak & Sherrod, 2012, p. 176). Students felt empowered to act, stirred by deep humane emotions and duty bound to make a difference. To support the students in their transcendence to a broader or Catholic/Christian world view, students were taught about the social teachings of the Church and invited to join a community of prayer.

At another Catholic secondary school in WA, Hine (2013) found that young people who were able to take an active leadership role in the school community reported

they felt a sense of 'obligation, duty, and service' (p. 42). They felt a greater connection with their school community, saw themselves as developing leadership characteristics and were concerned about the circumstances of other students. One quality that Hine noted was the character-building characteristic of self-sacrifice (pp. 44–45) that volunteering and service bring with student leadership. Students in leadership had to weigh up their obligations at a time in their senior school years when study was a high priority. As found in Hackett and Lavery's (2011) study, where students were exhorted to volunteer in service activities, young people learnt valuable lessons about coping with competing demands, developing a balance between self-interest and community mindedness. From a PYD perspective, Hine's study showed that leadership and service opportunities reflect spiritual practices that build personal and social competencies, enhance self-esteem, build community relationships and develop a sense of empathy and compassion.

Integration of Head, Heart and Hands Dimensions in Religious Education

The whole school religious education curriculum has the potential to provide young people with a meaningful view of the world. Catholic schools, on behalf of the Church, have a responsibility to communicate '…to young people an appreciation for the positive value of life and of awakening in them a desire to spend their lives in the service of the Good' (Benedict XVI, 2012, para. 1). For this to happen, the curriculum needs to make sense and relate to the 'lifeworld' of the students (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, 2012). The treatment of knowledge and understanding are not to be given 'precast' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 27) but 'as something which is discovered' (Rymarz, 2012, p. 173). There needs to be an integrated approach to the head, heart and hands dimensions of RE; what students may learn in religion in the classroom should be connected to the experiences and practices played out elsewhere such as through service-learning and prayer. That is not to say that there will not be challenges. The presupposition is that the culture in which young people are immersed is conducive to the RE practices described above in the three dimensions. Young people create their world view, be it Christian or not, through the filter of the culture they experience (D'Orsa & D'Orsa, pp. 76–77). Cultural experiences are formed by the relationships young people have with their family, the local community, the media, the society and the school. They search for consistency in these experiences across these social groups which provide answers to their concerns, that is, a 'knowledge …created by consensus' (Hughes, 2007 cited in D'Orsa & D'Orsa, p. 70). Lovat and Toomey (2007) also found that where students experienced the same values in the home as at school, then the quality of learning improved. The Congregation for Catholic Education (1977) affirmed that young people need to be immersed in 'an atmosphere permeated with the Gospel spirit of freedom and love' (para. 55), yet this permeation would be difficult to achieve if there is not '… constant reference to the Gospel and a frequent encounter

with Christ' (para. 55) among teachers, parents and other influential members of society. At the very least, there needs to be a consistency in message and example between parents, parishes and schools (Miller, 2005) for the dimensions of the head, heart and hands to have a chance to flourish.

A PYD approach has young people taking an active role in their development. They are challenged to 'step up' (Hackett & Lavery, 2011) for and on behalf of their communities. They need to learn to reject a life of superficiality and as Benedict XVI (2012) exhorted to young people:

> make a commitment, to face hard work and sacrifice, to choose the paths that demand fidelity and constancy, humility and dedication. Be confident in your youth and its profound desires for happiness, truth, beauty and genuine love! Live fully this time in your life so rich and so full of enthusiasm. (para. 6)

A whole school RE curriculum framed around the dimensions of the head, heart and hands can provide the means for young people to live life to the full (Jn 10:10) by focusing on the life, teaching and relationships of Jesus Christ. Young people need to face and answer the question: 'When did we see you, Lord?' (Mt 25:37). Through deep learning of a Catholic/Christian world view, practising critical reflection and prayer and experiencing service and leadership, young people may be able to respond positively. A challenge for religious educators is to evaluate the extent to which religious education offered in Catholic secondary schools actually integrates the three dimensions of the head, heart and hands. Also, the application of PYD in a school context assists students to flourish and helps them find expression for great love-compassion in the Church.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to explore the role of positive youth development in religious education. PYD is recognised as a significant way to reduce negative risk factors and promote a positive and thriving mind-set by helping students to develop five traits: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring. Such traits are developed through young people contributing to their families, local communities and schools. There is the possibility of emphasising a PYD approach through the whole school religious education curriculum. The approach can be framed around three dimensions: the head, heart and hands. To illustrate these dimensions, examples were drawn from Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia that have introduced, firstly, a new university-entrance course called Religion and Life and, secondly, service and leadership though student ministry. As positive as these examples appear, they remain 'works in progress' and are dependent upon how well the three dimensions are integrated and the quality and consistency of culture in which students are immersed. The secondary school years are a particularly sensitive time for young people to develop their spiritual well-being and, perhaps, open the possibility of a mature level of religious commitment (Rymarz & Graham, 2006;

Spiewak & Sherrod, 2008). Young people need authentic challenges in religious education to discover something about the real worth of who they are and who they can become: a person '…who talks consciously with God, [and] who is there for God to love' (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 55).

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Part II
Issues Emerging from the Context

Introduction

Part II explores issues pertaining to Catholic religious education which arise from the context in which the topics under consideration are situated. The impact of government regulation in some geographical locations impacts upon the direction and shape of Catholic religious education in schools. In other contexts, the interplay between secularism, culture and religious perspectives influences the development of Catholic religious education curriculum in schools. Teaching and leadership development in religious education have emerged as issues impacting upon the quality and delivery of Catholic religious education in some schools.

Australasia

Australia is made up of a diverse population, and this is reflected in contemporary classrooms and early childhood settings in Catholic institutions and schools. With regard to curriculum design, Catholic religious educators face the additional challenge of respecting the religious diversity of early-year students and also at the same time respecting and remaining true to the religious integrity and identity of the institution. In the light of this, Jan Grajczonek explores the tensions and their implications, associated with Australian early childhood religious education. She suggested that the nature and purpose of religious education in early childhood be informed and shaped by contemporary early childhood education theory. This in turn contributes to the development of religious education programmes that are both true to the nature and purpose of religious education and supportive of the rich diversity of students in Australia. In the following chapter, Shane Lavery investigates how to be true to the message while at the same time responding to the concrete interests and needs of young people and society in general. Aware of the urgency of the issue of sustainability, the extent to which it is close at heart to young

Australians, Lavery investigates papal social teachings on sustainable development and explores the practices of Catholic religious education teachers.

Issues and tensions of another kind impact upon religious education curriculum reform initiatives in China. Francis Chan explores Catholic religious education in Hong Kong and considers the tensions that arise in the development of Catholic religious education due to its accountability to the sovereign power of Beijing which he suggests is not always amicable with the Vatican. The tensions have the potential to compromise the development of religious and moral education, as well as the professional growth and development of teachers of this discipline. Rito Baring explores the tensions and challenges underpinning the implementation of Catholic religious education in schools in South East Asia. He identified the challenges in terms of diversity, national policies, faith-based instruction, new media technologies, justice and peace and contemporary articulations of youth attitudes. In considering these diverse challenges, Rito Baring argues that Catholic education needs to see new threads that confront religious instruction and Christian formation in the region.

Europe

Regarding the interreligious education context emerging in schools in Belgium, Annemie Dillon considers whether students need to be initiated into one religion before learning about others. She claims that in the Belgian context, children come into contact with religious and philosophical diversity from an early age. Therefore, it is important to search for methods that stimulate children in critical, hermeneutical thinking and communication about religion in dialogue. To do this, she suggests that children from diverse backgrounds need to be able to communicate with each other and with materials from other religions and world views. However, at the same time, Dillon emphasises that a profound introduction in the Catholic religion is necessary in order to stimulate a communicative attitude. Theo Van der Zee considers the growing trends towards diversity and individualism in the Netherlands and the tensions associated with making Catholic religious education relevant in Catholic schools. He found that one of the problems pertaining to the lack of relevance is that teachers and other staff appear rarely to link the contribution of Catholic religious education explicitly with the Catholic tradition in which the school is situated. He compares two schools and discusses the findings in light of Catholic schools being able to respond to the challenges posed by today's world, particularly those of diversity and individualism. Roisin Coll explores the implications of the major curriculum change in Catholic religious education in Catholic schools within the Scottish education system. While the new curriculum is perceived in a favourable light in terms of its content focus and theological accuracy, it has resulted in some significant challenges for teachers of religious education. Roisin Coll argues that in

order to bridge the gap between teacher education and curriculum delivery, a strategic plan for teacher development in religious education is required in order to meet the increased expectations of the Catholic Church in Scotland. Many of these expectations are placed on Catholic religious education teachers in the Scottish education system.

Within the German context, the influences of secularism and diversity have influenced a shift away from institutional religious perspectives and world views towards individualisation and de-traditionalisation perspectives. Reinhold Boschki argues that Catholic religious education in schools should aim to help students get rooted in the Catholic tradition. This is vital if students are to be able to competently dialogue with and about other denominations and religions. He concludes by stating that Catholic religious education has a twofold responsibility: preserving the tradition of the Church on the one hand and on the other being open for dialogue and encounter with others. Thus, RE can help maintain Catholic principles, Catholic identity and Catholic values in the context of a pluralistic world. Elzbieta Osewska also explores the tensions arising from the influences of secularism and diversity in Polish society which has contributed to a shift away from catechetical approaches to Catholic religious education. As a consequence, a multidimensional approach to religious education has gained momentum, and she suggests that the way forward must involve an attitude of dialogue, learning for life, personal and religious development of pupils, the dignity of the human person, identity formation, critical thinking skills, moral formation, new models of collaboration with the family, methodology and communication. Elzbieta Osewska concludes that Poland needs to evaluate the emerging trends in the light of the Gospel and find creative responses appropriate to present and future context.

Africa

Mary-Chizurum Ugbor notes the tension between state-based educational policies in Nigeria and the teaching of Catholic religious education. While Catholic religious education in Nigeria is Christocentric, Ugbor indicates that state policy dictates that religious education must be sensitive to cultural, racial and religious plurality and must involve all sectors of the school community. She suggests that the way forward is to be sensitive to policy requirements. Paul Faller considers the revival and survival of religious education in schools in South Africa. He considers the tensions and challenges associated particularly with relation to Catholic religious education. He notes that the resource base for the subject is thin both with respect to personnel and materials and that Catholic religious education is not adequately supported by the education departments in South Africa. Paul Faller explores some possibilities for the survival and advancement of Catholic religious education in geographical context that barely supports its contribution to South African society.

North America

Ron Nuzzi draws attention to the steady decline in enrolment in Catholic schools in the United States and suggests that it has provided the impetus for sustaining and strengthening the identity of the Catholic school. He indicated that it is central to this teaching of Catholic religious education and the professional development and spiritual formation of the teachers of religious education. He concluded indicating that the teaching of religion in Catholic schools in the United States plays a vital role in the evangelising mission of the Church. Richard Rymarz indicated that cultural and social circumstances offer a series of challenges. In the light of this, he explores that official Canadian Church educational documents reflect an understanding that closely associated catechesis with religious education. Furthermore, he claims that in the absence of strong, ongoing bureaucratic support, religious education can often lack a strategic sense that monitors current practice and also plans for the future. He concludes by stating that to have a better prospect of engaging students today, religious education, as a discipline, in Canadian Catholic schools needs to become more prominent in all aspects of educational planning. Only then will it have a chance to develop a well-grounded contemporary approach to religious education. Margaret Myrtle Power examines Catholic religious education in Primary and Junior Catholic Schools in Canada from the perspective of the development of curriculum structures and methodology in teaching. She investigates the relational power and transformative contribution of narrative hermeneutics with an emphasis on the aesthetic dimensions of teaching and the imagination as an invaluable ingredient in religious education. She concludes that the significant contribution of a practical hermeneutical method that shapes the catechetical process inspires the creation of new applications, new designs, new openings and new inclusivity.

South America

Sergio Junqueira explores Catholic religious education in Brazil in the light of the law reforms enacted in 1996. The growing religious plurality of Brazilian society had provided the impetus for a major rethink of religious education in the public and private educational sectors. Junqueira draws attention to the tensions and challenges this has on religious education in Brazil which must cater for two schooling systems. Junqueira concludes by arguing that Catholic schools, like other schools, should have the opportunity to choose their methodology for religious education provided that the pedagogical project is approved by teachers, representatives of the students, families and relevant stakeholders in the community. Jara Fuentealba and Dagach Imbarack critically examine the professional and social expectations of religious education teachers in Chile whose society is underpinned by a secular character. Certain tensions and challenges designed to configure a sense of purpose of

regarding the religion classes in Chile are analysed in light of initial training, curriculum development and teacher practice within school institutions.

Conclusion

Catholic religious education in schools around the globe encounters many tensions and faces several challenges which originate from a number of contexts including government policies and legislation, cultural and social differences, secularism and individualism and diverse national populations. These contexts impact upon decisions pertaining to the nature and purpose of Catholic religious education in schools throughout the world. Issues to do with curriculum design and development and the professional development of religious education teachers and religious education leaders are explored in section two of this edited collection.

Chapter 8
Leadership Sustainability: Supporting Religious Education Leaders in the School Context

Michael T. Buchanan

Introduction

From the onset of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Congregation for Catholic Education articulated a fundamental difference between religious and other forms of education. Religious education is perceived as being at the service of fostering "… a total commitment of one's whole being to the Person of Christ" (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 50). Religious education is closely tied to the personal witness given by the teacher who plays a vital role in the Catholic schools' achievement of its educational goals (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1990, para. 96). In addition to the personal witness, the religious education teacher must have "adequate knowledge" (Gravissimum educationis, 1965, para. 8) as well as the necessary qualifications to teach religious education (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, para. 65). There is an expectation that despite the unique nature and requirements of the discipline of religious education in schools, it must also "appear as a scholastic discipline with the same systematic demands and the same rigour as other disciplines …" (Congregation for the Clergy, 1998, para. 73). If religious education is to be successful in achieving its aims, it requires the backing of certain stakeholders. This chapter explores the important role of the religious education leader in the context of Australian Catholic schools. Their leadership contributes to the success of school-based religious education programmes, and like other leaders they need the support of other stakeholders to enable them to do their job effectively.

This chapter provides an insight into the findings of an Australian study which sought to identify the kind of support religious education leaders perceived they required to do their job effectively. A key insight arising from this study suggested

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that the support needed to sustain them in leadership came from sources within and beyond the school. Prior to reporting the findings, an overview of the role of the religious education leader and the literature surrounding leadership development, as well as an outline of the research designed that informed this study, are presented as they provide the context for considering the kind of support required.

Overview of the Religious Education Leader

To appreciate the position of the religious education leader, it is beneficial to provide a brief overview of the emergence of Catholic education in Australia and the development of the role. The emergence of a Catholic schooling system in the former colony of New South Wales was prominently recognised in the 1830s and was supported by financial grants from the colonial government. Until the passing of a wave of colonial education acts between 1872 and 1893 in the former colonies of Australia, Catholic schools alongside other Christian denominational schools were virtually the only forms of education available (O'Farrell, 1992). The education acts passed in the latter part of the 1800s in the former colonies established free and secular education systems and marked an end to government funding for denominational schools. As a consequence of these legislative enactments and despite the end of state funding for denominational schools, Catholic schooling systems around Australia continued to grow with the support of thousands of immigrant priests, religious brothers and nuns (Campion, 1987). However, the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) saw a drastic decline in the number of religious teaching in Catholic schools despite the rigorous and robust demand for, and subsequent growth in, Catholic schools. In fact more than 20 % of the Australian school student population today are educated in Catholic schools (Buchanan, 2010a, 2009). The dramatic decline in priests, religiously professed brothers and nuns in Catholic schools in the decades following the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) placed the teaching of religious education further into the hands of the lay teaching staff who, at the time, tended to struggle to understand the content and pedagogy associated with teaching classroom religious education (Buchanan, 2005). To support the religious education teacher, schools began to appoint teachers to the position of religious education leader.

In Catholic schools in Australia, the religious education leader is a relatively new role which began to emerge across the array of Catholic schooling systems throughout the dozens of Catholic dioceses in Australia (L. Crotty, 1998). The actual title given to the role of religious education leader varied from diocese to diocese, and some of the titles given to the role include: religious education coordinator, director of religious education, head of religious education, assistant principal religious education, and deputy principal religious education. Throughout this chapter, the term religious education leader will be used to represent titles associated with this role. Some Australian scholars have endeavoured to research the role of the religious education leader in various Australian Catholic schooling contexts (Buchanan,

2010b; L. Crotty, 1998, 2002, 2005; Dowling, 2012; Engebretson, 1998, 2006; Fleming, 2002; Grajczonek, 2006; Hyde, 2006; Johnson, 1998; Liddy, 1998). A brief insight into their research follows in the next paragraph.

Fleming (2002) provided an overview of the development of the role of religious education leaders from its emergence to the commencement of the twenty-first century. His research found that there was a strong emphasis on the ecclesial and ministerial aspects of the role. This emphasis was reflected in diocesan policies, selection and appointment criteria at the school level as well as the religious education leaders' perception of their role. The leaders were also responsible for the formal classroom religious education programme. However, Grajczonek (2006) argued that the role was essentially associated with Church ministry through involvement in sacramental programmes both within the school and the local parish. In fact Johnson's (1998) research into the role indicated that the religious education leaders tended to ignore the curriculum demands and to give attention to the ministerial aspects of the role. There appeared to be a lack of clarity regarding the priority leaders should give to the classroom curriculum and the ministerial demands of the role (L. Crotty, 2002). In an attempt to bring clarity to the role, L. Crotty's (2005) research conceptualised the role as being positioned both within the Church and within education. Her theory brought some clarity to certain aspects of the role. However, understandings about what the role actually entailed remained obscure since the demands of the role were perceived as being too big for one person to handle (Liddy, 1998; see also Buchanan, 2013c). These scholars sought to understand the demands and the complexities of the role of the religious education leader at a time when discussions about giving recognition to the role as a senior leadership position in Catholic schools gained momentum across many Catholic dioceses throughout Australia.

Leadership Development

This section explores the initiatives oriented towards establishing religious education leadership as a senior leadership position in Catholic schools. To provide a context for situating this level of leadership, it is first necessary to briefly indicate the traditional focus on senior leadership responsibility in schools. In recent times, senior leadership positions in education, including Catholic education, have been concerned mainly with school improvement in the following areas: curriculum outcomes for students, staff development, people management, student and staff well-being and successful bureaucratic management and strategic planning (Barth, 2001; Buchanan, 2013a; Christie & Limerick, 2004; Durbin & Daglish, 2003; Golanda, 1991; Lunenburg & Ornstein, 2004). From the perspective of L. Crotty's (2005) conceptual framework, senior leadership positions in schools have traditionally been firmly embedded within an *educational* dimension. However, scholarly research has indicated that religious education leaders have given priority to the *ministerial* dimension of their leadership role (Buchanan, 2011; L. Crotty, 2002;

Fleming, 2002). These ministerial priorities take place within school and parish settings (Hyde, 2006) and align with understandings of the role as a position also within the Church (L. Crotty, 2005). From the onset, moves to establish the role of religious education leader as a senior leadership position in Catholic schools have impacted on the orientation of this leadership role.

A wave of religious education leadership policy initiatives began to emerge across many Australian dioceses and sought to establish the role as a senior leadership position in Catholic schools, and in so doing gave public recognition of the increased status and importance associated with the role. However, in reality the policy initiatives in general actually added to the complexity and demands of the role (Buchanan, 2013c). This is illustrated in diocesan policy initiatives, for example, South Australia (South Australian Commission for Catholic Schools, 2004) and Brisbane (Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane, 2012). These policies maintain the ministerial responsibilities as integral to the role but also prioritise the importance of leading the religious education curriculum as well as ensuring that the entire school curriculum assumes a religious character. Furthermore, they are responsible for the religious education and faith development of the staff members. They are also expected to foster partnerships with students' families, parishes, the diocese and the universal Church and promote opportunities for the school community to learn and work towards social justice. They are, in addition to exercising religious leadership, required to exercise educative leadership, staff and community leadership, strategic leadership and organisational leadership. In addition to the previously mentioned responsibilities, the diocesan policy initiatives require religious education leaders to demonstrate a personal faith commitment that extends beyond the boundaries of the school, and it is expected that they be committed to public ministry in the Church and to active participation in a Eucharistic community. Furthermore, in addition to their initial teaching qualifications, they must hold or be working towards a postgraduate qualification in religious education and/or theology such as a master's degree in Religious Education.

The following points sum up the key themes pertaining to the role of the religious education leader as well as leadership development initiatives as a means to provide a context for understanding the kind of support needed. Firstly, the position is a relatively new position within Catholic schools (L. Crotty, 2002), and religious education leaders have difficulty prioritising the many demands of the role (Fleming, 2002) but tend to give attention to the ministerial demands (Grajczonek, 2006; Johnson, 1998). The position has been conceptualised as bidimensional in terms of it being a position both within the Church and within education (L. Crotty, 2005). There is a lack of clarity about the role, and it is complex and too big for one person to handle (Engebretson, 2006; Liddy, 1998). Since the turn of the century, policy initiatives have sought to articulate the role as a senior leadership position within Catholic schools (Buchanan, 2013c). As a senior leadership position, the position has become more complex and more demanding requiring leaders in religious education to exercise leadership in areas other than religious education. The position also requires the leaders to demonstrate a personal faith commitment through public ministry in the Church and through participation in a Eucharistic community in

ways that are likely to extend beyond school hours. Furthermore, they are required to hold, or be studying for, a postgraduate qualification in religious education or equivalent. Against this backdrop, the research reported on in this paper sought to identify the kind of support religious education leaders perceived they needed to enable them to effectively carry out their role. The following section in this chapter provides an overview of the study design underpinning this. It provides a context for understanding the scope and limitations of the study and its subsequent findings.

Research Design that Informed This Study

To discover the kind of support religious education leaders require to enable them to do their job effectively, this investigation sought to gain insights from those who were in the position of religious education leader in their respective schools. The participants were not only religious education leaders, but they were also working towards completing a Master of Religious Education course at the Australian Catholic University. This group was selected for reasons considered relevant to the study. The participants were interacting with the main stakeholders investing in supporting their potential and ability to effectively lead religious education in a Catholic school. The stakeholders in question were the Catholic school principals, the Catholic Education Offices supporting Catholic schools in each diocese and the Australian Catholic University.

The participants were enrolled in a Master's unit which is generally undertaken by students in the final stages of the degree. The unit focused on various leadership dimensions which have been associated with the distinctive nature of leadership in Catholic schools (but not exclusive to leadership in such schools). These dimensions include educational leadership, curriculum leadership, faith leadership, spiritual leadership, ministerial leadership and religious leadership (Buchanan, 2013b). The unit was offered in a fully online mode, and those enrolled in the unit had access to their lecturer via online discussions, email and telephone communication. There were online discussion forums for students to interact with each other as a means to stimulate peer learning and feedback. For the reasons stated earlier, this cohort was deemed suitable to provide insights into discovering the kind of support religious education leaders perceived they needed to do their job effectively.

There were a total of 21 people enrolled in the unit, and at the completion of the unit, a letter of invitation was sent to each person. The letter invited them to participate in the study. If they agreed to participate in the study, they were asked to download a questionnaire from an online learning environment website, type their responses to the questionnaire and return it via post in a stamped self-addressed envelope which was provided. The surveys were completed anonymously in that participants were asked not to disclose their name or any information that would reveal their identity. Twenty responses were received out of a potential of 21 participants.

The questionnaire asked four broad questions about the type of support participants perceived they needed. They were asked what type of support they felt they needed in general and what type of support they felt they needed from the school in which they were employed, from the centralised authority to which their school belonged (the Catholic Education Office in their respective diocese) and from the university in which they were undertaking their course (in this case, the Australian Catholic University).

Founded on the assumptions that knowledge is constructed and that learning can only be understood in social contexts, this qualitative study was situated within a constructivist paradigm (M. Crotty, 1998). It sought to construct meaning from the perceptions of the leaders and aspiring leaders about the support they conveyed in their responses to the questionnaire. The conceptualisation of the participants' responses to the questionnaire was guided by the principles underpinning the original approach of Glaser and Strauss (1967) to grounded theory. By intensive engagement with the participants' responses, particular categories of findings began to emerge. According to Glaser (1998, 1992, 1978), the categories of findings should emerge from the data. Categorising the data in this way allows for the data to tell their own story (Goulding, 2002). This approach was appropriate because little is known about the kind of support leaders and aspiring leaders of religious education in Catholic schools perceive they need. Glaser and Strauss (1967) proposed that if one wants to know and understand a particular phenomenon where very little is known, one should ask those involved, in this case the religious education leaders themselves.

As indicated by the number of participants, this was a small-scale study, but the qualitative researcher is not preoccupied with numbers of participants or numbers of participant responses as in qualitative research – insights, events, incidents and experiences, not people per se, are typically the objects of purposeful sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1984). Glaser (1978, 1992, 1998) has emphasised that it is only necessary to stay in the field of data collection until the categories have reached saturation point. This is not determined by the quantity of participants but rather the quality of data, for saturation occurs when no new information or categories emerge from the data. Category saturation is an important factor that contributes to the plausibility of the study (Glaser, 1998). There were mainly three categories of support identified by the participants' responses. Each of these is explored in the following section.

Findings: Support Required by Religious Education Leaders

The participants perceived that in order to effectively fulfil their role as a religious education leader, they needed the support of the Catholic Education Office in their diocese, the support of their school principal and the support from the Australian Catholic University. In this section, the general insights into the participants'

perception of how they might be supported and sustained by each of the above-mentioned stakeholders are explored.

In some parts of Australia, there are high proportions of students populating Catholic schools who come from families that are not overly inculcated within the Catholic faith tradition (Healy, 2011). In general, the participants saw one important aspect of their role as being the person who was most able to meaningfully convey the Church's official position on moral and ethical issues in a language accessible to the diverse range of members of the school community (students, parents and in some cases teachers). To do this effectively, the religious education leaders needed the support of the religious and faith education experts at their respective Catholic Education Offices. Some leaders were concerned about ensuring that they did not misrepresent the Church's universal position on certain moral and ethical issues. They felt that support and clear advice from their Catholic Education Office gave them the confidence to communicate with accuracy the Church's view in a way that was meaningful and sensitive to the members of the school community they were serving. They also felt supported by the religious and faith education experts at their Catholic Education Office who helped them to remain up to date with current resources and curriculum initiatives pertaining to the discipline of religious education. This helped them to feel confident that their religious education leadership in their schools was up to date and effective. They also felt supported by their Catholic Education Office through its initiative to nurture their own faith and spiritual development through various opportunities to participate in retreat experiences.

The participants were supported through initiatives provided by their Catholic Education Offices who offered sponsorship that enabled them to complete their postgraduate tertiary qualifications in religious education. Those who were enrolled in the postgraduate religious education programme were generally sponsored by the diocese having jurisdiction over the schools in which they were employed. The Catholic Education Office of each diocese determines the level of sponsorship offered to educators employed within their respective schools. This may take the form of sponsorship that covers all or part of the enrolment cost of the degree, or it may also take the form of time release from schools to attend lectures or study. Keeping in mind the distinctive nature of leadership in religious education, explored in the earlier parts of this chapter, the Catholic Education Offices generally offer sponsorship to leaders and aspiring leaders to help build religious education leadership capacity in this area within their schools. In doing so, this kind of support helps to develop knowledgeable religious education leaders who are able to confidently move in the direction of providing effective leadership in this field.

At the school level, the participants felt that the most significant support that would enable them to ensure an effective religious education programme within the school was the principal. This is not surprising and is consistent with L. Crotty's (2005) research which stressed that in situations where the principal and the religious education leader are aligned in their vision of the religious dimension of the school, and the religious education leader is supported by the principal, then effective religious education is more likely to take place. Many religious education leaders felt

supported by a principal who met with them regularly (weekly or fortnightly) to discuss religious education and the religious dimension of the school. Principals who were aware of and acknowledged the demands and complexities of the role were also viewed in a positive light and as supportive. They also felt supported when the principal would provide an opportunity for the religious education leader to be involved in the selection as well as appointment and staffing of classroom religious education. Given that the teacher plays such a significant role in ensuring that the aims of the school are achieved, it is vital that the best possible teachers are leading learning in the religious education classrooms (The Congregation for Catholic Education, 1990, para. 96).

The demands of postgraduate study while working fulltime in a senior leadership position are great. The participants felt supported when the principal tried to offer some degree of flexibility in the timetable to enable them to do their job as well as allowed time for them to complete their postgraduate studies. The main examples of timetable flexibility expressed by the participants related to principals granting them a day off from time to time to allow them to complete assessment tasks or to catch up with their families. This was particularly appreciated in situations where they had worked all week and attended classes all weekend. It should be acknowledged that *some* participants noted that the sponsorship offered by their Catholic Education Office included release days for study purposes but that these days were not always awarded in their entirety. In these situations, some participants felt a lack of support.

Keeping in mind that all the participants were not only religious education leaders but were also undertaking postgraduate studies in religious education, it is not surprising that they perceived that their university could support them in ways that would in the short term and long term contribute to their ability to deliver effective and high-quality religious education in their schools. The key areas where they felt they could be supported related to structural issues and their relationship with their lecturers in religious education. In terms of the structural issues, the main concerns were related to timing and timetabling of lectures. This wasn't so much a problem with units that were delivered fully online but more so a concern with the units that were offered in weekend intensive mode. They felt that consideration should be given to ensure that classes should not be scheduled around weekends that coincide with high points in the Church's liturgical calendar. At these times it was not uncommon for the religious education leaders to have responsibilities associated with their role clashing with their studies. On a personal level, several participants preferred that weekend classes not be scheduled on Mother's Day or Father's Day. From an educational perspective, some preferred that weekends centred during report-writing times or times that lead into national testing schedules for students should be avoided. Perhaps some of these concerns could be addressed through closer dialogue between stakeholders: Catholic Education Offices, school principals (perhaps through their principals associations) and the university. They also felt that provision for flexibility in the timing and submission of assignments and/or assessment tasks would support them in allowing them to remain committed to their studies and their leadership position. They also felt supported in learning environments where

the opportunities to interact with other students provided opportunities for peer review and peer feedback.

One other area where they felt supported, which has been explored in detail elsewhere (Buchanan, 2013c), was in relation to mentoring from their lecturers in religious education. The participants expressed a preference for teaching and learning approaches that involved opportunities for them to be mentored on how to be effective religious education leaders by the academics who were teaching the units they were undertaking as part of their degree. It is not uncommon for mentoring to occur within higher educational settings; however, it is usually oriented towards assisting the achievement of the outcomes of a course (Lacey, 1999). Mentoring as a vehicle for leadership learning occurs mainly in contexts other than in the pursuit of an academic qualification (Hansford, Tennent, & Ehrich, 2003). However, given the unique nature of the complex role of a religious education leader, it is perhaps not surprising that the participants perceived the academics who understood the role as being able to support them through a process of leadership mentoring.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In this chapter the uniquely complex and demanding role of the religious education leader has been outlined, and its evolution from a middle-management position to one of senior leadership has been explored in the light of diocesan-based policy initiatives in the Australian context. The perspectives of the religious education leaders were sought to gain an insight into the kinds of support they required to sustain them in leading effective religious education in their respective schools. Three key stakeholders were identified: the diocesan Catholic Education Office, the school principal and the Australian Catholic University. The kinds of support expected from these stakeholders by the leaders in religious education may best be achieved through closer communication between the parties. Given the intensely demanding and important role of the religious education leader, it is recommended that further investigation be undertaken to explore ways in which each of the stakeholders can work and communicate more closely in their planning. This will help to ensure that their support initiatives will cohesively support the growth and development of the religious education leaders and move further in the direction of sustaining effective religious education leadership in schools.

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Chapter 9
"To Thine Own Self Be True": Respecting Both Religious Diversity and Religious Integrity in Contemporary Australian Early Childhood Religious Education

Jan Grajczonek

Introduction

Religious education in early childhood, while gaining greater attention and importance, is a relative "newcomer" in the wider context of Australian Catholic education. Since early colonial times in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Catholic dioceses have predominantly been involved in the establishment of primary education. Furthermore, during the twentieth century, they also became systematically involved in secondary education. In more recent times, however, an increasing number of Australian Catholic dioceses have established preschools, kindergartens and preparatory year classes to their primary school settings. Catholic dioceses have also established early childhood prior-to-school settings and early years learning centres in Catholic parishes and schools.

The response to early childhood by the Australian Catholic Church reflects the nation's emphasis on the early childhood sector and aligns with Australia's first national early years curriculum document, *Belonging, Being & Becoming: The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (henceforth *EYLF*) (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), 2009). As dioceses continue to enter the area of early childhood care and education, they find themselves deliberating upon their distinct contribution to the sector in terms of how a Catholic early years care and education operates and what it offers. It is at this point of deliberation that many pay close attention to religious education as providing that distinction. However, religious education theory in the early childhood setting cannot sit outside of contemporary early childhood education theory and practice. It must also be set within the context of Australia's increasingly pluralist population. Early childhood education theory advocates young children's agency and voice, that

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is, their active say and participation in all matters that affect them (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 2007; MacNaughton, 2003). It requires that their diversity be acknowledged, respected and affirmed (DEEWR, 2009; United Nations, 1989). Diocesan supported early childhood programmes face the challenge of ensuring that the design and delivery of Catholic Religious Education programmes respect early childhood theory with its emphasis on respecting children's diversity (including religious diversity). This chapter provides an overview of the emerging area of early childhood religious education in the context of Australian Catholic education. It aims to explore religious education theory that encompasses contemporary early childhood education theory and practice. It discusses the many issues and challenges that confront those who are responsible for religious education in these settings and considers some possibilities as a way forward.

The Australian Catholic Education Context

In recent times, a number of Australian dioceses have taken the initiative to extend their care and education to all children, that is, to explicitly include early childhood care and education for children from birth to 4 years, in addition to early childhood for children from 5 to 8 years. Some dioceses have established separate long day child care and/or early years learning centres within their parishes, while in other dioceses early years learning centres have been established on-site in Catholic primary schools. The establishment, responsibility and administration of such centres, whether they are on parish or Catholic school sites, can lie with diocesan Catholic education offices (as in the Townsville Diocese in Queensland) or other Australian diocesan Catholic organisations such as Catholic Child Care Services (as in the situation in the Archdiocese of Brisbane) or can be a joint venture between both parties (as in the Toowoomba Diocese). The curriculum for such centres is underpinned by the national EYLF document, (DEEWR, 2009), along with relevant state and territory curriculum guidelines. Some diocesan Catholic education offices have designed and implemented their own curriculum programmes which are aligned with the *EYLF* document (e.g. *Catholic Early Learning Curriculum* of the Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn Catholic Education Office, 2011; *Spirituality in the Early Years*, Catholic Education: Diocese of Rockhampton, 2012).

It should be noted that there is a difference regarding accreditation to teach religion requirements between those teachers who teach in the mandated early years classrooms in Catholic schools and those who teach in the prior-to-school early years settings, which are not mandated. Teachers in the compulsory years of schooling in Catholic schools are required by their dioceses to be accredited to teach religion, which involves compulsory study in preservice or postgraduate religious education and theology tertiary courses. For those teachers in non-compulsory early

years settings, no accreditation at this point in time is expected of them. Because such non-compulsory settings are recent additions to Catholic care and education, the area of religious education in these settings is still an embryonic stage. As discussion surrounding religious education and what it means to be involved in Catholic early childhood care and education gains momentum, educators in these settings have expressed uncertainty about their place, particularly in terms of what might be expected of them in the area of religious education (Grajczonek, 2013). Teachers involved in a recent study exploring teachers' voice in a proposed religion curriculum design (Grajczonek, 2013) were unanimous in their support of the *EYLF* (DEEWR, 2009) document's requirements that all children's religious beliefs and practices be respected; "We're taught to respect differences and embrace diversity" (p. 6). They felt strongly that religion should not be imposed on anyone and no one should say, "This one's right, this one's wrong" and that children know they can talk about their own beliefs (p. 6). Some commented that a proposed curriculum "should encompass all religions" (p. 6).

Diversity of student populations in the Australian Catholic education context is an important aspect that must be considered within any discussion about religious education. The most recent statistics regarding student populations in Catholic schools show that 29 % of students, or almost one in every three students, who enrolled in Catholic schools in 2012 were not Catholic (NCEC, 2013, p. 32). The percentage of students who are not Catholic has continued to increase steadily each year since 2006 (NCEC, p. 32). While no statistics are available for children in Catholic early years learning centres, educators in Catholic long day care centres and kindergartens referred to a significant diversity of children's religious traditions (Grajczonek, 2013). Considering their reflections together with the Catholic school statistics, it can be reasonably assumed that the number of children who are not Catholic enrolled in such centres would reflect similar numbers as in Catholic schools. Herein resides the dilemma for all concerned with the distinct place of Catholic early childhood care and education: recognising, acknowledging and respecting all children irrespective of their religious beliefs while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the centre's Catholic identity.

Early childhood religious education in Australian Catholic dioceses is an emerging area, and those working within the area continue to wrestle with this dilemma. Ongoing robust discussions and deliberations between academics, educators and personnel in Catholic education and other Catholic agencies regarding the nature and purpose of religious education in early childhood have contributed and continue to contribute significantly to this pivotal sector within the wider context of Catholic education. Such debate and deliberation continues to highlight key insights, but it must be emphasised that it is very much an unfolding and developing space. The following explores the many issues and challenges which confront educators and seeks to provide an overview of the ongoing development of Australian early childhood religious education.

The Issues and Challenges

Those who are responsible for the provision of care and education in Catholic early learning centres are aware of the diverse nature of the children in their care. However, their understanding of their own obligations regarding the acknowledgement and catering for such diversity is less clear, and many struggle with how to incorporate that religious diversity into their policies, communications, programmes and practices. Many are not familiar with key documents which specify certain requirements regarding the acknowledgement and respect of children's diversity such as outlined by the United Nations in its *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and by the Catholic Church in *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, para. 6). Many, however, are familiar with the Australian Government's *EYLF* document (DEEWR, 2009). These three key documents are explicit about the requirements regarding children's religious freedom and their right to have that freedom respected.

The *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (henceforth *CRC*) (1989) has influenced and shaped governing policies and documentation regarding children and their rights throughout the world. Its influence on how early childhood care and education is approached has been most significant. A key aspect that distinguished the *CRC* document from its predecessor, *The Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (United Nations, 1959) was its addition of the third "p", "participation" to the "provision" and "protection" of children. The addition of children's right to participation highlights each child's right to be heard and to be active rather than being silenced and passive. Children's participation rights are emphasised in contemporary early childhood educational theory and practice (Dahlberg et al., 2007; MacNaughton, 2003) as well as in mandated curriculum documents (e.g. *Early Years Curriculum Guidelines*, QSA, 2006). In the *CRC*, Articles 1, 14 and 29 are explicit about respecting children's religious beliefs and practices. Article 1 requires that children's religious rights be respected without discrimination; Article 14.1 requires that "State Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion" (Article 14, para. 1); and Article 29 concerns the role of education in ensuring that it be directed to the "development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms" (Article 29, para. 1 [b]) and, further, that the preparation of the child as a responsible citizen is done "in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin" (Article 29, para. 1 [d]). Generally, teachers are not familiar with the details of these articles and certainly less familiar of their own roles implied by the statements in advocating children's rights. Nevertheless, it is a significant document that has shaped and continues to shape different national curricula and its implications are relevant for religious education.

Another key document for all curriculum designers and teachers in Catholic schools is *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (Congregation

for Catholic Education, 1988) which explicitly acknowledges religious diversity as an important aspect of Catholic schools:

> Not all students in Catholic schools are members of the Catholic Church; not all are Catholic…. The religious freedom of the personal conscience of individual students and their families must be respected, and this freedom is explicitly recognized by the Church. On the other hand, a Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education; this is its right and its duty. To proclaim or to offer is not to impose, however; the latter suggests a moral violence which is strictly forbidden, both by the Gospel and by Church law. (para. 6)

Essentially this document emphasises three points: all students including those who are not Catholic are free to enrol into Catholic schools, those children's own religious freedom and personal conscience are to be respected, and Catholicism is not to be imposed on them. Most Catholic educators are unaware of this document, particularly this paragraph, but it is important that they do know that Catholic schools embrace diversity which is to be respected.

The one familiar and influential document for all Australian early years educators is EYLF (DEEWR, 2009) which, since its introduction, has dominated professional development and education for all teachers and staff in early childhood settings. The document emphasises children's rights and educators' responsibilities to each child. Each child's context and circumstances are to be acknowledged, respected and valued. The document explicitly outlines educators' obligations regarding the respect and acknowledgement of children's diversity which includes religious diversity:

> There are many ways of living, *being* and of knowing. Children are born *belonging* to a culture, which is not only influenced by traditional practices, heritage and ancestral knowledge, but also by the experiences, values and beliefs of individual families and communities. Respecting diversity means within the curriculum valuing and reflecting the practices, values and beliefs of families. Educators honour the histories, cultures, languages, traditions, child rearing practices and lifestyle choices of families. They value children's different capacities and abilities and respect differences in families' home lives. (p. 14)

This statement specifies obligations regarding early childhood curriculum and its implementation. The curriculum must value and reflect children and their families' diverse values, beliefs and practices. Furthermore, educators are to honour, value and respect differences. Herein dwell a number of challenges for educators in Catholic settings who struggle with seeking to fulfil the requirements while also seeking to live the Catholic identity of the school or early years setting. What do such verbs as "honour", "value" and "respect" mean in their everyday implementation? Early childhood teachers in Catholic settings have explicitly voiced their anxiety as to how they can accommodate religious diversity within a Catholic early childhood centre or classroom, as expressed by an early years teacher who observed that educators need to be sensitive to everyone's beliefs as there is a wide variety present in some centres (Grajczonek, 2013). The teacher gave an example of some comments made by the children in her setting, including one child who stated, "My

mum says that there's a heaven" and then another child who responded, "There's not" (p. 6). Another teacher expressed a feeling held by many in Catholic school early years settings, "The last thing you want to do is offend anybody" (p. 6). How to acknowledge, honour and respect children's religious beliefs and practices as required by the *EYLF* document in ways that are sensitive but at the same time holding true to the Catholic identity and beliefs is a real concern for educators.

It is the practical implications raised in these three documents that cause anxiety about how to approach such matters, particularly in terms of how to articulate and implement religious education. At the heart of solving this dilemma is to come to a clear understanding of the nature and purpose of religious education in the educational setting of the Catholic school and/or early years learning centre. Once religious education curriculum designers and educators understand and can articulate the nature and purpose of religious education in their early childhood settings, the tension between acknowledging and respecting children's religious diversity and the faithful living of Catholic identity will begin to dissipate as teachers will come to know and be confident about their roles.

A Way Forward for Australian Early Childhood Religious Education

While some significant progress has been made in the implementation of a religion curriculum that respects religious diversity and at the same time holds true to Catholic identity, generally there needs to be a greater emphasis on a clearer articulation of the nature and purpose of religious education in the Catholic Australian early childhood arena. Examples for the need of such required clarification include the following observations of current practice. These examples are not intended as criticism of teachers and curriculum designers, all of whom are dedicated to the place of Catholic care and education, but rather to exemplify that some confusion and ambiguity still exist and that concerted efforts to continue to clarify the nature and purpose of religious education offer a way forward.

For some Australian dioceses, a faith-based catechesis rather than an educational approach underpins and is implemented in early childhood religious education in Catholic schools and early years learning centres. A faith-based catechetical approach presumes that all students are Catholic which is not reflected in the statistics of Australian Catholic school student populations (NCEC, 2013). Such an approach does not acknowledge religious diversity and limits religious freedom of those students who are not Catholic (Grajczonek, 2012). An example of current practice that demonstrates the implementation of a faith-based catechesis in early childhood settings is where religion lessons occur within daily prayer times. Prayer is a catechetical activity, that is, a faith-forming activity that teaches children to "be religious in a particular way" (Moran, 1991, p. 249). Unfortunately, some early childhood educators and those who design religious education curricula for Catholic

schools do not fully grasp the distinction between catechesis and education. When combined with prayer, the religion programme becomes a faith formation exercise which is no longer a classroom lesson and silences those who are not members of the Catholic faith community. Moran argues against the combining of the educational and faith dimensions and urges teachers to know which of the two processes they are engaged in at any one time and place, that is, are they teaching the religion curriculum, an educational process, or are they forming faith, a catechetical process? He stated:

> The tragedy would be that, for lack of clarity about this distinction, institutions end up doing neither: their academic inquiry is not challenging enough and their formation is not particular enough. Endless talk about Christianity is not religious education. What deserves that title is teaching people religion with all the breadth and depth of intellectual excitement one is capable of – and teaching people to be religious with all the particularity of the verbal and non-verbal symbols that place us on the way. (p. 252)

Teachers need to be clear about the educational aims for their religion programmes: What is it that they want young learners to know and be able to do about the particular topic at hand? As in other subjects, teachers consider their pedagogy that will activate children's participation in, and learning of, the topic. When the religion lesson becomes part of classroom prayer, best early childhood pedagogy is compromised. Combining lessons with prayer constructs learners as passive recipients rather than as active agents constructing their learning in a dialogical manner wherein they are encouraged, challenged and provoked by teachers to come to deeper thinking and offer further considered responses (Siraj-Blatchford & Sylva, 2004; Vygotsky, 1967). When sitting quietly in a circle beginning with prayer, then listening to a Bible story and responding to a series of questions from the teacher, young learners come to experience religious education as a passive activity. Contemporary early childhood education theory informs us that young children learn when they are actively engaged, investigating, persistent, focused, hypothesising, collaborating, problem solving, designing, constructing and creating (Arthur, Beecher, Death, Dockett, & Farmer, 2012; DEEWR, 2009; Keen, Pennell, Muspratt, & Poed, 2011; MacNaughton & Williams, 2004). Young learners must be immersed in the subject matter, which must be engaged with, wrestled with and played with in a variety of ways and contexts. The home corner can become the baptismal font, the playground equipment becomes the long and at times rugged journey between Nazareth and Bethlehem and the sandpit becomes the desert for Abraham and Sarah's long journey. How children learn religion is equally as important as in other subjects. Children are diverse learners who bring with them a variety of dispositions, all of which need to be activated. Pedagogy implemented in the religion curriculum has to mirror pedagogy in all other areas.

Throughout the learning sessions as well as at their conclusion, children's learning can be assessed. However, when the learning occurs in the context of classroom prayer, for what learning are children held accountable (Grajczonek, 2012, pp. 244–245)? Is it their participation in the prayer time or their demonstration of the learning outcomes which are then difficult to explicate from the prayer? And how can their

learning be assessed and evaluated in a variety of contexts if the religion programme is always sitting on the floor as part of prayer? The aims and objectives of the educational aspects become lost and ambiguous.

Another important issue linked to classroom prayer requiring further purposeful consideration and evaluation is the manner in which prayer is conducted. To what extent does the actual process of classroom prayer acknowledge and honour religious diversity? Here, too, teachers can be more conscious of how they organise daily class prayer times so that such times respect children's religious diversity. Some guiding questions that might assist in deciding how prayer can be conducted in ways that acknowledge and embrace diversity include: To what extent can teachers enable young children to decide how they pray? Are they, for example, encouraged to explain how they pray within their own religion? Are they allowed to make a choice as to whether they wish to pray the Catholic prayers or pray their own prayer silently during prayer times? When all children are required to pray the same prayer irrespective of their own religious beliefs, it is evident that religious diversity is not being acknowledged and, further, children's own religious beliefs are seemingly dismissed. What about those children who have specific prayer obligations regarding times for prayer and the manner in which it is done? For example, does the Muslim student feel empowered to leave the classroom to pray in his/her own way at the required prayer time? Such questions could initiate worthwhile discussion at staff meetings and raise key issues that otherwise might remain unspoken and silenced; the first step is for such deliberations to be given voice. Until they are voiced they cannot be addressed.

Enabling children from other religious traditions to pray in their own ways does not diminish or dismiss the Catholic identity. In some cases, giving voice to children from other religious traditions can strengthen the identity of the Catholic school as Catholic children come to realise that prayer and religious observance is common across many religions. Often those children from other more demonstrative religions provide the initiative for Catholic children to become more knowledgeable about their own religion so that they too can communicate it with the same familiarity and depth as do these children of other faiths. An example of facilitating such diversity within the educational religion programme was once shared with me by an early years teacher in a Catholic school who reflected that one of her most effective years in terms of the religion programme was when one of her young students, a Hindu boy, gave a morning talk in which he shared the excitement of his family's previous evening's religious festival at home which centred around the symbol of the deity, Ganesha (Grajczonek, 2011). His knowledge and ability to express the significance of the celebration ignited immediate response and interest in the classroom, and the teacher recognised the "teachable moment". She reached for the candle, crucifix and coloured cloth from the prayer table and shared the religious significance of these three symbols for Christians. Suddenly, the young students were engaged in what these symbols meant for Christians (and most were Catholics) and wanted to know all about them, other symbols and their associated celebrations. Following the investigations over the next few weeks, these young children were then able to stand up and confidently share elements of their own

religion knowledgably. Two significant learnings came out of this teacher's response: first, students' interest in their own Catholic religion had been ignited and strengthened, and second, their insights into and awareness of religious diversity had been facilitated.

Another aspect that is an important indicator of how religious diversity is acknowledged is the language used to communicate a school's religion curriculum. While some Catholic education offices openly state their early childhood programmes are aligned to the *EYLF* document, the reality is that the language used to express the aims of the religion curriculum documents denies and dismisses the religious diversity of some children. For example, one diocesan curriculum document, *Catholic Early Learning Curriculum* (Archdiocese of Canberra & Goulburn Catholic Education Office, 2011) states that children will experience "a sense of personal and communal relationship with God" as well as "a sense of love and belonging in family and Church" (p. 19). For those children who are not Christian, a sense of personal relationship with God is an inappropriate expectation as it denies those children's own religious relationships, and the requirement that they experience a sense of love and belonging in Church dismisses their sense of belonging to their own religious communities. The language chosen to articulate aims and outcomes needs to be conscious that for some children such aims in not acknowledging religious diversity imply imposition of Catholic beliefs. Such aims are presumptive statements in that they presume that all participants are Catholic. Perhaps some aspects of diocesan early childhood religion curricula can be re-evaluated in terms of how the religion programme's aims and objectives are articulated. Language that is presumptive needs to be omitted from such documents and indeed from all documents that communicate about religious education (Doulin et al., 1987). Communication to parents and carers about school policy and practice, newsletters, subject overviews and such like need not be expressed in presumptive language wherein exclusivist statements dismiss and deny the presence of religious diversity.

It is possible to respect and honour young children's religious diversity and at the same time hold true to Catholic identity. The answer in achieving this dilemma lies within coming to a clear understanding and articulation of the precise nature and purpose of religious education in the Catholic early years setting. The purpose of the religion programme in an educational setting is primarily knowledge and understanding. It is not about indoctrination or imposition of a particular set of religious beliefs. It must embrace tolerance, respect and valuing others' ways of being religious. When the religion programme is underpinned by an educational approach and implements best early childhood education theory and practice, wherein religion is taught using the same pedagogy implemented in other subject areas, young children are not required to make faith responses. They can feel free to offer insights as to how their religious celebrations are ritualised or what is emphasised in their sacred stories or who are the key role models in their religion. The Catholic religion programme need not be compromised, as all children are required to demonstrate their knowledge and skills of the set achievement standards or content descriptors in the programme. In some dioceses, a multi-faith strand has been added to their

religion curriculum (such as in the Catholic Education Archdiocese of Brisbane *P-12 Religion Curriculum*, 2013) which includes the study of Judaism in the early years. In addition to mandated multi-faith studies, it would be important for teachers to know who their students are in terms of different religious backgrounds and then embrace aspects of that religion into their programme.

During those times that the religious life of the school/early learning centre is celebrated, it is equally important that Catholic teachers and administrators seek to find ways of ensuring those celebrations include a pluralist approach which enables young children from other religious backgrounds to participate in a manner that does not dismiss or deny their own religion. Again, this does not diminish the Catholic identity as the prayer or liturgy being celebrated in the Catholic early years setting is Catholic; Bible readings are proclaimed, Catholic prayers are recited and Catholic symbols are used. Because of engaging in an educational religion programme, all children should know, understand and appreciate the meaning of the elements being used in the celebration. However, they also know that other participants in that celebration might celebrate in different ways in their own religious traditions.

Conclusion

Early childhood religious education in the context of Australian Catholic education is an emerging area still finding its way. Many challenges and uncertainties confront curriculum designers and teachers. The exact nature and purpose of religious education for young children is not yet fully articulated as some dioceses still implement a faith-based catechesis rather than an educational approach. While some teachers understand and acknowledge the reality of the rich diversity of their student populations, they are less sure of how to embrace religious diversity and what the implications of that diversity might be for their religion programmes. Part of their anxiety is related to their uncertainty of how to respect children's religious diversity and at the same time live within an authentic Catholic identity. However, this need not be a dilemma. By applying the same best practice they use in other subject areas, teachers can teach the religion programme and celebrate religious prayer and liturgy in a manner that acknowledges and respects young children's religious diversity and at the same time remain true to the Catholic identity of the school/setting. "To thine own self be true …" (Shakespeare, 1600–1601, *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 3) is indeed a possibility for Australian early childhood religious education.

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Chapter 10
Religious Educators: Championing the Concept of Sustainable Living

Shane Lavery

Introduction

Two basic premises lie at the core of this chapter. The first is that humanity has a primary responsibility for the stewardship of the earth. The second relates to the complexity of issues that challenge humanity over the condition of the natural environment. Put simply, these issues are more than simply scientific, technological, political and economic (Toohey, 2008). Rather, at their foundation is the very nature of the human person and his or her relationship with the Creator. Toohey (2008) points to ecological degradation as "a spiritual imperative to view the earth as sheer gift, given to us by God on trust and our vocation is to be stewards of creation" (p. 55). Such an imperative, while acknowledging important scientific concerns over climate change, global warming, acid rain, ecological footprints, carbon trading and environmental degradation, asks more fundamental questions. What, for instance, are the moral, ethical and religious underpinnings as to why a person should be a responsible environmental citizen in the first place? What does it mean to be a trustworthy steward of God's creation? How are the earth's resources to be used equitably, especially for the poor, given the many competing demands? Such questions bring a sense of spirituality to the notion of sustainable living. This article posits that religious educators are in an exceptional position to explore the issue of sustainable living in a balanced and informed manner with the young people with whom they teach, both within and outside of the classroom. They also have a unique opportunity to develop a spirituality of sustainable living with students. While the article takes a specifically Catholic perspective, the author recognises the significant work being undertaken by other Christian traditions and, indeed, other faith traditions, in relation to ecological education (McDonagh, 2006; The Climate Institute, 2006).

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A Catholic Approach to Environmental Awareness

In his 1971 social encyclical *Octogesima Adveniens*, Pope Paul VI acknowledged the environmental problem as a serious, widespread social concern that affected all of humanity. He exhorted Christians to take up responsibility with others for that shared future. However, it was only with Popes John Paul II (1978–2005) and Benedict XVI (2005–2013) that ecological issues began to take on a significant role in Catholic teaching (Edwards, 2012). For instance, in his 1990 New Year message, Pope John Paul II highlighted the importance of a conscientious attitude towards the environment: "Christians, in particular, realize that responsibility within creation and their duty towards nature and the Creator, are an essential part of their faith" (1990, para. 15). He elaborated on this theme in his message for the World Day of Peace (1999): "the world's present and future depend on the safeguarding of creation, because of the endless interdependence between human beings and their environment" (para. 30). Moreover, he warned: "the danger of serious damage to land and sea, and to the climate, flora and fauna, calls for a profound change in modern civilization's typical consumer life-style, particularly in the richer countries" (para. 29). In his January 2001 General Audience, Pope John Paul II reiterated these sentiments even more forcibly with the words: "If one looks at the regions of our planet, one realizes that humanity has disappointed the divine expectation … humiliating … the earth, that flower-bed that is our dwelling" (para. 4). Further, he articulated the need to "stimulate and sustain the 'ecological conversion' … which has made humanity more sensitive when facing the catastrophe toward which it was moving" (para. 5).

Pope John Paul II's successor, Pope Benedict XVI, was also proactive in his statements on environmental issues. In January 2008, he highlighted the need for ecological responsibility: "We need to care for the environment; it has been entrusted to men and women to be protected and cultivated with responsible freedom, with the good of all as a constant guiding criterion" (Caritas Internationalis, n.d., para. 1). That same year he called on all young people "to support and practise ways of behaviour that help to appreciate and defend nature" (CathNews, 2008, para. 26). In his 2009 encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict XVI clearly reiterated the Catholic Church's environmental commitment when he noted: "the Church has a responsibility towards creation and she must assert this responsibility in the public sphere" (para. 51). Further, the Pope pointed out that the Church is required to "defend not only earth, water and air as gifts of creation that belong to all", but must "above all protect mankind from self-destruction" (para. 51). In early January 2010, Benedict XVI exercised this responsibility when he denounced the failure of world leaders to agree to a new climate change treaty in Copenhagen, criticising the economic and political resistance to addressing environmental degradation (Willey, 2010).

Pope Francis (2013a, b) has begun his papacy with specific remarks on environmental responsibility. In his homily at his inaugural mass, he highlighted humanity's vocation to protect creation: "let us be 'protectors' of creation, protectors of

God's plan inscribed in nature, protectors of one another and of the environment" (para. 8). On World Environmental Day 2013, Pope Francis remarked on the need for humanity to cultivate and care for the earth in accordance with God's command reflected in Genesis 2:15. He criticised what he called a "culture of waste", in particular the waste and disposal of food, when many suffer from hunger. He blamed consumerism for people becoming used to an excess and daily waste of food (Vatican Radio, June 2013). During his visit to Brazil (July 2013), he took on the defence of the Amazon and of the environment. Speaking to the bishops, he called for "respect and protection of the entire creation" which, he argued, had been entrusted to humanity not so that it would be indiscriminately exploited (Brooks, 2013). In his apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (Nov 2013), Pope Francis stressed that human beings "are not only the beneficiaries but also the stewards of other creatures" (para. 215). He urged all people, in the spirit of St. Francis of Assisi, to "watch over and protect the fragile world in which we live, and all its peoples" (para. 216).

The Catholic Church publication *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004), provides important insights into any understanding of a Catholic approach to environmental awareness. The publication takes a strong social justice perspective on ecological issues. The relevant chapter, entitled "Safeguarding the Environment", is set out under four themes: Biblical Aspects, Man and the Universe of Created Things, The Crisis in the Relationship between Man and the Environment and A Common Responsibility (p. xii). Within these themes, creation is seen as "flowing from the Lord's Paschal Mystery" (para. 455). Scientific and technological applications must be "accompanied by a necessary attitude of respect for other living creatures" (para. 459). The earth is viewed as "God's prior and original gift" (para. 460). Moreover, a correct appreciation of the environment "prevents the utilitarian reduction of nature to a mere object to be manipulated and exploited" (para. 463). The Pontifical Council also states: "serious ecological problems call for an effective change of mentality leading to the adoption of new lifestyles" (para. 486). In particular, the council notes that there is a need to break with the logic of mere consumerism, to promote forms of agriculture and industrial production which value the order of creation and meet the basic human needs of all and to encourage a renewed awareness of the interdependence of all inhabitants of the earth. Such a Catholic approach to environmental awareness invites religious educators to exercise a significant role in exploring the issue of sustainable living with students.

Methodology

This study sought to examine ways in which religious education teachers develop a sense of sustainable living in students. The four specific research questions were:

1. What do religious education teachers believe is the value of religious education in developing a sense of sustainable living with students?

2. In what alternative ways do teachers of religious education develop a sense of sustainable living with students?
3. What are the experiences of religious education teachers in developing a sense of sustainable living with students?
4. To what extent do religious education teachers believe they have developed a spirituality of sustainable living with students?

For the purposes of this chapter, the notion of spirituality of sustainable living (Q4) is closely linked with Pope John Paul II's (2001) call to "ecological conversion" (para. 5) wherein students learn to value and respect the environment – and act appropriately. An interpretive paradigm incorporating a symbolic interactionist lens provided the theoretical perspective for the study. Symbolic interaction directs investigators to take, to the best of their ability, the standpoint of those being studied (Crotty, 1998). Consistent with this perspective, the study examined ways in which religious education teachers developed a sense of sustainable living in students from the viewpoint of religious education teachers.

Data was collected through the use of an anonymous survey completed by 37 teachers of religious education in Catholic schools in Western Australia. This sample was drawn from two cohorts. The first involved religious education teachers undertaking a postgraduate unit entitled *The Professional Religious Educator* at the University of Notre Dame Australia, Fremantle campus. This unit is designed for teachers actively involved in teaching religious education, many of whom hold middle or senior management positions in their schools. Twenty-one participants from a class of 36 volunteered to answer the survey. The second cohort entailed 16 religious education teachers in Western Australian Catholic schools purposively selected because of their dedication and expertise in the field. These participants included religious education coordinators, service-learning coordinators, and primary school principals as well as experienced practitioners. A breakdown of the sample in terms of teaching level is highlighted in Fig. 10.1. Eight of the secondary
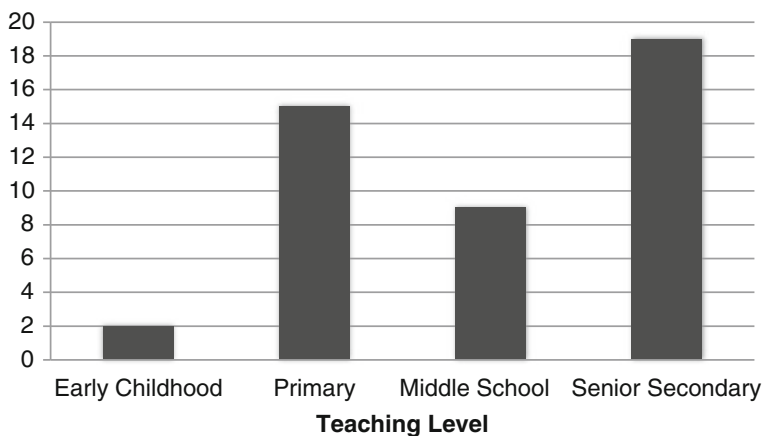

Fig. 10.1 Teaching level of the participants

Table 10.1 Qualitative survey questions

3. What areas of the religious education curriculum do you find valuable in developing a sense of sustainable living with your students?
4. What other teaching areas do you teach in that you find valuable for developing a sense of stewardship of creation and sustainable living with your students?
6. As a school leader what ways do you promote a sense of sustainable living within the school?
7. If you feel that you have developed a sense of sustainable living with your students, what have been some of the highlights/positives/benefits?
8. If you feel that you have developed a sense of sustainable living with your students, what have been some of the lows/challenges/negatives?
9. Do you believe that as students develop a sense of sustainable living it also raises in them a spiritual awareness of sustainability?
11. Please feel free to make any other comments that you believe are relevant.

Table 10.2 Quantitative survey questions

1. To what degree do you believe that developing a sense of sustainable living in students is an important responsibility for a teacher of religious education?									
Not important					Extremely important				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
2. In what ways do you develop a sense of sustainable living with students? (indicate as many categories as appropriate)									
a) Through teaching religious education									
b) Through teaching other curriculum areas									
c) Practical activities with students									
d) In my leadership role at the school									
e) Other									
5. What practical activities do you undertake with your students to develop a sense of sustainable living with them?									
Worm farm					Antilitter programme				
Vegetable garden					Cleanup Australia campaign				
Flowerbeds					Tree planting				
Recycling					Other				
10. Given all you do with your students, to what extent do you feel that you have developed a spirituality of sustainable living with them?									
Very little					Considerable				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

school teachers indicated that they taught at both middle school and senior secondary level. Twenty of the participants (54.1 %) taught in coeducational schools, 6 (16.2 %) in girls' schools and 11 (29.7 %) in boys' schools. The qualitative survey questions (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11) are listed in Table 10.1 while the quantitative survey questions (1, 2, 5, 10) are listed in Table 10.2. The survey as a whole was "pre-tested" (Berg, 2007) with three colleagues: an early childhood educator, a primary school educator and a secondary school educator.

Content analysis was the process used to explore the religious education teachers' responses to the survey question. Berg (2007) describes content analysis as "a careful, detailed systematic examination and interpretation of a particular body of material in an effort to identify patterns, themes, biases and meanings" (p. 303). The responses of the religious education teachers to the survey were examined for themes, patterns, topics and shared mind-sets. The format for analysing the data followed that described by Miles and Huberman (1994), that is, data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/verification. The responses to the qualitative questions (3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, & 11) were reduced through identifying emerging themes by selection of specific segments of language that emphasised particular themes. These segments were visually displayed under each theme heading and appropriate exemplars of each theme were selected. The responses to the quantitative questions (1, 2, 5 and 10) were displayed and analysed through the use of univariate descriptive statistics (Neuman, 2006). Specifically, frequency distribution graphs (bar graphs) were used along with measures of central tendency: mode (most common score), mean (arithmetic average) and median (the score at which half the values are higher and half are lower – the middle score). A measure of variation, range (the extent of dispersion indicating highest and lowest scores), was also employed.

Findings

The vast majority of participants believed that developing a sense of sustainable living in students was an important responsibility for teachers of religious education. Participant responses to a Likert scale from 1 (not important) to 10 (very important) generated a mode of 10, a median of 9 and a mean of 8.43. The range was between 10 and 3, namely, 7. Figure 10.2 indicates the spread of participant responses. Participants were also invited to indicate ways they developed a sense of sustainable living with students (from five choices offered). The most popular responses were "teaching religious education" and "teaching other curriculum areas". Figure 10.3 provides the breakdown of the responses. Five participants listed "other". Their comments included: making use of the computer programme "ecological footprint", using recycled materials, employing an environmental study teacher, modelling a sustainable attitude "within all areas of personal and professional life" and using the Catholic Earthcare website.

Participants indicated four interconnected areas of the religious education curriculum, which they found valuable in developing a sense of sustainable living with their students. These areas were: creation stories, the notion of stewardship, a sense of wonder of God and creation and an understanding of social justice. Participants, for example, underlined the relevance of teaching (and learning) about creation, the meanings behind the different creation stories and that the bible reveals God's vision for all creation. They highlighted the concept of stewardship (or custodianship), noting, in the words of one participant, "humankind is the steward of creation".
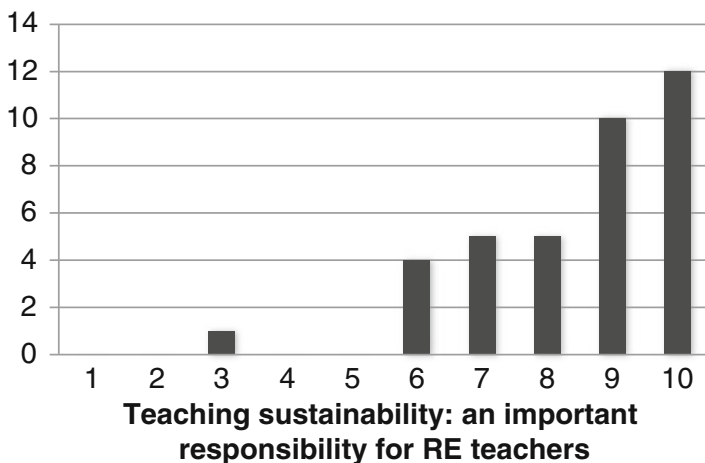
Fig. 10.2   Teaching sustainability: an important responsibility of religious educators
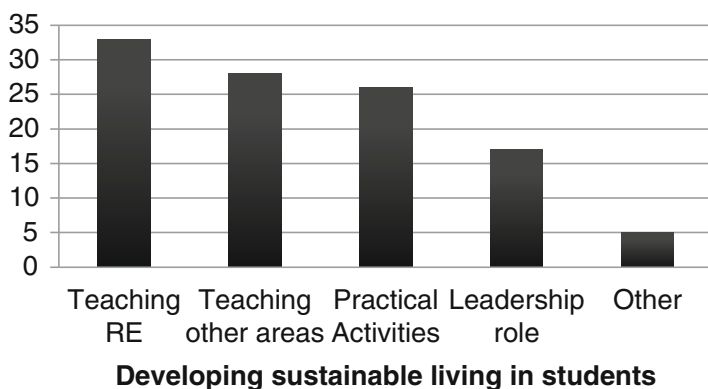
Fig. 10.3   Ways to develop sustainable living in students

Often linked with this idea of stewardship was the term "respect": "respect for God's creation", "respect for nature", "respect and care for the environment", and "respect the use of (the gift of) God's natural environment". Primary and early childhood teachers, in particular, stressed the importance of developing in students a sense of wonder and awe of God and creation. As one participant observed, "the wonder aspect" presented students with "the opportunity to develop a sense of how sustainable living could change our lives both individually and as a community". The concept of social justice was a particular emphasis of secondary school teachers. Comments included: "teaching students about the way we can work at restoring God's state of original justice", "the universal destination of goods", "the responsibility to care for and sustain the environment for future generations", "dignity of the human person" and "the concept of Church as servant". Students were also challenged "to question their own choices and those of companies and governments".
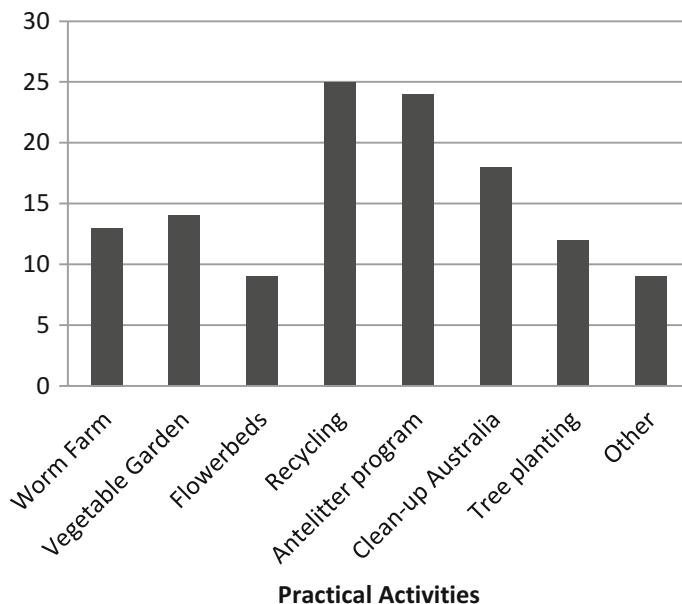
Fig. 10.4 Practical activities to develop sustainable living in students

Participants indicated various other teaching disciplines by which they developed in students an appreciation of sustainable living: science, geography, society and the environment, history, health, economics, English, woodwork, drama, mathematics and art. Service learning was also mentioned. Many of the participants also involved their students in a range of practical activities as a further means of developing a sense of sustainable living (Fig. 10.4). The "other" activities indicated in Fig. 10.4 included such pursuits as: an environmental kitchen, save our "Swan River" project, bushrangers, drama performances, save-the-koala foundation awareness programme and adopt-a-beach action. Similarly, participants highlighted an array of methods by which, as school leaders, they could foster in students a sense of sustainable living. Some of these methods could be categorised as individual, for example, the mode of transport to work (bike, walking, bus), turning off lights, discussions with students in class and displaying respect at all times for the environment and people. Other methods were more "big picture", involving participants in such initiatives as recycling (paper, cardboard, food scraps, batteries, ink cartridges and mobile phones), energy efficiency (solar panels, regular audits to implement energy efficient devices), waterwise schooling (rainwater tanks, waterless urinals), assemblies and liturgies and offering students and staff opportunities to engage in sustainable activities – and providing suitable resources.

Participants indicated a diverse list of positives in working with students to develop a sense of sustainable living. These included seeing students appreciate the beauty and wonder of the environment, having appropriate conversations and class discussions with students, noting the development of a greater sense of school com-

munity through enrichment of student-staff, student-student and staff-staff relationships and the development of leadership in students and observing students "extending their actions into their homes and immediate communities". There were also negatives. For example, various participants commented on the perceived apathy of some students, the need to motivate staff and the indifference from the school leadership team. Lack of time was also frequently cited as a negative.

The majority of participants (76 %) believed that as students develop a sense of sustainable living, it also raises in them a spiritual awareness of sustainability. Comments tended to draw links between sustainable living and a sense of responsibility for and awe of creation. One participant remarked: "this idea of sustainability is embedded deeply in the topics of creation and our relationship with God, of stewardship and our commitment with God". Another commented: "most definitely, this idea of sustainable living builds a sense of responsibility and stewardship". A third observed: "the aim of a person living sustainably is to value the natural gifts from God. The connection with creation, the environment, and the creator God is most closely felt". Yet another participant stated that developing the idea of sustainability "creates a sense of connection to God's creation and our school as a 'church'". Three of the participants commented on the importance of time and the need to provide opportunities for "critical reflection". Those participants (19 %) who disagreed felt that students "don't always see the link", it is "still a challenge to connect learning and faith", and such connections "need to be explicitly taught". Two participants (5 %) did not answer the question.

Many participants were unsure as to the extent they had developed a spirituality of sustainable living with their students. Figure 10.5 gives the spread of participants' responses on a Likert scale from 1 (very little) to 10 (considerable). The range was from 9 to 2, that is, 7. The mode and median were both 6. The arithmetic mean was 5.3. Participant responses reflected these statistics: "we have done some work but more needs to be done"; "I believe I have started, but feel there is such a long way to go"; "the issue is raised but its link to spirituality is not explicit"; "the opportunity is provided – some students do connect". One participant observed: "children have a range of influences from home and outside factors apart from school. These need to be contended with". Yet another remarked, "I do hope that students understand the impact they have on the environment – their environment which is the platform for our existence on earth".

Discussion

The intention of this research was to examine ways in which religious education teachers can develop a sense of sustainable living in their students. Specifically, by use of four research questions, this article seeks to identify (a) what religious education teachers believe is the value of religious education in developing a sense of sustainable living with students, (b) what alternative ways teachers of religious education use to develop a sense of sustainable living with students, (c) the experiences
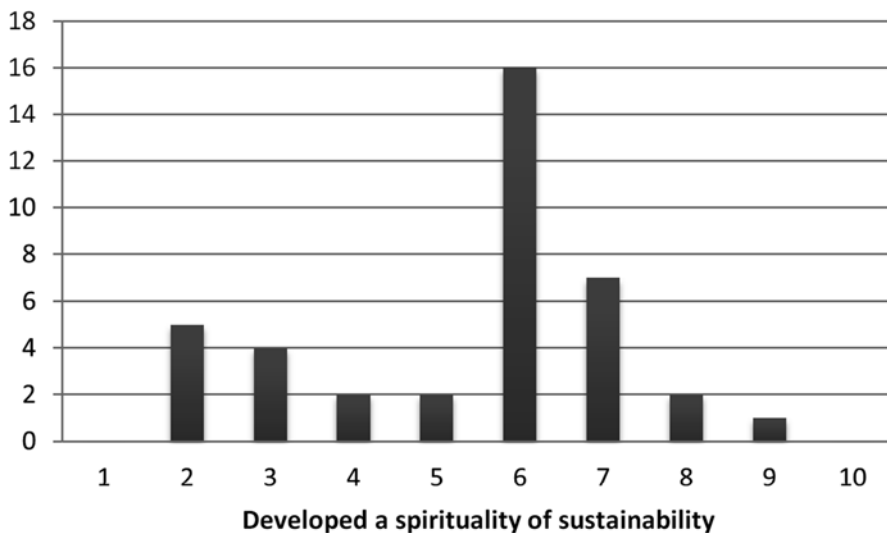
Fig. 10.5 The extent to which participants believed they had developed a spirituality of sustainable living with their students

of religious education teachers in developing a sense of sustainable living with students and (d) to what extent do religious education teachers believe they have developed a spirituality of sustainable living with students. The discussion is undertaken under these four headings.

Religious Education: Developing a Sense of Sustainable Living in Students

Participants registered a strong belief in the importance of religious education teachers developing a sense of sustainable living in students through teaching religious education. Such a belief is perhaps indicative of the consistent message on this matter from the papacy since 1990 and reflective of the general ecological approach adapted by the Catholic Church in Australia. As an institution, the Catholic Church in Australia has taken the environmental crisis seriously (McDonagh, 2006). The Australian Catholic Bishops published the document *A New Earth – The Environmental Challenge* as their social justice statement for 2002, which articulated the Church's desire "to stand in solidarity with the poor and marginalized, and to exercise good stewardship of the fragile ecosystems that support life on earth" (p. 8). This was also the year that the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference founded the ecological agency, Catholic Earthcare Australia. In 2003 members of several religious orders established the EarthSong Project, which included the

periodical *Earth Song Journal* that promotes eco-literacy within the Australian context. Both Catholic Earthcare Australia and the EarthSong Project are active to this day (Rue, 2009).

Participants identified four main teaching areas in the religious education programme as addressing the notion of sustainable living. These areas show distinct links with the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004). In particular, comments drew links with the overarching notion of social justice, creation viewed as a gift from God, humanity's responsibility to care for the earth and respect for nature. There is also a sense of personal responsibility. Moreover, these teaching areas are reflective of the vision and goals of the publication *On Holy Ground*, coauthored by Catholic Earthcare Australia and Catholic Education Offices in Queensland and New South Wales (Rue, 2009). The publication presents a long-term vision for Catholic ecological education that involved embedding ecological values into school programmes and practices. Three specific goals are detailed: (a) to foster in students an appreciation of creation as a gift, their relation with creation and their responsibility as cocreators for its future; (b) to develop in students the knowledge, skills attitudes, values and commitment to initiate individual and collective responses that are environmentally responsible and reflective of their ecological vocation; and (c) to inspire students to decrease their ecological footprint and increase their spiritual one, as creatures made in the image and likeness of God (Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2006, p. 6).

Other Approaches by Teachers of Religious Education

Participants confirmed three other approaches by which they developed the notion of sustainable living with students. First, they indicated a range of teaching disciplines which, like religious education, provide opportunities to explore ecological concepts with students. Such an approach by participants reflects the notion of sustainability as a cross-curriculum priority deserving of particular attention in the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, n.d.). Second, with one exception, participants engaged students in practical "environmental" activities outside the classroom. These forms of engagement underscore the need to move children out of buildings so as to interact with nature (Louv, 2008). Third, many participants indicated that, as a school leader, they promoted a sense of sustainable living within their school. All three approaches link well with the ASSISI programme, A Strategic Systems-based Integrated Sustainability Initiative designed as "a strategic pathway for Catholic schools to engage with answering the call for ecological conversion and sustainability" (Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2010, p. 22). ASSISI has six components: whole school planning, religious dimension, teaching and learning, ethical resource use, cultivating grounds and buildings and community relationships (Catholic Earthcare Australia, 2010, pp. 20–21).

Experiences in Developing a Sense of Sustainable Living with Students

The chief experiences that participants described centred on out-of-class activities and the development and attitude of students. Remarks such as "students taking an active leadership role to improve the local environment", "students becoming positive citizens and having a more concerned approach to the human and natural environment" or "students valuing other things over sustainable living and hence not seeing the importance" highlight important positive and negative experiences. Statements relating to teaching and learning were less obvious and certainly not explicit. One participant did remark on the need to develop a "cross-curriculum whole school focus" at his/her school. Another participant commented on the "lack of enthusiasm from students for certain theory-based tasks". However, participants made little mention of any experiences regarding the development of sustainable living in students and the teaching of religious education. This omission suggests a potential concern given the religious dimension inherent in the ASSISI programme and the Catholic Church's overall call to stewardship and "ecological conversion".

Developing a Spirituality of Sustainable Living with Students

The majority of participants (76 %) saw a correlation between developing a sense of sustainability and the promotion of a spiritual awareness of sustainability in students. Their responses are perhaps indicative of what Delio, Warner and Wood (2008) term a "spirituality of conversion" (p. 169) where humanity is "called to love God *in* creation, not apart from creation" (p. 169). That is, a spirituality which ultimately involves not only respect for the natural world but "a deep sense of global solidarity, and a radical, lifelong commitment to act for the good of the whole Earth community" (Edwards, 2012, p. 58). Such spirituality stresses the aesthetic dimension that undergirds religious education and which can bring people to deeper levels of growth.

Participant responses also highlighted the importance of a whole school approach, in particular the need for reflection, academic content, class discussion and action within and outside of the school. As one participant observed:

> It is difficult to judge if this link is a result of practice or education. The responsibility to live sustainably is advertised in the school community. However, I believe students take it to heart when they have a better understanding of personal responsibility through their RE lessons.

Statistically, there was little difference in the responses of the nineteen secondary teachers from those of the seventeen primary and early childhood teachers (Table 10.3). Such a result may suggest that the age of the students was not an issue for those participants who believed students could acquire a spiritual awareness as a result of developing a sense of sustainable living. It was an issue for those who

Table 10.3 Breakdown of participant responses to whether developing a sense of sustainable living also raises in students a spiritual awareness of sustainability

Participants	Yes	No	Undecided
Secondary	75 %	20 %	5 %
Primary and early childhood	76 %	18 %	6 %

answered "no". Finally, participants were hesitant as to the extent that they believed they had, in fact, developed a spirituality of sustainable living with their students (Fig. 10.5). Many participants indicated that a start had been made, but believed that more needed to be done in this respect.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This research indicates that religious education teachers take most seriously their responsibility to develop in students a sense of sustainable living. The participants in the study identified four interconnected components of the religious education curriculum, which they found instrumental in fostering a student awareness of sustainability. Every participant taught, or has taught, at least one of these components. Participants pinpointed other teaching disciplines, whereby they promoted the importance of sustainable living with students. The vast majority of participants also worked with students in out-of-class activities designed to encourage sustainable living. All three methods indicate a multifaceted and dedicated approach by religious education teachers in stimulating a culture of sustainability with students. It is an approach consistent with both the Australian Government cross-curriculum priority on sustainability and the ASSISI programme for ecological education in Catholic schools. The majority of participants drew links between promoting a sense of sustainability and developing in students a spirituality of sustainability. However, the data suggest that many participants were less confident as to the degree to which they had actually developed a spirituality of sustainability in their students.

Three recommendations are made in line with the findings of this research. First, those responsible for writing and developing religious education programmes should ensure that important concepts such as God's creation, stewardship, sustainability and social justice are embedded at appropriate levels in the religious education curriculum for early childhood, primary and secondary classes. Papal documents and the Catholic Church publication *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church* (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, 2004) provide an excellent guide to content. Second, Catholic education authorities should consider offering suitable in-service opportunities for religious education teachers to enable and encourage informed teaching of appropriate ecological concepts within and outside of the religious education classroom. Third, given the apparent disparity surrounding the development of a spirituality of sustainability in students, further

research is required to examine ways such spirituality can be better nurtured and maintained. This last recommendation should not be overlooked. A spirituality of sustainability may well lie at the core of Benedict XVI's (2009) call to "appreciate and defend nature" (para. 5). Moreover, religious educators are in an exceptional position by virtue of their role in the school and the nature of religious education per se to awaken and develop in students a sense of spirituality that defines why a person should be a responsible environmental citizen.

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Chapter 11
Religious Education in Hong Kong Catholic Schools: Past, Present and Future

Francis Nai Kwok Chan

Introduction

This chapter explores the religious and moral education (RME) in Catholic schools of Hong Kong over the last five decades, in the domains of curriculum development and teacher professional development in particular. This chapter depicts the trends of curriculum development and the professional qualifications of the teachers of RME during this period. The review provides a context for a discussion on the present situation and future challenges of RME in Catholic schools.

The Catholic Schools in Hong Kong

The provision of Catholic education in Hong Kong dated back to 1841, the same year when the British commenced the occupation of Hong Kong. The missionaries of various religious orders from Europe and the USA started providing education to the local Chinese people soon upon their arrival. Schools were later set up by the local diocesan authorities, mostly after the Second World War to meet the dramatic increase in population. The demand for access to education increased as the colony became a haven for Chinese refugees fleeing the civil war in the second half of 1940s between the Chinese Communist Party and the Nationalist government until the eventual Communist take-over of mainland China in 1949. The Caritas organization also began to provide vocational education in the 1960s as Hong Kong was transforming itself from an entrepot between China and the West into a leading

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industrial and manufacturing centre of Asia (Mok, 2007). The Catholic diocese of Hong Kong is currently the largest education provider of kindergarten, primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. It runs 31 kindergarten, 107 primary and 85 secondary schools, as well as 41 vocational institutes, totalling 264 schools, with 165,781 students and 11,278 teachers. 9.71 % of the students and 25.58 % of the teachers are Catholics. There are three main types of Catholic schools in Hong Kong. They are managed by different sponsoring bodies, including 103 religious schools run by religious orders, 98 diocesan schools directly by the Catholic Education Office (CEO) of the diocese and 49 schools run by Caritas. The religious schools are being run by various religious orders according to their own mission and vision, with a high degree of autonomy and little supervision from the diocesan authorities. The diocesan schools, however, are more closely supervised by the Episcopal Delegate for Education. The Caritas schools also enjoy a high degree of autonomy and are accountable to the Caritas management board rather than to the diocesan Catholic Education Office. While the overarching educational goals and ideals of all Catholic schools in Hong Kong are in line with the teachings of the Catholic Church, the management styles of different types of schools vary considerably. Consequently, the curriculum across these schools is far from uniform, even in the area of religious and moral education (RME) which is upheld as the identity of a Catholic school. In the Catholic schools in Hong Kong, it is difficult to distinguish clearly between the curricular areas of religious education, moral education, life education, spiritual education and even civic education. These areas have been closely connected and overlapped to certain extent. In this chapter, RME is adopted as an umbrella term to refer to the curriculum domain which comprises all these related areas.

In the 1960s

The 1960s was a transitional decade for the Catholic Church with the convening and aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965). The Catholic atmosphere in school was still very pervasive with many Catholic students joining various religious activities. There was a strong presence of clergy in the school campus, particularly during religious education lesson. There was no formal professional training on religious knowledge for the teachers. The priests and nuns were presumed to have expertise pertaining to biblical and catechetical knowledge. The pedagogy adopted was largely didactic and rote learning was the norm.

The subject title "Religious/Biblical Knowledge" on timetable could pinpoint the orientation of the subject. The Bible and the Catholic Catechism were the two main sources of knowledge to be learned. The Diocesan Catechetical Centre established in 1963 was responsible for educating young people in Christian principles and values. It began to dominate the provision of teaching materials as well as professional training to teachers of RME for the subsequent five decades ever since.

In the 1970s

The Second Vatican Council was a turning point for religious education in Catholic schools all over the world (Buchanan, 2003; 2005). It taught that non-Catholic students should not be forced to accept the Catholic dogmas or to attend religious activities. This implied that religious education should not be equivalent to catechism classes. Teaching of ethical issues encountered by students in their daily life in religious education lessons began to make sense. Fr. Peter Brady, a Jesuit in Hong Kong, published a series of five books on ethics for secondary students between 1974 and 1985. There was an obvious shift of focus of the RME books from biblical knowledge to personal experience of students. The Diocesan Catechetical Centre published a series of religious education textbooks for primary school in 1973 and 1974. While the biblical and catechetical knowledge still formed the backbone of the series, there was an obvious effort to relate the teachings to the personal experience of students. As far as professional qualifications were concerned, most of the RME teachers were untrained. In-service professional development opportunities were also rare. There were no courses on teaching of RME or the like offered in the schools of education of the two local universities. The Diocesan Catechetical Centre was the only training ground of RME teachers for Catholic schools at that time. The major change between the 1960s and 1970s regarding RME teachers was a steady increase of lay people, partly due to the decline in the number of clergy, coupled with an increase in Catholic schools in Hong Kong. Acknowledging their own inadequacy both in subject matter and pedagogic knowledge, the lay RME teachers of the diocesan secondary schools found it necessary to set up the Committee of Panel Heads of Religious Education of Diocesan Secondary Schools to support each other to teach the subject well by means of sharing teaching materials and experiences.

In the 1980s

The 1980s was a significant decade for the curriculum development of religious education in the Catholic schools of Hong Kong. The shift towards moral education with Catholic values and away from catechetical religious education, a trend first emerging in the 1970s, accelerated in this decade to the extent that by the end of the decade, a majority of RME teachers preferred moral education to religious education (Chan, 1990). The publication of a series of six textbooks on moral education by Fr. Luke Tsui (1981 to 1988) gave impetus to such development. The preference for moral education in the context of Hong Kong could be explained by the fact that the teachers regarded it more practical and beneficial to bring up morally educated persons as the primary objective of RME. This reasoning was based on the supposition that most of their students were not expected to become converts of the Catholic faith. Religious education, with an emphasis on the dogmas, history, institutions and

liturgy of the Catholic Church, was perceived as comparatively less relevant to the life of students. However, the shift towards moral education was far from complete up to the end of the decade. Many Catholic schools remained committed to the study of the Bible, and Fr. Tsui's books on moral education were far from popular after the first few years. A demand for "drafting a uniform, or at least a core, curriculum for all Catholic schools" was raised by senior RME teachers (Chan, 1990, p. 126). While the strength of clergy continued to shrink in the 1980s as few missionaries were sent to Hong Kong from Europe and the USA, more opportunities were open to lay RME teachers for professional development during this period. The Diocesan Catholic Board of Education ran a series of workshops on moral and civic education for teachers of all Catholic schools in the mid-1980s and began to offer overseas scholarships in 1989 to RME teachers of Catholic schools to subsidize further studies. The 1980s was also a watershed in the contemporary history of Hong Kong. The fate of Hong Kong to be returned to mainland China in 1997 was confirmed in *the Sino-British Joint Declaration* signed in 1984. Its impact was immediately felt in the educational field. Civic education to prepare youngsters for the "return" during the transitional period (1984–1997) began to draw the attention of both politicians and educators in the second half of this decade, although a heated debate on the nature and objectives of civic education only reached its climax ten years later (Chan, 2004). In most of the Catholic schools, the element of civic education was gradually infused into the religious-moral education programmes. The RME of Catholic schools, thus, became even more diversified and complicated in such a politicized social context of Hong Kong of the late 1980s.

In the 1990s

The RME curriculum of Catholic schools was further enriched with the inclusion of civic education and life education in the 1990s. The series of civic education booklets entitled *Xiang gang qing、 zhong guo xin (Love of Hong Kong, Concern for China)* published by the Catholic Education Office between 1995 and 1997 was the most obvious response of the church to the political challenge posed by the "1997 Question". This series was originally conceived as a pre-emptive move to prevent the future Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government of Hong Kong from imposing its version of civic education onto Catholic schools in post-1997 Hong Kong (Chan, 2004). The basic stance of the series was that the three identities of the Hong Kong Chinese Catholics after 1997, namely, being Hongkongese, Chinese and Christians, were compatible and that the Catholic Church and its adherents should take a positive view of the future of Hong Kong. The RME of Catholic schools could contribute to the "return" of Hong Kong to the motherland by bringing up a new generation of responsible and patriotic citizens. However, this series was not well received by most Catholic schools. Although 1997 was already at the door of Hong Kong and proper civic education deemed indispensable for youngsters, many principals and RME teachers of the schools regarded it as too pro-China

in its stance for the RME of Catholic schools. The issue of where the focus and emphasis of RME should lie surfaced again among RME colleagues at this occasion.

At the same period of time, the RME curriculum of Catholic schools was further expanded to include themes on life education which became popular in Hong Kong schools in the 1990s. The revised series of RME textbooks for primary schools published by the Diocesan Catechetical Centre in the mid-1990s has been popular and more well received than its precursor of the 1970s which shows that the experiential approach to RME became more acceptable in the 1990s than in the 1970s, and the shift from dogmatic catechism towards moral education from a Catholic perspective continued to gain ground among Catholic primary schools over the years.

In the junior secondary level, the Catholic diocese also published a series of textbooks entitled *En rong zhi dao* (*The Road of Blessings and Honor*) in 1995 and 1996. This series is also an attempt to relate the biblical and Church teachings to the daily life of students. The authoritative and didactic approach to RME of the 1960s was eventually replaced by a much more inquiry approach of learning and an interactive mode of teaching in the classroom. In other words, both the subject matter and the pedagogy of the RME in Hong Kong Catholic schools have undergone significant shifts over the last four decades.

One of the prominent features of RME curriculum of Catholic schools in the 1990s was its diversification in subject content with varied emphasis on religious education, moral education, civic education, life education or spiritual education which began to gain ground in this decade, according to school-based decisions. These schools did enjoy ample freedom in making curriculum decisions. There had not been any official top-down core and centralized RME curriculum for all schools until 2006.

The situation of teacher's professionalization in RME did not improve much in the 1990s. The Diocesan Catechetical Centre continued to be the main provider of training for novice RME teachers with its two-year certificate course which, however, was not a prerequisite for teaching the subject. In this decade, more teachers also began to attend part-time courses on theology and biblical studies offered by the local Holy Spirit Seminary to strengthen their subject matter knowledge, although the enrolment was still very low if compared with the total population of the RME teachers.

In the 2000s

The first decade of the new millennium has seen significant RME curriculum initiatives of the Catholic Church of Hong Kong, as responses to her internal needs and external pressures of the educational reforms launched by the SAR government after 1997. A thorough and comprehensive review of the current situation of the diocese in the Diocesan Convention (March 2000 to December 2001) set a list of priorities in various domains of works of the Catholic Church in Hong Kong.

Greater attention to and better coordination of the RME in schools was among the top ten items for immediate concern (The Catholic Diocese of Hong Kong, 2002).

In 2006, a centralized RME curriculum for all Catholic schools (*Religious and moral education curriculum of Catholic secondary schools, primary schools and kindergartens*) was promulgated (Task force of Religious and Moral Education curriculum of the Hong Kong Catholic Education Office, 2006). Three months later (September 2006), a professional centre of RME specialists, the RME Centre, was immediately set up in the Catholic Education Office to prepare for the implementation of the new curriculum.

The issuance of the RME Curriculum (2006), coupled with the setting up of the RME Centre for its implementation, was undoubtedly a significant curriculum initiative of RME of the Catholic schools (Woo Lo Ming & Chan Nai Kwok, 2007). Firstly, the most significant contribution of the document lies in its clarification that "the ultimate aim of this curriculum is mainly about moral and spiritual values and not religious values. It is not the kind of 'catechetical education' in which students' acceptance of Christian faith is assumed" (Task force of Religious and Moral Education curriculum of the Hong Kong Catholic Education Office, 2006, p. 33). This is a clear defining and positioning of RME for Hong Kong Catholic schools in the 2000s by the diocesan authorities for the first time.

Second, the document delineates a clear core scope of study ranging from the kindergarten to the senior secondary level. The list of themes suggested in the curriculum is comprehensive and well organized, serving as a useful standard guide for schools to follow. It is expected that from now on the RME programmes of all Catholic schools should be modelled upon this official curriculum as far as possible. Eventually, the demand for a centralized and core RME curriculum from schools since the 1980s has been met.

Third, the document also proposes to introduce traditional Chinese moral values into the RME curriculum. As morality has played a prominent role in the culture of China and most of the people in Hong Kong are ethnic Chinese whose daily lives are still significantly shaped by the moral teachings of their ancient sages like Confucius, Mencius and Lao-tzu, the diocese finds it morally obliged to alert the students with the great value of the treasures of their cultural heritage for the contemporary age. The document argues that the Christian and Confucian traditions are, to a large extent, both compatible and complementary. In some cases, the Confucian values can also be supplemented and thus enhanced by their Christian counterparts. This becomes the official stance of the diocese.

Fourth, the document recommends Thomas Groome's "Shared Christian Praxis" (Groome, 1991) as a preferred approach to RME. This approach emphasizes "bringing life to faith and faith to life" (Groome, 2006, p. 763) or "the integration of life and faith" (p. 763) and "offers a pedagogy that is communal, conversational, and participatory" (p. 765). Groome's approach is adopted, it is hoped, to improve the status quo of religious education.

Fifth, the setting up of the RME Centre in September 2006 is also significant in the fact that it is the first standing professional centre of the Hong Kong Catholic diocese to provide curriculum support to the implementation of RME in its schools.

Since its establishment, the centre has been writing materials and running professional development activities for over 3,000 RME teachers. Most importantly, by the summer of 2015, the centre will have published textbooks for 12 year levels. Similar to the situation in Australia (Buchanan, 2006c), this new set of textbooks, regarded as being with high quality and user-friendly, is warmly received by most classroom teachers. The RME Centre is thus pinned with high hopes to enhance the quality of RME in Catholic schools continuously by providing useful teaching resources and much needed professional training to teachers concerned.

On the other hand, the diocese perceived the array of rapid educational reforms being launched by the SAR government after the political take-over in 1997 as potential threats to the traditional curriculum status of RME in Catholic schools. In December 2005, the bishop of Hong Kong, Cardinal Zen, issued a directive to all Catholic schools stating that no less than 5 % of formal curriculum time should be devoted to RME, no matter how the school timetable will be rearranged to accommodate the curriculum changes imposed by the government. This measure has showed that the Catholic Church is determined to uphold the identity of Catholic schools by strengthening RME amidst changes and challenges after 1997.

Challenges Now and Direction Ahead

By now, the RME in Hong Kong Catholic schools is facing a number of internal and external challenges, either carried over from the previous decades, as explained above, or newly emerged due to changing political and social contexts. Internally, while the needs of designing appropriate curriculum and publishing suitable textbooks have partly been met by the efforts of the RME Centre since 2006, the tasks of inducing the school leadership and strengthening the teachers to implement the 2006 curriculum and new textbooks adequately are still daunting.

One of the immediate internal challenges for the diocese authorities in 2010's is the implementation of the new centralized RME Curriculum in all the Catholic schools. While all the diocesan schools directly managed by the Catholic Education Office have to adopt the new textbooks written according to the new curriculum by the RME Centre, the response of the schools run by religious orders, which are more autonomous, is far from being uniform. While some are enthusiastic and willing to try the new curriculum approach embedded onto the new textbooks to improve the situation of the teaching and learning of RME, more than half of them are still reluctant to adopt the new curriculum and textbooks due to various reasons.

One of the major reasons of the reluctance lies in the great inertia towards curriculum change on the part of teachers. It has been argued that there are favourable factors to assist curriculum change in religious education. The provision of opportunities of professional development for teachers is a crucial one (Buchanan, 2006a). If the new curriculum approach is seen to be an important step to improve the situation of RME, more efforts from the Catholic Education Office are indispensable to order to convince the principals and teachers concerned of these schools that such

an initiative holds the key to the provision of appropriate religious education at this stage of its curriculum development.

A challenge now for the diocese is the need to prepare adequate number of qualified RME teachers to implement the new curriculum and to use the new textbooks properly. Without appropriate levels of subject matter and pedagogical knowledge, it is likely the RME teachers will impede the curriculum change (Buchanan, 2006b). While the professional development programmes and new textbooks prepared by the RME Centre over the last 8 years might be able to help solve partly the teachers' puzzle of "why to teach, what to teach and how to teach" RME, more effective measures need to be put in place to provide professional development programmes for them.

The RME Centre has proposed to work together with the Diocesan Catechetical Centre and the first Catholic University in Hong Kong (to be opened in a few years and run by the Caritas) to offer degree and certificate courses on RME. It is envisaged that, in the long run, all RME teachers of Catholic schools should receive academic and professional qualifications recognized by the diocese authorities. In particular, the expertise of the head of the RME Panel (similarly to the post of Religious Education Coordinator in Australia) in school should be strengthened, especially in the mastery of the relevant theory of curriculum change if the recent curriculum initiatives are to be implemented successfully (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009).

The internal challenges of implementing the new curriculum effectively are now exacerbated by external threats which are perceived as looming large on the horizons by the Catholic diocese in Hong Kong. The Catholic Church has always been concerned that its schools and RME in particular would be marginalized due to the 1997 take-over by communist China (Tan, 2000). Cardinal Zen, the then bishop of Hong Kong, was already attentive to this concern when the new SAR government began to launch a series of educational reforms in 2000. In 2002 the government attempted to enact an ordinance to enhance the power and status of the management committee of individual schools by setting up the Incorporated Management Committee (IMC). The IMC was intended to replace the existing management committee. Its proposed role and power immediately became the focal point of contest and conflict between the diocese and the government. Cardinal Zen perceived the enactment of the new ordinance in 2004 in the following way: "the Government takes away the right of running schools from the school-sponsoring bodies, calling it decentralization, but, actually, it is decentralization of schools from the school-sponsoring bodies, to then centralize the schools under the absolute power of the Government" (Zen, 2011).

One of his major protests to such an attempt was that the ordinance was a breach of the Basic Law as the mini Constitution of Hong Kong after the 1997 reunion. Cardinal Zen accused that the new law would undermine the power of the Catholic diocese and a number of religious orders, as sponsoring bodies of nearly 300 schools, to control their schools. A key concern was that, sooner or later, even the vision and mission of Catholic schools with religious education at the core could be jeopardized. Thus, Cardinal Zen took the case to the court for judicial review. Yet, his appeal was eventually turned down by the Court of Final Appeal in 2011 and, as

a result, all Catholic schools are required to set up the IMC by the school year of 2014–2015. Although the Court also ruled that the right of giving religious instructions and organizing religious activities in these schools are protected by the Basic Law, Cardinal Zen claimed that the ordinance is part and parcel of a master design by the government to erode the enormous influence of the Christian churches over education in Hong Kong (Zen, 2011).

The belief of Cardinal Zen and his sympathizers was further consolidated by the Incident of National Education in the summer of 2012. The SAR government was not satisfied with the weak identification with their motherland among the young people even after Hong Kong has been returned to China for 15 years. It proposed to introduce national education as a compulsory and independent subject into the curriculum of all primary and secondary schools. This was a direct reversion of the long-standing policy of promoting civic and political education by a permeation approach. Strong accusations and suspicions of the government's attempt to launch communist indoctrination accumulated into large-scale parades and demonstrations from groups of parents, students and political activists. The Catholic Education Office also speculated whether the real intention of the curriculum move of the government was, in a long run, to establish the legitimacy of the communist ideology in school education at the expense of other faiths being taught in schools with religious background. It was thus decided that the existing religious education in their schools should be safeguarded by all efforts in the process of entertaining the government's request of promoting national education in case the new policy could get through. However, in face of huge opposition from the community, the government had to back down with its curriculum initiative eventually.

The mistrust of the SAR government after 1997 by the Catholic Church in Hong Kong should be understood in the context of the persistent hostile relationship between Vatican and Beijing since the communist take-over of China in 1949. Their rivalry over the question of who should be the legitimate and ultimate authorities to appoint Chinese bishops has continued to be a dragging and sensational issue. Cardinal Zen, a vocal critic of the Beijing regime, worries about the fate of the Catholic Church in mainland China. He also tends to understand the local educational policies of the new Hong Kong SAR government against such a backdrop of Vatican-Beijing rivalry (Zen, 2011). Moreover, many clergy in Hong Kong or their relatives in the mainland have suffered severe personal persecutions due to their Christian faith in the last 60 years. It is thus difficult to dispel their nightmare that the communist regime in Beijing will try every means to get rid of all Christian schools and their religious education sooner or later. Any discussion over the future of religious education in the Catholic schools in Hong Kong has to take into consideration the factor of the political dominance of the sovereign power which is antireligious in its ideology.

However, from an optimistic perspective, the Hong Kong SAR is promised by Beijing to be ruled according to the formula of "one country, two systems" and "high degree of autonomy" for a period of 50 years after 1997. It is written into the Basic Law that religious education in school is protected from political interferences from the outside. Thus, as long as the judiciary in Hong Kong which is a highly

respected institution will continue to be independent and capable of upholding the rule of the law, the prospects of religious education need not necessarily be dim and gloomy as speculated. The future will also hinge upon, to a large extent, the courage and determination of the Church with numerous followers who are leaders in various fields of society to stand firm to defend its legitimate and legal rights.

These perceived external threats have prompted the diocese to safeguard and consolidate the orthodoxy and prominence of Catholic values in school life, although values of other schools of thought would still be mentioned in the school curriculum to honour the educational principle of pluralism. It is repeatedly argued by the diocese authorities that it is both the legitimate right and moral obligation for Catholic schools to offer Catholic education to students who choose to study there, although most of them are non-Catholic. Thus, as a response to the IMC challenge, five core Catholic values (truth, life, justice, family and love) are deliberately written into the new constitution of all Catholic schools with IMC set-up. Moreover, the school leaders are asked by the diocese to promote these core values with great strength by a whole-school approach, that is, through RME as an independent and compulsory subject, other formal school subjects and informal school programmes and activities. This can be understood as a pre-emptive and proactive strategy adopted by the Church to combat the perceived imminent threats.

In view of the fact that all teachers in school are expected to help promote the core values and yet most of them are non-Catholic knowing little about the Catholic perspective of these values, the diocese is aware of the need to support them with appropriate resource materials and professional development programmes. For example, the Catholic Education Office is planning to enhance the power, status and competence of the Religious Education Coordinator in every Catholic school to ensure that the person in the post can be equipped with adequate expertise on the Church doctrines and teachings in order to serve as a gatekeeper on the quality of the RME curriculum as well as a resource person to lend professional support to other colleagues in need.

Conclusion

This chapter has depicted the shifts in focus of and approach to RME in the Catholic schools over the last five decades. The main trends of the story are broadly in line with the experience in Australia, although the shifts and turns of the development in Hong Kong have been much less theoretically driven (Buchanan, 2006a, 2006b, 2006c). The aim of RME has shifted obviously from converting students in the 1960s to "learning from" the teachings of Jesus by students (Grimmitt, 1987) in 2010s. Moreover, it becomes generally accepted that in any RME programme there should be integration between life and faith. Biblical teachings should be appropriated by learners to shed light on their own personal experience if RME is to be meaningful and relevant to their lives. The series of textbooks published by the RME Centre to implement the 2006 RME Curriculum is the latest attempt to promote religious education along such a line of argument.

Over the last five decades, the professionalism of RME teachers in Catholic schools has still been a key issue of concern of the diocesan authorities of Hong Kong. The situation has not improved much till now (Chan, 1990; Lam, 1997). As teachers are the key to the fate of any planned curriculum at its implemented stage, such a discrepancy has seriously constrained the development of religious education inside the school, while challenges from the outside such as unfavourable educational policies imposed by the SAR government could also undermine the status quo of this curriculum area so cherished by the Catholic Church.

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Chapter 12
Contemporary Engagements and Challenges for Catholic Religious Education in South East Asia

Rito Baring and Rebecca G. Cacho

Introduction

The dramatic transition of Roman Catholic presence from the North, or the so-called Western world, to the South (mostly developing nations) brings forth some implications for the universal presence of the church and its missionary mandate. In this light, the mark of Catholicity articulated in the Second Vatican Council places Catholic education at the forefront of new evangelization activities in many developing nations (Chambers, 2012). What should this mean for Catholic Religious Education in the Southeast Asian context? After centuries of Catholic missionary work, especially in educational institutions established in this part of the globe, has Catholic education thrived or diminished in its intended mission?

A substantial number of relevant literature deal with a regional "understanding" of Christian praxis in general (Thoppil, 2005; Yung, 2003) rather than with the practical aspects of Catholic education that consider the historical and cultural realities of the people being evangelized. More than anything else, attempts at understanding the Christian faith through contextualization in local churches pose a challenge to Catholic educators to identify new areas of engagement, rethink their pedagogies, and respond to the signs of the time without losing sight of the traditions which are characteristic of the Catholic faith (Bevans & Shroeder, 2004). Meaningful formation of the people has become more complex as it hopes to provide relevant and mature education (Riley & Danner-McDonald, 2013) in lieu of the

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principles of the Catholic curricula (see, for instance, Davis & Franchi, 2013). Catholic education in Southeast Asia needs continuous analysis, assessments, and revisions if authentic development is being envisioned. This will require careful attention to key experiential engagements of people in the region through a cultural-historical analysis without disregarding the wisdom culled in Catholic documents that may guide educators in their ability to show how religious propositions in general remain pertinent in postcolonial Southeast Asian societies. To have a more comprehensive view on the persistence of religious education in Southeast Asia, there is a need to consider the impact of the "religious socialization" (Vermeer, 2010, p. 105) process of people, played in part by Catholic mission schools both then and now.

Religion and Human Development in Southeast Asia

The Southeast Asian region covers ten member state signatories to a regional political agreement signed on August 8, 1967, in Thailand. These include the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Brunei Darussalam, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, and Cambodia. Although not a signatory state, Timor-Leste, a former Indonesian territory that gained independence recently, is included to complete the list of nations located in the region. A simple grouping of these states according to the leading religions in their country will give us a glimpse of the primary orientation of each state. Timor-Leste and the Philippines share a predominantly Roman Catholic population in their territories, while Indonesia, Brunei Darussalam, and Malaysia are dominated by Islamic faith. The rest are influenced by a Hindu-Buddhist mix. Southeast Asia in this respect is primarily shaped by non-Christian cultures. The fundamental challenge to Catholic education is the lack of space and support to establish schools in these countries that limit or reject its inception.

Because Southeast Asian history essentially includes colonial and postcolonial experiences, there is a need to interpret it from a rich "variety of history/culture and decolonization" (Cook, 2007, p. 41). Schools which were established by missionaries provided religious education and academic formation to people who embraced the Christian faith. These Catholic schools provided advancement in secular knowledge (Chee, 1981) particularly in the natural sciences via religious instruction. Contrary to perspectives that criticize religion as "anti-modern," history says otherwise. Catholic schools in the region are regarded as excellent institutions towards modernization (Goh, 2005). This view is in contrast to perceptions which deem that traditional education provided by local non-Catholic traditions "offer little support for the modernization process" (Von der Mehden, 1986, p. 134).

It is notable that many of the missionaries who initially brought the Catholic faith to the natives in coastal areas of Southeast Asia were primarily influenced by the rise of humanism in Europe (a philosophy that gives premium to the dignity of human beings above all) as they provided education to the converts. In spite of their efforts, however, they were considered invaders not evangelizers, hence limiting the

reception of the Catholic faith or even rejecting it (Bevans & Shroeder, 2004). The tension generated by this scenario continues to challenge the spirit of Catholic educators who have to grapple with a highly diverse religious situation in their schools (Chambers, 2012), isolated acts of hostility, and lack of mutual respect among members of different religions who are enrolled in Catholic schools (http://www.un.org/).

Despite such conflicts and pluralistic contexts, Catholic education continually aims at "the formation of the human person … and of the good of the societies of which, as a man, he is a member" (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Gravissimum Educationis*, para. 1). In particular, Catholic education as evident in the schools and educational institutions in Southeast Asia commits itself to the total formation of their students. Besides the secular considerations, the character and spiritual development of individuals are always embedded in their curricula which may be perused in their vision, mission, and goals. Since the onset of Vatican II, the church has always enjoined Catholics to contribute to the well-being of societies (see Second Vatican Council, 1965b, *Gaudium et Spes* and Second Vatican Council, 1964, *Lumen Gentium*). This means that education must be marked by a distinct Catholic character, namely, a vision of the kingdom of God, promotion of human rights and dignity, a good community life, education for social transformation, and a witness to a life of truth, justice, and harmony.

Just most recently, Pope Francis (2014) reiterated that: "Catholic educational institutions offer to all an approach to education that has its aim the full development of the person, which responds to the right of every person to access knowledge." Efforts to bring about better living conditions of people, especially to the poor and the disinherited members of societies, have been a primary concern in the advocacies and projects of Catholic schools, whose concern is distinct to their educational thrust and is akin to their Catholic identity. Thus, a mandate to work for social transformation is inseparable from their preaching of the Gospel (Synod of Bishops, 1971, *Justice in the World*). The Catholic schools then, through education, contributed not only to the development of deeply religious people but also played a key role in the building up of certain nationalist movements such as in Burma and in the Philippines where "ideological focus and leadership" were developed among the people (Cooley, 1968, p. 44; Von der Mehden, 1986, p. 154).

Key Experiential Engagements in the Region

Experiential engagements in this context refer to people's dominant cultural, historical, and religious experiences that impact upon their lifestyle, beliefs, and aspirations. An exhaustive list may be ideal for a Southeast Asian review of these engagements, but only a selection is included with respect to Catholic education, namely, the state of religious and ethnic diversity vis-a-vis religiosity, justice, and peace and the contemporary shifts in pedagogies in which Catholic educators are challenged to adapt.

Cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversities are fundamental to people's varied engagements. From these aspects of multiplicity, the Southeast Asian brand of religiosity is colorfully interlaced with culture. This can be observed in ritual observances and beliefs in a divine being. This embedding of religiosity in the present cultural life of people succinctly corroborates Peter Berger's observation that contemporary societies do not actually lean so much on secularity but rather on "explosive, pervasive religiosity" (Berger, 2007, p. 37) seen in a pluralized condition. Asian scholarship generally correlates with this observation when it sees how varied forms of religious expressions are manifested in the region (Fredericks, 2004; Kroeger, 1998). The most popular recourse of religious, political, and cultural institutions to this state of diversity is dialogue (Chia, 2003). It is conducted to address interfaith, intercultural, and peace objectives (Baring, 2010b, 2011; Cartledge & Cheetham, 2011). Phan's (2004) theological idea of interreligious witnessing sheds light on how this natural religious orientation of Asians leads to a commitment towards dialogue and peaceful coexistence in communities such as schools. These approaches to plurality are sustained by a distinct Asian trait where reality is appreciated as a balance of opposing forces and elements. The balance of divergent forces popularized by the Chinese concept "yin and yang" reflects the harmonizing Southeast Asian disposition towards varied cultural and religious manifestations.

Engagements in peace and dialogue therefore are a fitting opportunity where this disposition towards order and synchronization is nurtured despite cultural differences (Baring, 2010b, 2011). From the mainstream of Catholic education, the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (First FABC Plenary Assembly, 1974) issued guidelines for interreligious dialogue in Asia synthesized in three strands, dialogue with the poor, the cultures, and the religions of Asia. More specifically, prophetic dialogue must be emphasized in Catholic schools as they educate the young about the essence of the Christian faith in a diversified society exacerbated by modernization (de Mesa & Cacho, 2012).

In this light, religious education reforms are bent towards new modes of integration, enculturation, and witnessing schemes (Tirimanna, 2011). A case in point is the Christian witness of Jesuit missionaries in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, at the heart of Buddhist communities. A 1996 incident involved a young Jesuit, Richard Michael "Richie" Fernando, who died while attempting to stop a young Khmer student from detonating a grenade inside a building. Both of them died. Riche's heroism communicated an intensely positive impression among Cambodians who knew him. Christian education in the region drew inspiration from this experience through inclusive strategies where a new mode of presence and witnessing in the learning environment has become a shared concern among Catholics and Protestants alike (Wood, 2002).

The human rights issue is another key experience. Both the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Catholic Social Doctrines articulate the inviolable rights of people by virtue of their dignity (John XXIII, *Pacem in Terris*, 1963 par. 9). While the social encyclicals place human rights within the context of justice and peace, the overall appreciation of human life is not divorced from these rights. The popular postcolonial struggle resonates with these declarations in

the fight against harsh economic conditions, inadequate social services, corruption, poverty, and equity (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*, 1967). Catholic schools address these concerns by providing formal instruction and opportunities for exposure to social realities where they could engage directly in efforts that bring about social change (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Gravissimum Educationis*, para. 8). Catholic education in this regard promotes intercultural communion (Gundara, 2000) while instilling the value of human life to provide opportunities for peace and justice (Javier, 2008).

There is common agreement in Western scholarship that the postsecular period accommodates the resuscitation of religion in the public sphere. For Southeast Asia, it is only an affirmation of an inherent religious orientation which historians of religions in the region admit. Instead of dwelling on the postsecular shift however, one should focus on the "contemporary shifts" which may be responsible for the formation of new attitudes. These are the transitions that affected the religious attitudes or lifestyles of people in postmodern period. One of these transitions essentially describes religious transformations due to widespread media consumption (Nielsen, 2012). There is an increasing patronage of local television programs and narratives for primetime mass media productions in Asia (Baring, 2013a, 2013b). In the works of Kitiarsa (2008), he observes that this has raised the stakes for the possible commodification of religions in Asia. Because of the powerful influence of mass media in the development of the youth, Catholic educators have been called by the church to use mass media towards a more effective evangelization of the members of the Catholic Church (Second Vatican Council, 1963, *Inter Mirifica;* Pontifical Council for Social Communication, 1992, *Aetatis Novae*).

Another notable change is the movement towards personal spirituality from institutionalized religious observances of rituals. Spirituality in this sense underscores the personal privatized forms of religious belief as opposed to religiosity, which generally refers to observance of institutionalized belief manifested in the ritual practices of a church. Scholars attest to the prevalence of new spiritualities over institutional religious observances (Davie, 1994; Overstreet, 2010). The decline in the youth's adherence to beliefs and institutional affiliations may be due to the reconfigurations of their religiosity which are unconventional in form and style. Current discussions on youth religiosity and spirituality seem to point out that the inner disposition of the young can in fact accommodate an intricate combination of polarized worldviews. The concepts of "un-churched" or the de-traditionalized (Boeve, 2005) and privatized spirituality (Ogena, 1999, p. 87) introduce this apparent orientation towards lack of participation or indifference to communal worship (such as the Sunday mass) and social action on justice issues. But over and above this seeming apathy to worship services and praxis of the faith, an atmosphere of deference to church authority has remarkably persisted in youth's consciousness especially when the leader has gained integrity and moral ascendancy in the religious community. Meaningfulness and relevance seem to be the norm by which religious education is gauged by the youth in the schools they are enrolled in.

Catholic Education in Southeast Asia: Challenges

With the initial study of the changes in South East Asian societies, Catholic education needs to identify and respond to the challenges of diversity, national policies, faith-based instruction, new media technologies, justice and peace, and contemporary articulations of youth attitudes. Considering these diverse contexts, Catholic education requires new trends, innovations, and opportunities for a more effective Christian formation.

The question posed by ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversities highlights the issue of equity in opportunities for religious education. When one religious tradition dominates, minority religions are pushed to the margins. This intense interreligious occurrence places religious and intercultural coexistence in a position of either competition or dialogue and cooperation. In the Philippines however, free religious exercise is legally accepted and supported by the government. Since 1990, religious education has been prescribed as necessary in the formation of values of Filipino children as stipulated in the Constitution. This is further reinforced in 2009 through the Department of Education when it issued a Memorandum order no. 49 which reiterated the guidelines to be followed in teaching religion to students in basic education (Lapuz, 2009).

Likewise, thousands of Vietnamese express gratitude to the Catholic education they received from Catholic institutions because they were not only given quality education but were also accorded an opportunity to develop their character into something better (Thong, 2008). Many Catholic schools in East Asia are recognized to be leaders in different fields of education which highlights the holistic brand of education envisioned by Catholics.

Even when Catholic schools are without government subsidies, they continue to form competent and skilled professionals. This commitment by Catholic schools is warmly received by their graduates with a sense of joy and respect. The fundamental purpose of Catholic education is to pursue knowledge not as a means towards purely material gains but as a means to "serve others" (Pope John Paul II, 1990, *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*, para. 56). In the Philippines, religious education is given in primary and secondary schools in private and government learning institutions, while the tertiary government institutions only provide secular academic programs. Nonsectarian tertiary schools in the Philippines allow the religious formation of students through campus ministry services provided by volunteers from religious congregations or the local churches. While the problem in territories where Catholicism is dominant is a shortage of competent catechists that provide religious instruction to children (Baring, 2010a; Cooley, 1968, p. 116), in countries where Christianity is a minority, the more pressing concern is adult religious education for those who converted to the Catholic faith (Thong, 2008).

Moreover, since South East Asia is highly multireligious, Catholicism is confronted with a challenge on how to be respectful of religious differences found in Catholic schools. Here, it may be construed that Catholic education has to focus more on the promotion of human values and the development of human life as necessary

aspects of evangelization in society rather than campaign for new converts in Catholic schools (Second Vatican Council, 1965a; *Gravissimum Educationis*, para. 8). Hence, it will have to address culture, in all its variedness, as a factor in the learning process. This approach with respect to culture and religions reflects education's response to diversity in intercultural (Keast, 2007) or multicultural societies (De Vita, 2001). Religious education should embark on intercultural and dialogical approaches which offer engagements that are mindful of these realities (Jackson, 2005).

The third challenge is media influence. The intense reception given to new media has made religious education authorities seriously consider the use of media applications in instruction or evangelization. In fact, most Catholic schools are now using the Internet to be accessible and to access their clients or students. Religious educators widely use the different forms of media to make their classroom interactions, lectures, and discussions more up-to-date and creative. Today, industry practices (Kohn, 1992) and religious educational pedagogies (Ellis & Fouts, 1997) are moving towards cooperative learning models as a new measure of student excellence or competence. This move favours Catholic education because it values communion and solidarity as central ideals around which learning is designed. Another challenge generated by new media influence is the rise of undesirable character traits inimical to learning. There is a growing admission that media influences character formation (Lanuza, 2003). However, the obsession of young new media users with virtual realities weakens their appreciation of the natural world and the demands of real life today. Religious education strictly considers strategies to develop socially acceptable behaviour by providing media education (Araneta-de Leon, 2002).

The huge challenge posed by regional diversity and limited access to basic goods and services also makes human rights education a fundamental Catholic commitment. There is the challenge to make sense of law enforcement and order in poverty-stricken communities. Hence, Catholic education is called to design community-based learning modules to help students rediscover the profound value of the human person. The fundamental task of Catholic education towards this recovery is also meant to address the growing restlessness of people that disregard human dignity and rights of persons. Being so, the Catholic Church, whose primary instrument in Southeast Asian engagement is education, finds this as an urgent educative task (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Gravissimum Educationis*, para. 2).

Finally, there is the challenge posed by the emerging culture of nonconformity and relativism in gauging moral issues among the youth. The transition in attitudes can be observed in their growing individualistic and relative appreciation of reality. For example, in the Philippines, this uncertain perception of the young is conspicuously manifested in their indecisive moral position towards particular issues like multiple sex partners, heavy gambling, hazing, and use of drugs (Alan Guttmacher Institute, 2007). This faltering disposition is thought of as a demonstration of a change in youth's moral behaviour that reflects a shift "from moral principles to social acceptance" brought about by peer pressure (Ogena, 1999, p. 93). A study conducted in Northern Thailand revealed that many 17–20-year-old adolescents have had relations with multiple sexual partners or have experienced sexual

relationships without an established marital commitment (Tangmunkongvorakul, Carmichael, Banwell, Utomo, & Sleigh, 2011). Such scenario presents a challenge for Catholic schools to assert its beliefs and value system which are in contrast with the new culture among the youth under their jurisdiction (Komolmas, 2007).

Conclusion

Catholic education in places where Christianity is a minority has demonstrated the viability of Christian formation through the Catholic schools. As for territories where Catholics are in the majority, the challenge raised for Catholic schools is "to become the locus of encounter with Christ. These schools are charged with proclaiming the fundamental truths in catechesis so that Catholic education is regarded not only as 'informative' but also as 'performative' in orientation, hence creative and life-changing in its impact" (Palma, 2012).

These present forms of engagement in religious education require some pedagogical shifts in teaching religion. The classical way of teaching the faith through catechism requires a shift to adult education where people are able to think critically and decide more wisely for themselves on issues affecting their lives. Instead of servile obedience, personal commitment to the faith may be strengthened or sustained among the youth. Sensitivity to the varied expressions of religiosity in South East Asia may require a more inclusive religious education where all Asian religions are given equal space for study and practice even in the school setting. Thus, redesigning curricula and providing programs and opportunities for interreligious dialogue are ideal in religious education.

Respect for the many cultures prevalent in this region may be concretised in Catholic schools as they make use of the language, traditions, local symbols, and stories of the people to reappropriate their faith and respond to the issues of justice and peace which all developing countries experience (such as poverty, ecological crisis, corruption in public office). The greatest challenge resulting from all these contemporary engagements is how to strike a balance between the multicultural and multireligious contexts on the one hand and on the other the universal vision of Catholic education to bring about authentic formation of students called in the message of salvation proclaimed by Christ.

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Chapter 13
Aren't They Too Young? The Challenge of Hermeneutical and Interreligious Learning in Catholic Religious Education: A Flemish Perspective

Annemie Dillen

Introduction

One of the contemporary discussions in Flanders (Belgium) concerning religious education centres around the question of how much diversity children can cope with. Do they first have to be initiated into one religion, particularly the Catholic one, before they can be brought into contact with other religions? Is interreligious education preferable in a de-traditionalised country where most children do not know a lot about Catholicism? In this chapter, it will be argued that, both on theological and on pedagogical grounds, it is important to take children seriously as agents and as subjects who are not just empty vessels.

The relevance or desirability of interreligious learning in Catholic Religious Education classes is debatable both within the secular society and within church and religious educational contexts. Some atheistic philosophers and politicians prefer a more 'neutral' overview of different religions and react against the longstanding system of confessional religious education within Flemish schools. They would especially suggest introducing a more general, neutral course in the final two years of secondary education (ages 17 and 18) instead of Catholic Religious Education (Loobuyck et al., 2011), based on the idea that adolescents should be helped in taking decisions themselves (see also Dillen, 2014). Others suggest that instead of two hours of confessional religious education a week, one hour should be dedicated to 'comparative religion' (De Morgen, 2011). Some Catholics support this approach because they consider it to be an opportunity to make Catholic religion education even more confessional. However, others have rejected this proposal, because Catholic Religious Education itself is already open for other religions and because

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dealing with other religions (traditions) and persons from other religions within a confessional setting gives the opportunity to deepen one's own tradition and to integrate dialogue as a genuine part of religious learning. They also argue that neutral religious education is not possible. Today confessional religious education, including an interreligious approach, is formally recognised in the curriculum for secondary Catholic Religious Education. The interreligious approach is closely linked to the hermeneutical-communicative approach, which is also the model used for primary education (Pollefeyt, 2008). Nevertheless, some teachers and religious educators prefer a model where there is first 'initiation' or 'socialisation' and only afterwards, when children are older, dialogue and more interreligious learning. In this chapter, I will argue why interreligious learning from the very beginning is possible and relevant. In this way, I will give an answer to the scepticism against religious education from both an atheist and a traditional, more 'conservative' Catholic perspective.

By providing arguments for interreligious learning for young children, based on an analysis of images of children, I also support the model that is presented by my colleagues as the ideal 'Catholic school', namely, a 'dialogue school'. The Flemish theologian Didier Pollefeyt developed a model for research on the Catholic identity of schools, used mainly in Australian and Flemish (Belgian) contexts (Pollefeyt & Bouwens, 2010, 2014). The 'dialogue school' is one important aspect in this broader research on Catholic identity of schools. It refers to the openness of a school for people with various religious and philosophical backgrounds. The dialogue school stimulates open encounters and explicit exchanges about religious issues, between all members of the school, in all their variety. It recognises diversity in religious issues and does not want to hide this diversity in name of a so-called Catholic identity. At the same time, the Catholic identity is not hidden. Being Catholic and being open for other religions is possible as an institutional option, which we call a 'dialogue school'. When I argue in this text for forms of interreligious dialogue for children, it becomes clear that the image of children as competent subjects will be a condition for the dialogue school.

Questions About Interreligious Learning and Children

Interreligious learning with children seems to be quite impossible for many people. Are children able to understand different religious perspectives? Is it desirable to confront children with different religious and philosophical perspectives? In order to help children with the appropriation of one perspective, might it seem better that they are first initiated in one specific religion?

Dialogue is stimulated when the different partners have their own position and are aware of this position. The model of the 'dialogue school' is based upon an empirical typology as developed by the Dutch researchers Hermans and Van Vuygt (1997, pp. 5–27) and Ter Horst (1995, pp. 63–75). Hence, interreligious dialogue in general might profit from partners that are stimulated to develop their own religious

identity. This general position is however not without further questions. How can their 'own identity' best be developed? Why do children need to develop such a religious identity that includes openness for the other? Do children under 12 need religious education that includes an introduction to various religious traditions? To address these questions, an exploration of the different images of children, as they are discussed in pedagogical and theological literature, will be undertaken and will focus on two classical ideas about children, namely, the idea of children as persons (1) 'to be socialised' and (2) 'to be protected'. The images are closely interrelated and these images need to be confronted with the critique that acknowledges children as 'not-yet-adults'. The image of children portrayed here is as competent subjects rather than as 'not-yet-adults'. These images of children are related to the discussion about interreligious learning with children. It is not the intention of this chapter to deal extensively with images of children but to enrich the discussion about interreligious learning with the perspective of child images (for a longer discussion about this topic, see Dillen, 2005).

Three Images of Children and Childhood Education

Three images of children and their education that enable different positions in the debate on interreligious learning are discussed in this section and consider the paradigm of 'socialisation' (1), protection (2) and participation with the connotation of active involvement, voice and 'having a say' (3).

Socialisation

Among others, the famous American theological ethicist Stanley Hauerwas defends the socialisation model. He points out the relevance of traditions and initiation and socialisation of children in a certain narrative tradition (Hauerwas, 1981, p. 169). The narrative Christian tradition contains a critique on the liberal market economy, where individualism and economic profit are central. In the liberal market economy, children are instrumentalised for the economic profit of adults. The child, as such, is not as important as the economic profit it brings for producers and salesmen. An example can be found in advertisements, which are either directed to children as consumers or present children in a particular way in order to persuade adults to buy the products that are advertised. Children might also be used for entertainment, as is the case in programmes such as 'Supernanny', where a so-called educational aim is disguising a market- and profit-oriented approach of children and families. Communitarians, like Hauerwas, consider a community approach as an alternative for this market-oriented approach of children.

The aim of the education of children is then not so much the nurturing of autonomy, health, competitiveness or self-actualisation, which are aims that are

commonly presented in certain therapeutic and pedagogical theories. This socialisation paradigm, rather, considers education as much more than teaching ethical values and practices; it requires an initiation in a moral community.

Religious education, in the contemporary Western society, is often viewed as a form of moral education. The socialisation paradigm goes further in terms of the aim of religious education. Children should be initiated in familial and cultural values and be initiated as responsible members of specific living communities (Hauerwas, 1981, p. 166). This way of looking at children can be found in various Catholic texts and communities as well.

Children are then mainly seen as 'not-yet-adults'. The aim of education is then to let children experience how the adult world functions and to help them to obtain a place in the adult world. Participation means their being a member of a broader community. This approach seems to have only limited space for interreligious learning, expect for the idea that the initiation in the Christian religion might be an initiation in a religion that teaches peace and dialogue. Children might be told to be tolerant with those who profess other faiths. Real dialogue, however, seems to be reserved for those who are more fully initiated in the community.

Protection

Next to the paradigm of socialisation, we distinguish the paradigm of 'protection'. This approach considers children mainly as 'protected persons', because they are often victims of dangerous situations, such as violence or poverty. This approach is closely connected to the socialisation paradigm, as the necessity of socialisation is often defended on the basis of protection of children (Hemrica, 2004).

The Catholic German theologian Albert Biesinger defended the right of children to learn to know God. He used the expression '*Kinder nicht um Gott betrügen*', which means, children may not be 'kept away' from God. Children always get a certain philosophical or religious life view, and when this is mainly determined by performance, money, television, etc., something very valuable is left out of their education (Biesinger, 1999, p. 88). The underlying view is that faith in God gives people, also children, a certain critical assertiveness. This is a main reason to defend the 'right' of children to religion. Children need religion as an alternative for the messages given by secular society, especially also by advertisements. Biesinger perceives a religion that gives attention to the 'sacred' and to 'transcendence' to be very important and argues that religion is not only for adults but also for children and furthermore, in the light of this perception, parishes should adapt their liturgical gatherings in order to be open for children (Biesinger, 1999, p. 89).

Within this 'protection' model, the idea that children may not be totally free is defended. It is not conceivable to give children the impression that they need to find their own religion. Children need accompaniment. They need examples and people

who have a close relation with them, who guide them in important matters in life, such as world views and religion. On the basis of this model, one could say that those who propose that children have to taste a piece of everything, in order to be able to make their own choice later on, do not really take either children or religion very seriously.

When religion is presented as a fully free and individual choice, one can conclude that it is unimportant which religion one chooses. The claim of particularity, linked to a religion such as Christianity, is then neglected. Religions can be presented as something that does not ask for direct engagement. However, even when parents or teachers or policy makers consider religion as a purely individual choice, they are not really neutral. If religion is unimportant for them, they transmit this attitude, consciously or unconsciously, to their children. The possibility that children will experience religion as something valuable, and that they will deepen religion in order to come to a personal 'choice', is rather limited. Another possibility is that parents or teachers feel themselves in a certain way connected with a certain religion. Religion is then not just an arbitrary object of choice. They will more or less explicitly guide their children in a certain direction, because their children perceive them as related with a certain religion. Adults who take the first option (so-called freedom) will also express their view, which is however coloured by an unqualified vision on the future: 'the future will show what is right'. This seems closely related to 'indifference'.

A position where all choices are (theoretically) open does not really help children to make choices, however. One often hears the metaphor of learning a language in relation to learning a religion. Biesinger (1998) wrote: 'Based on the anxiety that a child will say after ten years that he or she does not want to learn Dutch, but prefers to learn Russian, parents do not avoid to speak their own mother tongue at home' (p. 86). This metaphor functions as an argument for confessional religious education of children, in view of caring for and protecting children.

However, what does this metaphor and the image of children as vulnerable and in need of protection say about interreligious learning? Learning different languages at the same time is possible, when it is initiated at home and consequently continued. Something similar might be possible in religiously mixed parenthood situations. We speak here about religious education. The similarity is then the discussion about when to introduce a foreign language in formal school education. In the Belgian context some will answer at the age of 5 or 7, others only at the age of 11 or later.

On the basis of the protection paradigm and the image of a child as vulnerable, many will argue that interreligious learning can best start later in childhood (after 11). Roebben (2013, 144) refers here to educators 'who themselves have been brought up in a time of a linear-chronological education and who therefore assume that one first needs to feel at "home" somewhere before one can engage oneself in a conversation "outdoors"'.

It might be that children are overburdened when they are confronted with too many perspectives at a very young age. Young children cannot make their own conscious choices about complex themes such as religion – that is at least what is held on the basis of the 'protection' model. Therefore, a need for accompaniment, guidance and socialisation of children into one religion is necessary. Later on they can ask critical questions and compare with other religions.

Critical Perspectives on the Image of Children as Not-Yet-Adults, to Be Socialised and Protected

The models discussed, 'socialisation' and 'protection', start from a general image of children as very different from adults. Children are mainly considered on the basis of what they are not yet able to do in comparison with adults. After the general presentation of the two models above, some critical remarks on these images of children with the focus on 'initiation' or 'protection' are presented.

The sociological concept 'socialisation' is used to discuss the relation between adults and children, with the burden of responsibility on the adults. Children were – until recently – often considered as uncivilised people who had to learn the rules of society, to integrate and to socialise. This vision is based on a certain dualism: on the one hand society with its rules and institutions and on the other hand, the individual, who has to be cultivated by society (Van den Bergh, 1998). Children were considered as 'naturally' unsocialised people.

The concept of socialisation is criticised more and more, as children are presented as incompetent, not responsible and not-yet-adults. They are presented as merely passive objects of socialisation. They are 'persons-in-the-making' and thus pedagogical projects. Children are approached from a 'deficit' model, from what they are lacking or from what is 'not-yet-there', more than on the basis of the competencies of children (Van den Bergh, 1998). Education and socialisation are merely important for the future and not so much for the children themselves.

This image of children is not only something from the past. It can be found in contemporary literature, practices and church documents. An example of this is *Familiaris Consortio* where Pope John Paul II (1981) speaks about children as 'the springtime of life, the anticipation of the future history of each of our present earthly homelands'. He continues:

> No country on earth, no political system can think of its own future otherwise than through the image of these new generations that will receive from their parents the manifold heritage of values, duties and aspirations of the nation to which they belong and of the whole human family. (para. 26)

Likewise, in recent ecclesial documents the focus is on education or protection of children (Pontifical Council on the Family, 2002).

On the other hand we find another approach where children are understood to be competent subjects. This may be found in frequent recent pedagogical and

sociological literature (Cannella, 1997; James & Prout, 1990; Vanobbergen, 2001) and also in theological essays and books (Timmers-Huigens, 2002; Miller-McLemore, 2003).

Children as Competent Subjects

The image of children that is developed below presents children as competent subjects. The central question is not 'how can children best be initiated and socialised in a narrative community?' or 'how can society prevent children from becoming the victim of many new evolutions?', but 'how can children receive the opportunity to flourish and use their own competencies?'

This image presents children as they are here and now, with their own competencies, knowledge, wisdom and experiences. The behaviour of children is considered less on the basis of the next phase, as a stop 'on the road to something else', and rather more as an expression of the individual personality and experiences of children, separating the growth from the aim. Classical stage models in developmental psychology are criticised on the basis of this thinking.

Traditionally one thinks that when a child is little, it is egocentric (Fowler, 1981). Later, the child will develop naturally, following the 'nature of things' or stimulated by others. The aim seems to be clear. In line with postmodern culture, these universalistic beliefs of developmental psychological schemes are questioned. Critics state that these theories are based on a predetermined view. Koops (1997) indicated that recent developmental psychologists are developing further research about possibilities of communication with young children, as thinking in stages, in terms of what children are not yet able to do, diminishes the opportunities for communication and in fact 'many excellent researchers in developmental psychology end up as experts in babies' (p. 50). Scientists are discovering that babies and small children have at their disposal more competencies than we usually associate with them. Children are considered to be capable of cognitive operations such as the development of concepts, symbolic representation and abstraction. Koops argued that young children are not so fundamentally different from adults concerning the structure of their thoughts. At the age of 3, they can distinguish between mental and physical worlds. 'If they are told a story about a boy who possesses a dog and a boy who thinks about a dog, three-year-olds give a right answer on the question of which dog can be touched and cuddled and which may not' (p. 52). Toddlers can understand that people react on the basis of their own subjective ideas and not so much on the basis of facts (Koops & Meerum Terwogt, 1994; Rieffe, Koops, & Meerum Terwogt, 1996). On the basis of simple tests, it is found that children are able to do much more than we usually think (Dillen, 2007).

With the image of children as 'competent subjects', it is perceived that children possess more competencies than we usually think, if they only have the opportunity to express them. The concept 'subject' means that a child is not only a passive object to be cared for, but that he or she can take up their own responsibilities in

many cases, of course within certain boundaries, taking into account the development of children. Taking children seriously as they are now, and not only as who they should be in the future, means recognising the personhood of children as a valuable aim and not only as human social capital. This recognition will improve the sense of dignity of children.

Consequences of Considering Children as Competent Subjects for Religious Education

This vision of children as competent subjects, and the critique on the monolithic focus on socialisation, has stimulated new accents in the research on religious education. Especially church leaders have been searching for ways in which children can best be socialised, in view of internalisation of fixed contents and clear aspects of a religious tradition (Synod of Bishops, 2012). The term 'faith transmission' can however be put under discussion. 'Faith communication' and 'religious education' are concepts that take dialogue much more seriously (Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003). Children as active participants are taken more seriously. Some scholars in religious education consider children as a more central group and do not only consider them from the perspective of their relations with adults (see, for instance, most articles in the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* or in the *Jahrbuch für Kindertheologie*). The starting point is that children themselves have a vision on faith and life. They are not spiritually incompetent (Hyde, 2008). Children, of course, express faith in their own way, but this is not necessary less valuable than that of adults. If children play with visualisations of faith, if they dance when saying a prayer or use their own interpretations of biblical text, this is not necessarily 'wrong' or 'immature'. It is their own way of doing things. The individual 'theology' that children develop their own thinking and reasoning and religious questions is worth being studied. Children might also be a source of 'revelation'; they can awaken and deepen spiritual insights.

Schweitzer (2013) spoke about the right of children to religion. This implies that religious education is in favour of children and not so much in favour of the church. This vision is closely related to the two previous models, but there is a difference. Schweitzer defended the right to religion on the basis of the individual competencies of children, while in the other paradigms, the deficits and the threats to children are central. Religious education is important for the moment itself, not only for the future.

Speaking about initiation in a tradition only recognises children and the community if children get the opportunity to have a critically constructive participation in the community. The American ethicist John Wall (2004) wrote: 'Children need not just *initiation* into wider social stories, in which their roles and responsibilities

come to them already historically defined, but also the nurturance of active *capabilities* for weaving new and more expansive stories of their own' (p. 84). Within the Anglo-Saxon focus on 'children's spirituality' and the German focus on 'Kindertheologie' (child theology), it becomes clear that children have more competencies and capacities than one might assume on the basis of a unilateral initiation and socialisation paradigm. If these capacities are taken seriously, this is valuable both for the children and the religious community. Children can develop themselves, in critical confrontation with a frame that is offered. The religious community profits from children's participation because more members are actively contributing to the richness of the tradition. Children ask pertinent questions which lead adults to think about their own understanding. Initiation and interpretation go together under the condition that 'initiation' is not seen as a unidirectional process of transfer of adults to children but considered in an open, critical and multidirectional way.

The critical questioning of the religious narrative tradition is necessary when the ambiguity of reality is taken seriously. Religious traditions are not perfect and are coloured by human limitations. The initiation in a religious tradition and narrative community may not be considered as the aim of religious communication, without also stimulating a critical hermeneutical approach of the tradition. We can speak about the 'adventure of tradition' (Haers, 1999): the Christian tradition develops permanently and can never be considered as perfect. Such an open approach of tradition is also very important for religious education, certainly when it concerns the context of a school where the religious community is somehow less present than in contexts of parishes' catechesis.

When children are not considered as active subjects who have their own spiritual competencies rather than as 'not-yet-adults', interreligious learning is a real possibility. It is even preferable, as it helps children to deal with the religious diversity they will encounter in daily life, or with their actual questions, even at a very young age. On the basis of this image of children, there is no big gap between children and adults. Children can, as adults, learn from the interaction between religions.

Conclusion

Specific assumptions on the possibility and the value of interreligious learning with children go together, with specific ideas about who children are and what the aim of religious education might be. These ideas are influenced by theological, ethical and pedagogical assumptions. On the basis of a socialisation and protection vision of children, there is not much room for interreligious learning as an aim or method in religious education. The idea of children as competent subjects, however, supports the relevance of interreligious learning for children. This vision of children as

competent subjects gives an argument with which to criticise one aspect of the reluctance many people show when it concerns children and religious education.

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Chapter 14
Addressing Diversity and Individualism: The Contribution of Catholic Religious Education to the Educational Project of Catholic Schools in the Netherlands

Theo van der Zee

Introduction

A key challenge – perhaps the biggest challenge – of our times is diversity. Contemporary Western society is characterised by a great diversity of religions and worldviews (Jackson, 2004) and of the ideas, intentions, attitudes and behaviours that accompany them. Religious diversity is far from straightforward, for at least two reasons. The first of these is that people clearly find diversity extremely difficult to deal with. How do you go about living in a community with people who are different from you in many ways? The second reason is that religion is a slippery and problematic phenomenon for many people. Whereas a few decades ago some people thought that religion was set to disappear from the social scene, recent developments such as globalisation and immigration have made clear that religion is still a force to be reckoned with (Berger, 1999). The role of religion is far from clear-cut; in fact it is highly ambiguous. How do you go about living side by side with people who are different from you in an area that in today's world engenders tolerance and a sense of community on the one hand, but arouses conflict and alienation on the other? Diversity should however be understood in relation to individualism: the increasing tendency to take the individual as the source of ideas and action. It is not just that people are all different; they also seek recognition as unique individuals. This recognition has unmistakably led to greater levels of self-determination, autonomy and freedom in today's society than has ever been seen before. This is as true of religion and worldviews as of anything else: in Western societies they are increasingly seen as a matter of individual, voluntary choice (Beyer, 1994).

Increasing religious diversity and individualism raise questions about Catholic Religious Education: what is it based on and what is it aiming at? In Catholic

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schools, Catholic Religious Education isn't a stand-alone subject, but it is related to the whole of the Catholic educational project (see Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977, para. 50). The educational project reflects the educational task of every school not only to impart knowledge to its students but also to promote their development in personal terms (finding meaning in life, developing their talents) and in social terms (citizenship and social participation). Catholic schools aim to support students in their development as people and as citizens on the basis of the Catholic tradition. These schools offer their students activities related to religion, spirituality and the search for meaning in life to attain the formative goals. Religious education is therefore part and parcel of their educational project. By relating it to the educational project of Catholic schools, it is possible to get a more clear view on the way how Catholic Religious Education can meet the challenges posed by today's world, particularly those of diversity and individualism.

This chapter will investigate what people involved in Catholic schools in the Netherlands see as the role of religious education. In the Netherlands, Catholic schools are approximately one-third of all schools and are fully state funded. This examination of the educational project and what religious education contributes to it is part of a larger study on the identity or self-perception ascribed by staff, management, parents and students to their secondary school as a Catholic school. The larger study involves not only more Catholic schools, but also interventions to enhance a shared understanding of identity or self-perception.

The chapter is structured as follows: It explores the issue of religious education in Catholic schools in the current context of diversity and individualism. A brief overview of the research question and the method used is provided, followed by a presentation of the results in the light of the issues surrounding Catholic Religious Education and the educational project of Catholic schools.

Religious Education in the Context of Diversity and Individualism

An outline of key characteristics of Western society today, such as diversity and individualism, and consideration of their impact on religious education in Catholic schools is the focus of this section.

The term diversity refers to the fact that people differ in their convictions, their intentions, their attitudes and their behaviours. Religious and worldview-related diversity refers to the fact that people differ in their religious and worldview-related convictions, intentions, attitudes and behaviours because their strivings to aspire to fullness of life are anchored in different traditions and communities (Taylor, 2007). For centuries, Dutch society has been characterised by a religiously diverse population and was home to Protestants of various denominations, to Catholics, to Jews and to nonreligious humanists. However, in recent times religious and worldview-related diversity is seen as problematic. In the days of religious compartmentalisation, diversity could be 'channelled' through the various religious and philosophical 'pillars',

as the different denominations were called. That is no longer possible. Contemporary society does not leave people simply to live side by side; it demands almost constant interaction. People are continually – and seemingly unavoidably – thrown into contact with others who have different convictions, intentions, attitudes and behaviours. Globalisation has intensified this diversity because of the relatively fast and easy communication between countries and continents and the way we are confronted with a stream of contradictory ideas and values (Jackson, 2004).

In recent years, a great deal of attention has been paid in religious education at Catholic schools to coming to grips with religious diversity (Sterkens, 2001; van Eersel, 2011). Questions are posed such as: how can teachers help students see things from someone else's perspective? How can students be taught to keep an open mind towards others – even when they are surprised by them? How can teachers and students from diverse religious and worldview backgrounds keep communication open and constructive? Most of these questions relate to communication between teachers and students or among students. By communicating with each other as individuals from different religious backgrounds, students can develop communication skills which they will seriously need in a pluralistic society. The theory is that if students learn to communicate effectively among themselves, they will not only develop more understanding for other people, but will also be able to live more peaceably alongside them (Jackson, Miedema, Weisse, & Willaime, 2007; Sterkens, 2001). From this point of view, religious education makes an indisputable contribution to the creation of good citizens. The approach represents progress on at least two counts. First of all, it replaces comparative religious studies with an approach that emphasises communication across religions rather than learning to compare them. Objectives are formulated in terms of communication: 'Students are able to communicate their religious identity to others'. Secondly, an objectifying approach to education is exchanged for an approach that starts from the learning subject, i.e. the student. This means that the goal is not so much for the students to acquire a body of knowledge about religions and worldviews, as for them to be equipped to communicate with each other about their religious backgrounds and inspiration.

The question is, however, whether religious education along communicative lines adequately meets the needs of our times (van der Zee, 2012). This education tries to cope with diversity by teaching students communication skills. In my view, however, the approach fails to address another crucial development in contemporary Western society, namely, individualism. By individualism I mean the growing tendency to take the individual as the source of ideas and action: a societal trend that has an inevitable impact on education. From this perspective, schools are judged by their contribution to the degree of autonomy and freedom developed by the individual student. It is not surprising that the focus of many educational projects in schools lies on the personal development of the individual student. This is particularly true of religious education, where the emphasis has come to be placed on promoting the autonomy of the individual student. In other words, autonomy is seen more explicitly in individual terms. Since this has been the case, religious education has been expected to contribute primarily to the religious and worldview-related development of the autonomous individual student and not, as was

formerly the case, to the development of the student as a member of the church, let alone to the development of the church itself. Since the 1960s, the objectives formulated in Dutch curricula have been couched in terms of a personal religious identity. Religious development is seen primarily in individual terms. In an extreme form of individualism, society is seen exclusively as an extension of the individual, and the social system is only expressed in terms of the individual. This reduces a school to no more than the sum of the individual views and activities of its teachers, managers and other members of its community. This extreme version of individualism can be placed at one end of a spectrum with collectivism at the other end. For collectivism, only collective views and activities count: only what is believed and done together as a community. To navigate between the Scylla of extreme individualism and the Charybdis of collectivism requires an alternative approach: a participatory one.

The participatory approach aims to invite participants to make a contribution to a larger whole, whether a school, a neighbourhood or a society. The word 'invite' implies that there can be no question of coercion: this has to be a matter of freely chosen participation. Freely chosen, but not without commitment. Their contributions make participants genuine members of these larger wholes. Conversely too, the wholes are informed by what individual members contribute to them. The school, neighbourhood or society is therefore more than a collection of individual views and activities, although it cannot be understood without reference to these individual contributions. The participatory approach has its philosophical roots in Aristotle's philosophy of the parts and the whole (Aristotle, 1995) and its theological roots in the work of Tillich (1959).

Doing justice to individualism requires an approach to religious education which espouses communicative objectives not just for their own sake but also in relation to a greater whole. For Catholic schools, religious education is part of a larger educational project. By taking part in activities organised around religion, spirituality and the search for meaning, students can acquire relevant knowledge and skills which are formative to their development as people and as citizens (de Jong, 2007; Hermans, 2003). A participatory approach is more than a method, however, and it orients the ideas and activities of the participants to a larger whole. In this respect, educational activities do not exclusively target individual self-development, but are just as interested in the future development of the school, neighbourhood or wider community the participants belong to. Schools can realise these goals by placing the communicative objectives of education and training in the context of larger wholes. By orienting their activities in this way, schools position themselves as positively critical in a social system characterised by diversity and individualism.

The Research Question

Although societal trends call for a re-evaluation of the educational project and of religious education, in practice we see that schools have difficulty achieving this. Those involved in or around Catholic schools in the Netherlands are rarely engaged

in any discussion on their educational project. However, there are Catholic schools which are willing to review their educational project and religious education, because they want to be able to navigate their own course through the many and varied questions that come their way from the wider community (government, church and parents). These schools see themselves as facing a problem, but they do not know how to go about reviewing their situation and steering a course between extreme individualism and collectivism.

The schools which say they do want to undertake a review face an action-related issue. The issue is that the school wants to enter into the professional dialogue about its educational project and religious education but does not know how to go about it. Here, educational design research can help to generate the new knowledge and insights needed for an adequate response to the situation (van den Akker, Gravemeijer, McKenney, & Nieveen, 2006). The situation in this case calls for activities to be designed in which those involved communicate about the educational project of their Catholic school and what religious education contributes to it. The activities are based on the participatory approach at two levels: that of the communication about the educational project (those involved communicate about the school's objectives with a view to their own contribution to meeting them) and that of the educational project itself (those involved communicate with the students so they can learn to make their own contribution).

The way the substance of the educational project is seen is key to this chapter. The central research question is: *What do Catholic schools take to be their educational project and the contribution of Catholic Religious Education to it?* The educational project reflects the educational task of every school not only to impart knowledge to its students but also to promote their development in personal terms (finding meaning in life, developing their talents) and in social terms (citizenship and social participation). And, as has already been mentioned, religious education is seen as an educational field dealing with religious and spiritual themes. Catholic schools can realise Catholic Religious Education goals through religious education as a classroom subject, through other subjects such as languages and science or through activities such as services and reflection days (see Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1977).

Research Method

A case study approach is taken in the research. Qualitative research methods are used to investigate two Catholic schools within their real-life context to find out what they consider as their educational project and the contribution of religious education to it. This section will focus first and foremost on the nature of the design approach and then proceed to indicate which schools participated in the study and how the data was collected and analysed.

Design Approach

Activities in the design approach can be divided into two tracks: a specific practical track in which activities are set up with people involved in schools, for example, in order to solve a practical problem, and a theoretical knowledge-related track in which activities are set up with the aim of mobilising existing knowledge and generating new knowledge (Andriessen, 2007; van den Akker et al., 2006). The practical activities ensure that the research does not lose touch with the specific situation and asks what can be done in this concrete situation. The knowledge-related activities seek to relate the specific situation to a bigger picture: what can we conclude from what we see in relation to generic knowledge? The two tracks are closely related (see Fig. 14.1).

In this study, theoretical knowledge about participation, the educational project and religious education are first mobilised in order to design a generic solution that is applicable to the situation at the participating Catholic schools. The generic solution consists of a plan for a participatory approach to diagnosing the issues at stake at the specific schools. The aim was to find out two things from this diagnosis. Firstly, how communication around the educational project and religious education in the Catholic schools is going, possible reasons why it goes wrong and where the communication could be improved. Secondly, what participants understand to be the educational project and the contribution of religious education to it. The diagnosis can then form a basis for designing an intervention for improving communication and the quality of the educational project. Subsequently, the evaluation of the intervention provides input for developing new generic knowledge. This chapter is restricted to the findings from the diagnosis made in the participating schools and to the findings concerning the understanding of the educational project and the contribution of religious education to it.
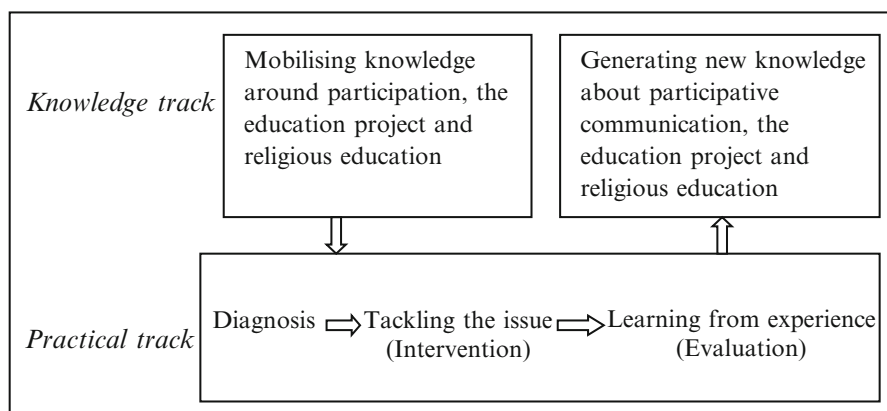

Fig. 14.1 The practice and knowledge tracks in the design approach

Participants

Two Catholic secondary schools took part in the study. Both schools have been designated 'Catholic' schools, although this status is interpreted in different ways by teachers, other staff, management, parents and students. The schools see themselves as facing a communication problem regarding their educational project and what religious education contributes to it. They do want to enter into the professional dialogue about this, but do not know how to go about it.

Both schools are located in a region which has historically been dominated by the Catholic community, but which has become increasingly diverse and individualistic over the past few decades. Both are co-educational schools that are attended by boys and girls equally. School One has about 1600 students and is located in a major city (>100,000 inhabitant), while school Two has about 1400 students and is located in a small town (<30,000 inhabitants). A diagnosis at these schools was made during the school year 2012–2013. This was done through both individual and group interviews as explained below. Representatives of the various members of both school communities (teachers, other staff, management, parents and students) took part in the discussions, aiming at a representative cross section in terms of gender, age, length of time involved in the school, tasks (administrative or technical support) or subject (languages, mathematics, science, humanities).

Data Collection

This study fits into the narrative turn in the humanities and consists of an interpretive description of the social reality of people in and around Catholic schools based on their own ideas about themselves (Riessman, 2008). The members of the school community shared their stories about the school by appealing to their (co)ownership of 'the story'. The study started by collecting the details of the story through interviews, first with members of the school (teachers, other staff, management) and then with others associated with it. The interviews are designed thematically: people are especially asked questions about the substance of the educational project.

The interviews were semi-structured around interviewees' own experiences of the school. Ten interviews were conducted in one school and 12 in the other, each of which lasted about one and a half hours. The aim in the interviews was to find out how the interviewees see the educational project of their Catholic school and how they communicate about it with others at the school. The aim was not so much to collect a string of separate ideas as to put together the components of a more or less coherent story from the interviewees at each school. The interviews started with some questions about typical events at the school: the high points and low points the interviewees had experienced during their time at the school. This kind of typical event and the way it is experienced has proven to be a good way to bring the discussion round to the way people find meaning (Riessman, 2008). One such event is used to explore what the interviewees' values are and to what extent they feel they are reflected in the

school's mission and vision, activities, orientation and sources of inspiration. The extent to which all these aspects are talked about at the school is also probed into.

The group interviews were focus group discussions (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook 2007) led by a moderator whose role was to keep the interaction going and keep the discussion on topic. In the groups, between 8 and 14 people discussed various themes related to the school's educational project. Six group interviews were held in each school: two consisted of teachers, one of other staff members, one of members of the management team, one of parents and one of students. These discussions lasted more than an hour and took place in a quiet room at the school. The topics in question were educational vision, formative activities such as services or reflection days and sources of inspiration. These themes emerged from an initial analysis of the individual interviews. Participants in the focus groups were asked about their opinion of the way themes were interpreted in the school, with a view to how they saw its educational project. I also probed further, looking for any finer distinctions within, or additions to, that interpretation. Like this, the focus groups provided an opportunity to add both breadth and depth to the insights gained from the individual interviews. Here again, the main aim was to amass the building blocks of the more or less shared narrative about the school.

Analysing Data

To answer my central research question, an analysis of the data was undertaken with a view to understanding the contribution of religious education to the educational project. A thematic analysis seemed the most appropriate approach, focusing more on what was said than on how, to whom and with what aim (Riessman, 2008). This analysis can be used to find out what the participants communicate about the contribution of religious education to the educational project.

The analysis is carried out as follows. First of all, the set of interviews and group discussions is transcribed. A set consists of ten or twelve interviews and six group discussions. Next, a description or narrative is created from each interview and discussion, keeping the narrative that was told there intact as far as possible so as to make interpretation possible. These descriptions are then compiled into one description of a school. Because the school is the object of research, the analysis is based on this latter description, with the aim of identifying the prevailing perception of the educational project and of religious education in relation to it.

The Contribution of Religious Education to the Educational Project: Findings

The educational project points to the school's pedagogic task of forming its students both personally and as members of society. What values does the school want to impart to its students? What does the school want to orient its students'

development to? The school's orientation and the way it gives it shape is bound up with its self-perception as a Catholic school. The contribution of religious education to the school's educational project lies in its engagement with religious and spiritual themes and the search for meaning.

School One, situated in the big city, is a fairly young school set up at the end of the 1960s. There is stiff competition for students in the city, and this school profiles itself as a school that pays special attention to highly gifted students and to technical education. The school provides secondary education from 12 to 18, excluding vocational education streams. The culture of school One is very open, with plenty of discussion among staff. Teachers and other staff describe the educational project in terms of social responsibility: guiding students towards being responsible citizens playing a positive role in society. As one teacher said: 'That is what we want to instil into the students: the idea that you should care about other people. You are not the centre of the universe. (…) This may well be the most important mission of this school: turning 'I' into 'we''. Students get the opportunity to assimilate this value by, for example, taking a turn on duty as break time supervisor or being a 'mini-mentor'. These tasks give students a particular responsibility, the chance to live up to it and thereby to make a contribution to school life. A few teachers or other staff members see a connection between this participatory approach and the school's perception of itself as a Catholic school: Catholic schools know how to take their students seriously and to challenge them to contribute to the community.

School One organises formative educational activities with a focus on social responsibility. These include Third World Day and the Christmas celebration. For Third World Day, students are challenged to do some work for a project in the Third World. Here, social responsibility and concern for others reaches across national borders. For the Christmas service, students are invited to make a contribution to their class get-together. In both activities, narratives from the Catholic tradition are almost entirely absent. Although some teachers indicate that these stories do offer food for thought, they hardly ever use them with their students. Teachers and other staff put this down to the diversity in the school population: even though the number of students from other religious backgrounds is negligible, they feel it is problematic for the school to base itself exclusively on one religious tradition, namely, the Catholic one. Teachers and other staff do very little to introduce the students to how the Catholic tradition teaches the importance of taking on social responsibilities through meaningful and beneficial action. It is also clear that there is little or no connection between religious education as a subject and the socially oriented educational project. Religious education is a compulsory subject on the curriculum, but nobody links it with the school's broader educational project. As a result, religious education remains somewhat nebulous and is not seen as contributing to the educational project.

School Two, which is situated in a small town, was formed by a merger of several schools which until the 1980s had been run by religious sisters and brothers. School Two is comprehensive, offering both the more academic and the vocational streams in Dutch secondary education for students of 12–18 years old. In this rural area, the school attracts almost all the students from its own municipality and the outlying villages. Teachers and other staff describe the educational project at this school in

terms of norms and values: the wish to impart, alongside knowledge and skills, norms and values which will give students a basis for participating in society. One of the teachers said: 'We at the school are trying to give them some norms and values, or in other words, an upbringing. We let them know what normal behaviour is and what less normal behaviour is'. The norms and values in question are those of respect, accountability and decency. Teachers and other staff members expect students to observe these norms, and in doing so, the school can fall back on a strong sense of community (family) among the students. And the school itself is firmly embedded in the local community in the town.

In religious education lessons, the teacher at school Two links the students' personal development with religious traditions, something which rarely happens, if at all, in other lessons. The link between personal development and religion, spirituality and the search for meaning is certainly made during the reflection days organised by the school for students in the 10th and 11th grade (not, therefore, for students in the vocational stream, who leave school earlier). On these days, students are challenged to think about and discuss issues related to existential themes such as life and death, good and evil and sickness and health. For the school, these days are part of its long tradition of giving students a break from the normal school routine to reflect and talk about important themes with their teachers and each other. These days bring students closer to each other and they experience them as an open invitation to reflect on their own attitudes and values. All this happens in the religious context of a Catholic monastery. The contribution of the reflection days and the religious education lessons to the school's educational project lies in the space that is offered both to reflect on existential themes and to gain an understanding of the educational project that goes deeper and broader than just a set of norms of decency. The reflection days are an unquestioned part of school Two's traditions and are rarely subject to discussion among teachers and other staff.

Conclusion and Discussion

Catholic schools stand in a long and rich tradition of personal and social formation of students, of which religious education is an integral part. They orient both their educational project and their religious education to the Catholic tradition. In today's pluralistic and individualised society, however, this is no longer unproblematic, and Catholic schools are having to review both their educational project and their religious education. In this chapter, I have examined what Catholic schools see as the contribution of religious education to their educational project. In order to answer the central research question, I set up an education design study in which two Catholic secondary schools which felt the need to review their approach and were keen to go into action participated. The nature of this qualitative study meant that the research focus was limited to just two schools. A certain caution in interpreting the findings is therefore called for, and no claims are made to representativeness.

School One sees its main task as the *social* formation of its students as members of society: to help them shift from the 'I' perspective to the 'we' one. To this end the school invites them to take turns as break time supervisors and to attend the Third World Day. Students get an opportunity to make a contribution to the wider community of their class, the school and society. Teachers and other staff rarely seem to discuss the school's educational project, religious education or related activities among themselves, however. Nor do they explicitly link them with the Catholic tradition. As a result, those involved are unable to say how they see their religious education as a contribution to the socially oriented educational project. School Two sees its key task as the *personal* formation of its students, inculcating norms and values such as respect, accountability and decency. Students get an opportunity to deepen and orient their understanding of these norms and values during the reflection days. People at school Two talk about how they see religious education as contributing to the educational project: namely, in terms of offering depth and orientation. However, teachers and other staff appear rarely, if ever, to link the educational project and the contribution of religious education to it explicitly with the Catholic tradition.

On the basis of these findings, I arrive at two interesting observations about the contribution of religious education to the educational project of Catholic schools. In the first place, school Two is able to show what role religion, spirituality and the search for meaning can play in assimilating norms and values. This role is to provide depth and orientation. One is reminded of the relation between religion and ethics in the immanent dimension: religion integrates, orients and criticises moral ideas, beliefs and practices (van der Ven, 1998). School One did not seem able to show the role of religion by offering religious formation activities, unlike school Two. This difference may have less to do with the different contexts (city/country) than with the different histories of the schools. School One was established in a period when such activities were no longer a matter of course, while school Two is able to build on foundations that were laid earlier. Further research should provide evidence for this explanation. Secondly, I conclude from the findings at both schools that members of the schools make little or no connection with the Catholic tradition and that they put this down to the diversity of the student population. Whether this is true is debatable, given that the population of both schools is fairly homogeneous (with fewer than 10 % non-Western immigrants). The explanation may lie in the Catholicity of the staff changing, with fewer Catholic staff and fewer practising Catholic staff (Casson, 2013). These developments present challenges to Catholic schools. The question is whether a pluralistic and individualised staff can contribute to an educational project on the basis of the Catholic tradition and if how. There are indications that Catholic schools actively invite their teachers and students to make a contribution to a larger whole such as a class, a school or the community. It appears, however, that the participatory approach is rarely made explicit and there is no discussion about people's contribution to the Catholic educational project as a whole. Shared reflection of the staff on their contribution to the Catholic educational project is necessary to meet positively the challenges raised by the social system

characterised by diversity and individualism. Religious education anchored in the Catholic tradition can provide content for this reflection (de Jong, 2007).

A tremendous opportunity opens up for Catholic schools through seeing Catholic Religious Education as part of their broader educational project. This chapter offers a few clues as to the perceptions of this issue among those involved in Catholic schools. Using educational design research not only reveals how those involved perceive the contribution of religious education to the educational project, it also provides some starting points for the schools for further development in this area in response to the challenges posed by today's world, particularly those of diversity and individualism.

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Chapter 15
Catholic Religious Education in Scotland: Bridging the Gap Between Teacher Education and Curriculum Delivery

Roisín Coll

Introduction

'This Is Our Faith' (Scottish Catholic Education Service [SCES], 2011) is one of the most significant documents to emerge in the field of Catholic Religious Education in Scotland (SCES, 2011). The ramifications of the publication of this new revised Religious Education syllabus are far reaching, transforming the perception of Religious Education in Scotland's Catholic schools and beyond.

In recent years, the entire curriculum in Scotland's schools has been subjected to radical review. Stemming from the consultation exercise, the 'National Debate on Education', *A Curriculum for Excellence* (SCES, 2011) was born, presenting the opportunity for a complete re-examination of every curriculum area taught in Scotland's schools. While having no legal obligation to participate in such a review, the Catholic Church in Scotland ensured that Religious Education taught in its schools would embrace this national development and used the opportunity to reposition the subject in Catholic schools.

This chapter provides contextualisation of Catholic education in Scotland and the ramifications for those involved in religious pedagogy as a result of recent curriculum reforms.

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The Historical Context

Much has been written about identity in Scotland and in particular that of the Catholic community (Devine, 2000; Boyle & Lynch, 1998; Bradley, 2004; O'Hagan, 2006). This community has recently expanded owing to the influx of immigrants from Central Europe and therefore consists of a combination of several ethnic groups with strong Catholic roots. However, despite remaining a minority entity in an increasingly secular country, the Catholic community has a significant presence in Scotland, and the Catholic Church has become a well-established institution (Boyle & Lynch, 1998). Catholics of Irish origins are the largest segment of Scotland's Catholic community and are concentrated particularly in the west-central region of the country. This influx of Irish Catholics had an impact on the education system, and as Bradley (2004) argues, the current Catholic school system was created as a direct result of this.

When the Irish first came to Scotland, they were often subjected to much hostility as was their 'alien and often detested faith' (Bradley, 2004, p. 20). It has been argued that the struggle to survive and thrive in Scotland has resulted in the well-established and strengthened identity of this community to the present day; however, there still exists a belief that a struggle against discrimination continues since there are entrenched anti-Catholic sentiments in society (Rolheiser, 1994). This claim has been well documented in recent years (for instance, Kearney, 2013; MacMillan, 2000, 2011; Walls & Williams, 2003).

A high proportion of Scotland's teachers in Catholic schools come from this Catholic community situated in the west-central belt of the country. These Catholic teachers are employed by the state and are part of the Scottish education system, but they work within the Catholic sector of that system, the story of which is reviewed below.

After the Protestant Reformation, Catholics were forbidden to attend Scottish schools or to teach in them and were required to establish an independent education system of their own. Resources were very limited, but a Catholic 'education system' was devised and maintained without much challenge until the middle of the nineteenth century. This allowed the tradition of Catholic schooling to survive, albeit in limited areas. It was then that the Catholic population of Scotland increased dramatically owing to immigration, as a result of *an Gorta Mór*, the Great Famine of Ireland (Devine, 2006; Vaughan, 2013). An influx of Irish travelling to and remaining in Scotland, particularly in the west of the country, had a significant impact on the Catholic education system. The Church was required to respond to this mass migration by upscaling education. By the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Catholic schools in Scotland were staffed by unqualified, underpaid teachers and served a destitute, and mainly Irish, population (O'Hagan, 2006).

In 1872, the government in Scotland wishing to establish a national education system which included all schools (Catholic, Protestant, Episcopalian) invited each community to transfer from Church control to that of the state. Schools would

become 'public', but they would have the flexibility on an 'ad hoc' basis to determine their religious nature if they so wished. The Catholic Church declined the invitation to transfer its control of its schools to the state on the grounds that such a transfer would endanger the denominational identity of the schools, believing that the guarantee that individual schools would retain the right to determine their religious nature if they so wished was inadequate (Coll & Davis, 2007; O'Hagan, 2006; Vaughan, 2013).

All Other Schools Transferred

For the next 45 years, the state system expanded and became increasingly more professional while simultaneously the Catholic sector wrestled with great financial burdens and battled for survival. The dearth of properly trained staff affected the level of academic achievement of Catholic children. In 1895, when Notre Dame, a Catholic teacher training college, opened in Glasgow, the Catholic system improved but still was unable to match the standards of the state system.

The government's desire to establish a state education system was a key priority, which would, if achieved, gain recognition worldwide for innovation, being visionary and embracing modernity. Therefore, the Catholic 'situation' required attention. Eventually, and with the establishment of a state system being the driver, the government agreed that the Catholic community was being effectively discriminated against on the grounds of conscience and, after much controversy (O'Hagan, 2006; O'Hagan & Davis, 2007), the Education (Scotland) Act of 1918 was passed, giving Catholic children the same formal educational opportunities found in the nondenominational schools. The schools were to be fully funded and maintained by the state, but the Church was given control over the Religious Education curriculum and the appointment of teachers.

It has been claimed that Scotland stood in distinction from other countries in the world with the passing of this act. The financial burden of Catholic schools, borne entirely by the Church, was effectively lifted, and so the expansion of Catholic education was able to take place. The whole civic status of young Catholics had been raised. This became evident in the 1930s. Catholic attendance at university increased, and many became professionals, particularly in the fields of education, law and medicine.

It could be argued that the state was simply making some minor concessions to achieve its goal. The Church was exceptionally forward thinking, pushing for particular guarantees, which enabled quality and uncompromised Catholic education for its population. This position has remained unchanged for almost a century.

Catholic schools are able to preserve their distinctive identity and faith-based mission since the Church has jurisdiction over the employment of staff in Catholic schools and the content of the Religious Education (RE) curriculum—a position that it has enjoyed since 1918.

Approval and Qualification

The Catholic Education Commission (CEC) works on behalf of the Catholic Bishops of Scotland in setting national policy on all educational matters. Its operational agency is the Scottish Catholic Education Service (SCES), which, among other things, works to offer support and guidance to schools and Catholic teachers in Scotland and develop and implement plans for the development of Catholic education (http://www.sces.uk.com/).

Owing to the Church's control over the appointment of staff, potential teaching staff in Catholic schools must satisfy the Church that they are suitable in 'belief and character' (Great Britain Statutes, 1918, Education (Scotland Act)). They are also subject to a stringent approval process. Anyone teaching Religious Education must be an approved practising Catholic (all those teaching in Catholic primary schools fall into this category). Moreover, the Catholic Church requires assurance that all other appointed teachers, whether Catholic or not, are committed to the promotion and support of the Catholic school's mission, aims, values and ethos. Approval therefore is also required for non-Catholic staff. The process involves a reference from a priest (or for non-Catholics, a professional) who can testify to the commitment of the individual. At present there are over 7000 approved Catholic teachers in Scotland employed in 403 Catholic state schools (http://www.sces.uk.com/).

In addition to being 'approved', there is the expectation that Catholic teachers wishing to teach Religious Education in the Catholic sector obtain their 'Catholic Teachers' Certificate'. This certificate indicates that an individual is adequately equipped to teach Religious Education in the Catholic school. Teachers in Scotland wishing to gain this certificate usually choose to study their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) course (either 4-year undergraduate honours degree courses or a 1-year professional diploma) at the School of Education at the University of Glasgow. This institution is the only one in Scotland that has the formal responsibility for providing Catholic teachers for Catholic schools. Due to this unique situation, the Religious Education component of these courses is primarily focused on the Catholic faith. Upon satisfying the subject's academic requirements (which include being observed teaching Religious Education in a Catholic school), in addition to the Catholic teachers' formation course, students are awarded the Catholic Teachers' Certificate. The only other way of obtaining this certificate is through CREDL (Certificate in Religious Education by Distance Learning), a distance learning course offered by the same educational institution.

Relationship with State

The working relationship between the Church and state regarding Catholic education in Scotland has strengthened substantially over the past 20 years, particularly as a result of joint policy initiatives where both have been the major stakeholders

(Coll & Davis, 2007). The creation of the National 5–14 Guidelines in the early 1990s found, for the first time, Catholic Church doctrine being presented and published under the auspices of the Scottish Government (formerly the Scottish Office Education Department) through the creation of the Religious Education guidelines for Roman Catholic schools (Scottish Office Education Department [SOED], 1994). This was part of a wider pattern of change. In 2004, the Scottish Government announced another major review of the whole curriculum in Scotland, producing an outline statement of principles and objectives entitled *A Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2004). In May 2008, the Catholic Education Commission and the Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS, the Scottish Government's advisory body on the curriculum) released a set of 'draft outcomes and experiences' on Catholic Religious Education in both primary and secondary schooling and again rooted in Church doctrine. By August 2011, this evolved into a new syllabus for Religious Education in Roman Catholic schools that received *recognitio* by the Holy See.

The solid working relationship that the Church enjoys with the state has resulted in a Catholic RE syllabus using the framework and structures of the national curriculum (of the time) to present its own core content. Both stakeholders appear to be satisfied for a variety of reasons. Without relinquishing any control over the content of the subject, the Church also was able to obtain recognition by the state for the teaching of Catholic RE as part of the national curriculum. On the other hand, the state is now able to herald a truly 'national' curriculum, where every subject area adheres to a particular framework. *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) builds on the agreed *Curriculum for Excellence* outcomes and experiences for RE in Catholic schools by providing guidance for teaching and indicating the core content to be covered.

The positive working relationship that the Scottish Government and Catholic Church seem to enjoy was endorsed in 2008 by Scotland's former First Minister, Alex Salmond. At the annual Cardinal Winning Lecture, hosted by the then Religious Education department at the University of Glasgow, Salmond 'celebrated' Catholic schools in Scotland and concluded that they 'will always have my support and the support of my government' (Salmond, 2008).

A Curriculum for Excellence: The Agency of the Learner

Priestly and Minty (2013) argue that *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004) 'has been hailed in Scotland as a radical departure from existing ways of both defining curriculum and from prevailing practices in a curriculum' (p. 39). They claim it

> represents a shift from the prescriptive culture of the previous 5–14 curriculum, towards a more developmental approach which positions teachers as agents of change and professional developers of the curriculum. It espouses more overtly student-centred practices than previously, based around the development of Four Capacities in young people – confident individuals, successful learners, responsible citizens and effective contributors. (ibid.)

Central to the philosophy of *Curriculum for Excellence* (Scottish Executive, 2004) and *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) is the concept of the agency of the learner: the model of the student is one that is actively motivated in learning, not passive but rather a critical thinker, encouraged to question. *Curriculum for Excellence* is arguably following worldwide trends where the learner is positioned at the heart of schooling and where the curriculum is less prescriptive in content owing to a shift from knowledge to skills. Such a change with regard to curriculum development has stimulated great debate and indeed received critique (see, for instance, Wheelahan, 2010; Yates & Collins, 2010). For example, a fear exists of downgrading content and the risk that 'young people will be denied access to powerful knowledge' (Priestley & Minty, 2013, p. 41). It is claimed that a weakening of 'traditional subject boundaries' could have a negative impact on teachers and learners where they 'fall behind without knowing it or miss out conceptual steps that may be vital later on' (Young & Muller, 2010, p. 23). It could be argued that *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) attempts to be balanced, where on the one hand the centrality of the learner is key to the successful implementation of the syllabus in Catholic schools, yet core content is provided to teachers to ensure that pupils are being adequately catechised and that they are provided with sound, theologically accurate content which will underpin their wider education. This, it is claimed, is necessary to facilitate critical engagement with what is being learned. If used correctly, it presents core content but also provides the skills to seek and quickly acquire additional knowledge. If used effectively, the teacher—involving the children—will carefully consider the best and most appropriate methodology to deliver the subject, ensuring the learner is at its heart.

Curriculum for Excellence has promoted a range of learning methodologies and strategies such as active learning and cooperative learning. One critique of such a push in this direction is that their theoretical underpinnings are rarely explained (Biesta, 2010). For example, why would it be good to use such a strategy in a particular context? What are the pitfalls? Biesta's concern is that discussions and considerations regarding the purpose of education are being replaced by preoccupations with the effectiveness of or accountability in education. For example, strategies such as cooperative and active learning have been taken as a given and promoted as important when implementing new curricula without any explanation as to why.

This Is Our Faith presents the teacher with two essential teaching approaches: inductive and deductive. It explains to teachers that

> An *inductive* (*existential* or *ascending*) teaching approach starts from the experiences of the student and enlightens them with the Word of God. It considers events in our daily lives and attempts to discern how, through these, God is revealing the divine mystery to us. This approach initially appears more personal and immediate.
>
> A *deductive* (*kerygmatic* or *descending*) teaching approach firstly describes and explains Scripture, doctrine or liturgy and then invites the student to see their relevance to life. This approach initially appears more abstract and conceptual. (p. 31)

Both are key to the successful implementation of *This Is Our Faith* and are indicative of the position of the learner in the RE curriculum.

This Is Our Faith and the Catholic Teacher

This Is Our Faith (SCES, 2011) is very clear as to what is required of the Catholic teacher. Aligned directly with the Church's expectations (Second Vatican Council, 1965, *Gravissimum Educationis*, Congregation for Catholic Education, 1997), it explains to the Catholic educator that 'teaching the Catholic faith is a great privilege and vocation since, along with parents and clergy, it is in the teachers hands that lies the task of transmitting the living faith of the Church from generation to generation' (SCES, 2011, p. 57). *Religious Education: A Divine Pedagogy* is a concise section contained within the document which points to Christ as the ultimate role model, highlighting his teaching style, his example and how teachers, as his disciples, should look to him in all aspects of their work. It explains that

> the teacher as catechist co-operates with the Grace of God when (s)he emulates the teaching style and methodology of Jesus … Thus the good teacher who adopts diverse and innovative styles of teaching in Religious Education, in effect, is following the example of Jesus, the pre-eminent Teacher. (ibid.)

It is, however, not just the approach of the Religious Education teacher that comes under the spotlight in this section of the document but the 'person of the teacher'. The expectation is clear that such teachers should be people of faith, travelling on their own spiritual journey and engaging in the liturgical life of the Church. Quoting Pope John Paul II, *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) reminds educators that 'to teach means not only to impart what we know but also to reveal who we are by living what we believe' (SCES, 2011, p. 58). In addition to providing guidance on what and how to teach, this innovative Religious Education syllabus details the expectation of the Catholic teacher regarding their individual faith commitment. In particular, it highlights the requirement to take time to reflect on their own faith journey and to inspire their faith commitment by seeking opportunities to recognise the Holy Spirit at work within them (*This Is Our Faith*). They are also expected to take time to continuously develop their understanding of the person of Jesus and his teachings.

Contained within this section is the assumption that the Catholic primary teacher or Catholic secondary teacher delivering the Religious Education curriculum will be a person of faith and fully committed to accompanying pupils on their faith journey. Indeed, *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) states that 'teachers should never underestimate how their profession, celebration, prayers and life of faith can influence each child that [sic] they nurture' (SCES, 2011, p. 59). Authenticity, therefore, is required where the personal witness of the one teaching is as important as what is being taught.

Recent research on the faith disposition of the Catholic teacher in Scotland (those responsible for teaching Religious Education) suggests that, despite a weakening of the matrix of sources of spiritual capital of Catholic teachers (Grace, 2002), there is still, for the most part, a willingness to embrace this faith commitment and there exists the recognition that this expectation is indeed appropriate (Coll, 2009a). It has been argued that this may be as a result of the sociological and ethnographical

backgrounds of the majority of those entering the teaching profession from the Catholic community in Scotland. It is not surprising, then, that many Catholic teachers exhibit a firm attachment to the community to which they belong, and this can heighten individuals' sense of identity and adherence to the conditions and expectations of the wider community that accompany being an 'Irish Catholic'. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that a sense of pride in Catholic identity from a political and cultural perspective increases the likelihood of attendance at religious services and observation of personal devotion (Coll, 2009b). This loyalty, coupled with the Church's expectation that every Catholic responsible for teaching Religious Education in the Catholic school is required to gain approval and the Catholic Teachers Certificate, results in teachers being more aware and accepting of the expectation of them to 'demonstrate living witness in their own lives' (SCES, 2011, p. 59). This of course is not to suggest that all Catholic teachers are living lifestyles aligned directly with the teachings of the Church. Nevertheless, a high proportion of those entering the profession in Scotland not only demonstrate a level of commitment to their faith (Coll, 2009b) but there is awareness of what the Church requires and expects of them.

While it is claimed that personal faith commitment is of importance to many Catholic teachers in Scotland, it is also acknowledged that the depth of this faith, and understanding of it, varies considerably (Coll, 2009a). In addition, having the ability to articulate belief and transmit knowledge of what the Church teaches is another key expectation of the Church in Scotland. *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) states that the content of 'RE in Catholic schools must remain faithful to God's Revelation and Church teaching must be presented in its fullness, not fragmented or impoverished' (SCES, 2011, p. 60). To respond effectively, teachers must possess the ability to appraise their own understanding of their faith and their corresponding behaviours against what the Church actually teaches. This would contribute significantly to ensure a consistent communication of the gospel message and prevent any well-meaning, though unintentional, dilution.

Content and Structure of Catholic Religious Education

The largest section of *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) contains 'core learning' for use in school from the first year of primary to the third year of secondary. It is rooted in Scripture and is built upon the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church (2011): faith professed, faith celebrated, faith lived and faith prayed. Eight 'strands of faith' are presented to schools and provide precise theological content that should be used by teachers when planning lessons for each stage of the syllabus. The titles of the strands of faith clearly indicate the 'back to basics' nature of this new syllabus, repositioning Religious Education by ensuring accurate Catholic doctrine is at the heart of children's learning. These are:

> Mystery of God, In the Image of God, Revealed Truth of God, Son of God, Signs of God, Word of God, Hours of God, Reign of God

Examples of core learning include:

In the Image of God: (Secondary 2) I can describe how Jesus used his gifts and talents to uphold the dignity of the human person, especially those who were marginalized or excluded eg., the Beatitudes – Matthew 5:1–12, the stoning of the adulterous women – John 8:1–11, curing of the leper – Luke 5:12–16

Son of God: (Primary 5) I know that from the first moment of her existence, as a unique privilege because she would be the Mother of God's Son, Mary was preserved from Original Sin in view of the grace of the redemption. I know that this is the mystery of faith known as the Immaculate Conception.

Signs of God: (Primary 6) I know that the Eucharist is called 'the source and summit' of Christian life because it is the memorial of the mystery of his death and resurrection and the sacrament in which we receive the body and blood of Jesus so that we can be nourished for our Christian lives as members of Christ's Church.

Hours of God: (Primary 2) I am becoming familiar with the responses at Mass by learning about the 'Introductory Rite' and I can recognize that this is God's invitation to gather and pray.

This Is Our Faith (SCES, 2011) clearly indicates to the classroom teacher that sound doctrinal content of Religious Education lessons is expected. There should be no ambiguity around what to teach children since the core learning is presented thoroughly for each stage of the pupils' Religious Education and the document also highlights scriptural roots and key vocabulary to be taught. It indicates at which stage certain prayers should be introduced and learned and includes, for example, a range of Latin prayers and Gregorian chant. Methodological approaches to lessons are offered, demonstrating to the teacher how core learning from a range of the different strands of faith can be interwoven and covered in individual or series of lessons.

This Is Our Faith (SCES, 2011), which was granted 'recognitio' (official approval) by the Holy See after consideration by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and the Congregation for the Clergy, has been acclaimed by many as a landmark publication since it repositions Religious Education in Catholic schools in Scotland. Indeed, other Anglophone countries have expressed interest as they anticipate, or are ready to embark upon, renewal of their own Religious Education programmes for use in schools. *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) represents an essential and substantial development in Religious Education that is mainstream, accessible and, above all, faithful to the teachings of the Church. However, it poses significant challenges in terms of the formation of Catholic teachers: effective implementation of this syllabus demands of teachers a wide breadth of knowledge and expertise, and personal commitment, and therefore raises questions regarding the competence of those charged with the responsibility of delivering it. Do teachers in Scotland currently have sufficient knowledge and background to effectively communicate to children this doctrinally sound core learning? Is the teacher theologically literate enough to appraise and deal with enquiry to the extent that it will facilitate sound learning? Are those responsible for implementing *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011) appropriately catechised to ensure that the teaching of the syllabus accurately reflects the intentions of the writers (working on behalf of the Scottish Catholic Education Service) and the expectations of the Church? Given that Scottish Catholic schools no longer have clergy within them or indeed, leading them, these responsi-

bilities have fallen to the lay Catholic teacher, and this has associated challenges. In the past the Catholic Church has expressed the view that 'all too frequently lay Catholics have not had a religious development that is equal to their general, cultural and most especially professional development' (Sacred Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982, para. 60). Again this claim has been echoed in a more recent Church document on Catholic education where the encouragement of a journey of formation for the lay Catholic teacher is one of its main points of focus (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2007). It can be argued that the main reason for this spotlight on faith development is sociological since the presence of religious teaching orders has diminished in Catholic schools in Scotland, almost to vanishing point (Fitzpatrick, 2003). There was an inbuilt assumption that the charism of these orders would pass to less experienced *lay* colleagues who worked alongside the ordained teachers, and while this did happen, it has faded out over the generations (O'Hagan, 2006). Most lay teachers do not have the same theological knowledge and understanding that Religious teaching staff would experience by virtue of their lifelong training, vocation and commitment. In Catholic schools in Scotland today, most teaching staff *are* lay Catholics, and the Church recognises that the future preservation of the distinctive religious character of its schools depends on these very people. As mentioned previously, all teachers delivering RE in Catholic schools in Scotland are required to have their Catholic Teachers' Certificate. However, delivery of the RE syllabus is only one facet of this, and so the content covered, while completing their initial teacher education programme of study (or the CREDL course), can only expect to scratch the surface of what is required to deliver this syllabus effectively.

A recent study of newly qualified Catholic teachers in Scotland (i.e. those responsible for teaching RE in the sector) highlighted a gap in religious understanding and knowledge, identified by the teachers themselves (Coll, 2009b). While comfortable with the Church's expectation of them in terms of their own faith commitment and personal disposition, they repeatedly raised concern about their confidence levels with regard to implementing the Religious Education curriculum. Interestingly, the study was conducted prior to the launch of the new syllabus, *This Is Our Faith* (SCES, 2011), which increases the demands placed on the teacher in terms of accurate theological knowledge and religious understanding. It is recognised here that the introduction of this syllabus has widened the gap between curriculum content and appropriate classroom delivery. This presents a pressing challenge for the Church. However, this challenge should also be recognised as an opportunity that not only repositions the Religious Education syllabus within Scotland's Catholic education system but aims to revitalise the teachers of Religious Education and give them confidence to effectively deliver it by way of appropriate support and development.

This syllabus may be a daunting prospect for many teachers; however, with the correct support, opportunities to share and network with one another, along with formal theological refresher sessions, this should be viewed as an exciting and interesting time for Catholic teachers.

Opportunities for Teacher Formation and Development

The opportunity to reinvigorate and reskill teachers of Religious Education in Catholic Schools in Scotland has never been more propitious. Although the new syllabus makes significant demands of the teacher, opportunities exist for them (and those supporting them) to respond positively, readdressing their knowledge, adding to it and, in turn, creating the possibility of renewing and even transforming their own faith (Coll, 2009a).

The syllabus itself is a comprehensive document and a catechetical tool for teachers to enhance their own theological knowledge, vocabulary and expertise in the field and to seek wider sources for deeper understanding. However, to maximise the effect of the syllabus on the development of the teacher, there is need of serious commitment to study. Therefore, a structured system of professional development in this field is called for, where the Church, the schools and the state work together to support those teaching Religious Education. Since the launch of *This Is Our Faith*, there have been support programmes implemented across the country. Examples include online podcasts, twilight sessions for staff regarding the use of Scripture in the syllabus and the use of prayer and styles of teaching based on the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church and cluster meetings where staff from groups of local Catholic primary schools gather to discuss the syllabus, engage in collective planning and create programmes of work directly linked to the liturgical year and interweaving core learning from the eight strands of faith. For the most part, these sessions have been led and supported by the Religious Education advisor within each diocese or the Scottish Catholic Education Service. The value of such activity is that it creates supported communities of faith and learning and provides opportunities for teacher knowledge to be enhanced while 'personal frames of reference' (Janssens, 2004, p. 147) of teachers become more aligned to each other owing to the shared experiences and to the conversations taking place. These kinds of activities are central to ensuring that staff have ownership of the syllabus, providing opportunities to work with it, interact and share with peers who may be equally challenged by its content. It also can expose, to those leading the development sessions, the areas of the syllabus that give cause for concern to teachers (in terms of knowledge), and they can respond accordingly.

While it should be applauded that such professional development sessions have been made available, each diocese has created its own programme of development, some in conjunction with the local authorities, and there have been varied responses in terms of attendance. Some dioceses have compulsory development sessions while others simply extend invitations to teachers. What has quickly become apparent is that while there are many substantial supportive opportunities available within individual dioceses, a national programme of staff development is not in place, and therefore a consistent approach to staff development for Religious Education across the country is not achieved. It is argued here that ensuring every member of staff teaching Religious Education participates in formal development for the delivery of the new syllabus is a goal worth aiming for.

Key to maximising the effects of the new syllabus, in terms of staff development, is the leadership within each Catholic school. A significant finding of a recent study was the impact that the Catholic school environment has the potential to have on a teacher's faith—and knowledge and understanding of it—even to the point of transformation. Newly qualified teachers placed in Catholic schools that have a strong identity and that demonstrate effective Catholic leadership recorded a positive impact on their own faith position and understanding of this (Coll, 2009a). Janssens (2004, p. 147) writes of teachers' 'personal frames of reference' and how these have the potential to be changed and influenced positively or negatively by others. He claims that teachers in the same professional environment discussing and sharing their own frames of reference can result in *shared* frames of reference which can ultimately influence the organisational culture of the school. Flores (2004) supports Janssens, highlighting that schools are not only places where teaching occurs, but they are places where teachers learn and develop and that the key to maximising the potential for this is the direction of the head teacher. Leadership, it is argued here, is key for the effective roll-out and delivery of the new Religious Education syllabus in Scotland's Catholic schools. The priority it has been given, the associated development opportunities on offer to teachers and the perception of the commitment of the school leader to the ongoing implementation of *This Is Our Faith* will have a direct impact on the response of the teacher and the degree of personal engagement, including a willingness to learn.

Conclusion

There is the awareness that the perspective offered in this chapter needs to be set in the larger context. Much has been written about the current state of play of Religious Education, especially in the English speaking world (see, for instance, Chater & Erricker, 2013; Conroy et al., 2013). Common themes include a crisis in confidence in RE, a loss of sense of direction and a fear of being burdened with added responsibilities. It is widely reported that there has been a withdrawal of state interest in morality, identity and character in favour of, for example, psychology, ethics and philosophy. It could be argued that the Scottish Catholic context, then, appears countercultural and indeed, as a result, has stimulated interest from other Anglophone countries worldwide. However, the Catholic community would insist that the current vitality of RE in Catholic schools reflects the vigour of the Catholic education sector as a whole. What is articulated here is a widely agreed countercultural affirmation of the Catholic Christian heritage and what it has to offer to contemporary society. It can take place alongside most motivated forms of processed curricular thinking. Far from being an entrenchment or retreat, it is an active contribution and affirmation of the leading edge themes in contemporary educational thought. While the chapter has been primarily concerned with the teacher of RE in the Catholic school, *This Is Our Faith*'s (SCES, 2011) model of the learner comes sharply into focus. Aligning directly with that of *Curriculum for Excellence*, the view of the

learner is an active agent who participates in the joint construction of meaning, that is, far from being indoctrinated but developed to raise questions and think critically about what it means to belong to the Church.

Given the increasingly secularised, globalised and pluralistic Scotland in which they live, the claimed faith commitment of many Catholic teachers in Scotland may appear surprising. Nevertheless, these same teachers require substantial support to develop their knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith, of Church doctrine, of Church teachings and of Scripture to enable them to effectively deliver this new syllabus. They are, for the most part, products of Catholic schools themselves where the Religious Education curriculum they encountered was typical of the post-Vatican II era, where the focus was on faith journeys and relationships with God and others, at the expense of any extensive understanding of the Catechism of the Catholic Church or Church Doctrine. While the RE component of the initial teacher education programmes in Scotland would claim at least to begin to address this imbalance, only so much can be covered in such short durations. Gaps in knowledge and understanding have been identified as being a concern and an area requiring significant support (Coll, 2009a). Clearly, a national development programme is required for all teachers of Religious Education in Catholic schools. This will require significant resources from the Church and the state and commitment from Catholic school leaders to ensure that the effective implementation of *This Is Our Faith* is an ongoing priority.

Coll (2009b) demonstrates how the Catholic school, through its leadership and overall culture, has the potential to add to 'sources of spiritual capital' (Grace, 2002, p. 237) accessed by teachers of Religious Education. Head teachers and other school leaders who offer an appropriate mix of support to the Catholic teacher have the ability to reinvigorate and further motivate their staff, bolstering their sense of ownership of the syllabus they teach to pupils. Indeed, research suggests that the socialisation process upon which newly qualified Catholic teachers embark can potentially have the power to 'trigger' a stronger awareness of faith, to shape individuals' views and even to alter or change their 'personal frames of reference' (Janssens, 2004, p. 147) with regard to faith. The direct impact that a teacher's commitment to faith can have on curriculum delivery should not be underestimated. *Nemo dat quod non habet*.

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Chapter 16
Catholic Religious Education in German Schools: An Ecumenical and Interreligious Perspective

Reinhold Boschki

Introduction

Roman Catholic Religious Education (RE) in Germany is undergoing transition and radical change, which is not only a matter of mere renewal but of transformation in the sense of the Latin word trans-formatio: getting a renewed shape and a new essence. The classical approach to Catholic RE has been one of catechesis and transmission of Christian belief. However, since the 1970s this concept is no longer deemed adequate for RE in the public school system and not even in Catholic schools, which are obligated to modern, democratic, and open-minded education. For this reason, Catholic RE in Germany was assigned a new goal by the synod of the German bishops in 1975: The task of catechesis was bound to the parish and church communities, especially in the preparation of the sacraments, aiming to bring participants close to the church and traditional belief. In contrast, RE in schools today is supposed to no longer focus only on faith formation and the liaison of learners to the church but is aimed at giving young people an opportunity to find their own position in relation to Christian religious standpoints and to make up their own mind concerning religious questions and the meaning of life. Looking back, we can speak of a paradigm shift with respect to the task and the goal of RE in schools that happened in the 1970s.

Today, societies in Europe and worldwide are witnessing a new radical ("to the roots") and fundamental ("to the basis") transformation deeply affecting the conceptual framework of the educational system in general and RE in public or confessional schools in particular. Society and schools are becoming totally pluralistic and heterogeneous, which is reflected in the composition of school classes. "Pluralization" on the one hand and its twin brother "individualization" on the other are the main

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indicators of society and the educational system in late modernity. For this reason, rethinking RE in ecumenical and interreligious perspectives is one of the main duties for theorists and teachers in this field.

A further source of transformational change with respect to RE is to be found in another severe transformation of our society, which is not only becoming more and more individualistic and pluralistic but also more and more "liquid" in terms of identities, personal relationships, and affiliation with social and/or religious communities. Analyzing this process on an empirical and long term basis, British sociologist and social theorist Zygmunt Bauman speaks of "liquid modernity," a term that he calls a "key metaphor" and a "negative utopia" for western technological societies today (Bauman, 2000). All patterns of everyday life, all personal, institutional, work-related, and even free and leisure time-related living conditions, are subjected to an immense acceleration of time and to the omnipresent separation of time and space. What has been taken for granted in modern and premodern societies, for example, the proximity of home and work, the close connection of believing and belonging, or the relative stability of family and other personal relationships, is more and more dissolving into uncertainty due to fleeting and vague living conditions. Living in a liquid society means living with contingencies with respect to jobs, social identities, personal relationships, and belonging.

These processes fundamentally affect our identity formation in general and our religious identity concepts in particular. Traditionally, religions live on permanence, longevity, and stability. Traditions bear witness to long roots and want to be rooted for a long term in both individuals and communities. RE takes part in this process. Traditional RE lives on the identity of time and space, on the authenticity of teachers and learners, and tries to create stable identities.

The remainder of this chapter elaborates on these issues reflecting the present situation of (Catholic) RE in German schools (1), theological principles for rethinking Catholic school-based RE (2), and challenges in ecumenical (3) and interreligious (4) perspectives to RE and finally suggests guidelines for the future shape of Catholic RE in Germany, Europe, and beyond.

Situation of (Roman Catholic) RE in Germany

After the devastating experiences of National Socialism in Germany from 1933 to 1945, the founders of the new democratic Germany were convinced that the state should never again be allowed to play the only and major role in education, mental orientation, and identity formation of (young) people. Religious communities were identified as adequate partners in educating the next generations. For this reason Article 7.3 of the German Constitution allows churches and other religious communities to become co-responsible for the content of RE in public schools, being conceptualized in accordance with the principles of a democratic state and the constitution, but at the same time taught "in accordance with the principles of the religious community concerned" (Rothgangel & Ziebertz, 2012, for a brief overview

on organizational forms of RE in Germany, see Knauth, 2007; Roebben & Dommel, 2013, pp. 164–169). Like all western democratic states, the German Constitution advocates the separation of state and religion, but in contrast to most European or North American nations, Germany emphasizes a close cooperation between both forces. The slogan could be: separation encompassing cooperation.

Consequently, school-based RE is mandatory for pupils affiliated to a religious community (baptized pupils: Jews, Muslims, etc.) and has to be attended in separate denominational groups. Confessional RE (Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, and recently more and more Muslim RE) is taught in public schools in the majority of federal states (Bundesländer) in Germany and of course in church schools, the so-called confessional schools, where churches are the management bodies. Governmental education authorities and representatives of churches or other religious institutions come together in joint (state–church) curriculum commissions in order to cooperatively set up the contents of curricula for RE. Due to the federal principles of the German Constitution, there are some federal states where Article 7.3 of the Constitution is not applied at all: Bremen, Brandenburg, and Berlin. In these exceptional cases RE is taught on a general, nondenominational basis. Another exception is Hamburg, where Protestant-based religious education attempts to encompass all students from different religious backgrounds.

In mandatory confessional RE, pupils from the age of 14 upwards have the right to opt out; before that age they need their parents' consent. After having quit RE, students are obliged to attend an alternative instruction course that is compulsory for pupils with no religious affiliation or with a different affiliation to the main churches. In some states, these alternative courses are called ethics, or philosophy, or values and norms, or practical philosophy. Until ten years ago, all Muslim students attended these alternative instruction courses. Today, Muslim RE is provided in many German states at least on an initial level. Government authorities try to expand the spread of Islamic instruction, but it is difficult to find homogeneous partners for cooperation, as it is the case with other churches for Christian RE or the Association of Jews in Germany for Jewish RE. The Muslim population is more strongly split into diverse groups.

Besides public and church schools, the German Constitution and government allow independent, explicitly "non-confessional" schools, where RE is not mandatory, in most cases not even offered. Approximately 30 % of the German population is Roman Catholic, another 30 % is Protestant, and the remainder either belongs to other smaller religious communities or has no religious affiliation at all or is explicitly atheist or antireligious. One can say that approximately one third of the German population has never attended or does not attend any RE at school.

In Roman Catholic RE at schools, the basic philosophy is that of the "trias," meaning that three components of RE are more or less associated with Roman Catholicism (see German Bishops Conference, 2005): First, RE teachers are members of the Catholic Church. They need a university degree in Catholic theology and an official authorization by the church called "missio canonica" to be allowed to teach. This arrangement is meant to guarantee the authenticity of teachers, which means that teachers do not only teach mere facts about religion but teach their

religion in an authentic way drawing from their own experiences and confession-oriented religious practice. Second, students of Roman Catholic RE are usually baptized members of the Catholic Church. However, if parents request that their non-baptized children be allowed to participate, it is usually no problem. Third, the content of RE lessons is based on Catholic principles. This "trias" is one of the main features of Roman Catholic RE in Germany up to the present day.

However, "there is a growing mismatch between the institutional position of religion in schooling, and beliefs and practices among the broader population" (Smyth, Darmody, & Lyons, 2013, p. 1). As it is the case in many countries in Europe, Germany is witnessing a decline in religious affiliation in society. The size of the nonreligious part of the population is growing. As the so-called Religion Monitor, an international comparative study on religion in society today, puts it: "In particular, socio-economic well-being generally results in a decline in the social significance of religion in society and a decrease in the numbers of people who base their life praxis on religious norms and rules" (Religion Monitor, 2013, p. 10). In Germany as in other European countries, religion has declined in significance, but it has not disappeared. Still 57 % of the population see themselves as religious persons, and there is a significant difference between former East Germany (36 %) and West Germany (78 %). For many people religion is still central to their lives, but in their practice they are *not* explicitly affiliated with any religious community. The process of dechristianization and detraditionalization is accelerating in most European countries as it is definitely the case in Germany. This fact seems to confirm the thesis that many contemporaries live in a way of "believing without belonging" (Davies, 2006). On the other hand the numbers of religiously indifferent persons and people who regard themselves as nonreligious are increasing within the last decades (Religion Monitor, 2013, p. 19).

All these sociological data are posing serious questions to the right of churches and other religious institutions to provide RE in public schools, as is regulated by the German Constitution. Can RE in schools, as it has been taught in Germany for more than six decades, be a model for future religious instruction or must it be rethought and reshaped fundamentally?

Theological Aspects of Ecumenical Cooperation and Interreligious Dialogue

Social change and sociological data are not the only source for reconceptualizing and reshaping school instruction. A basic theory of education is also necessary. Beyond that, the task of rethinking RE in a Roman Catholic framework needs clear theological, ecclesiological, and anthropological points of reference if its specific denominational identity is to be maintained. For this process the decisions of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) are of fundamental importance. The council aimed at opening the church to modernity, at finding a positive coexistence with the modern world, and at starting a new and intensive dialogue with all forces in society

that are interested in a human countenance of the world. The church reframed its self-concept away from an understanding of the church as a solid and never-changing "building" to a conception of the church as "the people of God," who find themselves on a permanent pilgrimage and in a permanent process of renewal (see Second Vatican Council, 1964b, *Lumen Gentium*).

This reform was started with the fundamental renewal of Roman Catholic liturgy and ended in the promulgation of three documents that are intended to find new attitudes towards people affiliated with other Christian denominations or with other religions, as well as a new understanding of the freedom of religion. The decree on ecumenism (Second Vatican Council, 1964a, *Unitatis redintegratio*) was inspired by the ecumenical movement that was held in high regard during the Second Vatican Council. For the first time since the European Reformation, other denominations were seen as dialogue partners at eye level. The declaration of the church's attitude towards the non-Christian religions (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Nostra Aetate*) was coined by the will to find a new "habitudo," a complete new attitude, towards other world religions. Later, this document was qualified as a "Copernican Revolution" (Leimgruber, 2007, p. 40) due to the fact that for the first time in the history of the church in official documents, other religions were not seen as *massa damnata* (St. Augustine) but in a positive light. In a similar conception the declaration of Second Vatican Council on religious freedom (Second Vatican Council, 1965b, *Dignitatis Humanae*), which is on the right of individuals and communities to social and civil freedom in religious matters, starts with the dignity of all human beings that is rooted in creation in God's own likeness and comes to the conclusion that no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs.

These three documents, in close relation with the basic dogmatic constitutions of the Second Vatican Council on the church (*Lumen Gentium*) and on God's Revelation (*Dei Verbum*), live on the presupposition that God has established a fundamental personal relationship with all humankind and every single human being, no matter which culture or religion someone belongs to, and that God ultimately wants salvation for everybody. For this reason every human person has the same dignity. This theological (re)discovery is the foundation of a new and authentic dialogue between the church and "the world." Since the Second Vatican Council, the term "dialogue" is not only seen as a key term but as the core identity of the Roman Catholic Church (Kasper, 2012). Pope Francis confirms the centrality of the dialogue with other religions and denominations in his Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, where he writes about social dialogue as a contribution to peace Pope Francis, 2013, para. 238–258). This task includes the dialogue between faith, reason, and science, the ecumenical dialogue, the relations with Judaism, the interreligious dialogue, and the dialogue in the context of religious freedom.

Dialogue in the sense of mutual exchange cannot be established from "above"; it must be realized on the same level, from eye to eye, from ear to ear, and from heart to heart. The precondition is a new *habitudo*, attitude, towards those who do not belong to Roman Catholicism. This attitude is based on the value of respect. To form and then work at one's attitude is an essential task of (religious) education.

Cooperation of Catholic RE with Other Denominations

An attitude of respect forms the foundation for a new understanding of, and dialogue with, non-Catholic denominations. After centuries of enmity and mistrust, Roman Catholicism has started a new relationship with Protestant, Orthodox, Methodist, Anglican, Baptist, and many other churches which again is reflected in Pope Francis'encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013). With respect to other Christian denominations, he writes:

> We must never forget that we are pilgrims journeying alongside one another. This means that we must have sincere trust in our fellow pilgrims, putting aside all suspicion or mistrust, and turn our gaze to what we are all seeking: the radiant peace of God's face. (para. 244)

The result of such an attitude is an immense learning process:

> How many important things unite us! If we really believe in the abundantly free working of the Holy Spirit, we can learn so much from one another! It is not just about being better informed about others, but rather about reaping what the Spirit has sown in them, which is also meant to be a gift for us. (para. 246)

With regard to RE at schools, this approach can be identified as learning in the spirit of mutual respect and "reconciled differences" (Meyer, 2009). Since the Second Vatican Council, Roman Catholic RE in Germany is taught not in an exclusively Catholic framework but in ecumenical openness. Catholic RE teachers, curricula, and teaching materials emphasize the need for dialogue between denominations and the benefit of mutual exchange. Many teachers informally work together with teachers of other denominations or, where no teachers from other churches are available, even teach mixed groups in an ecumenical spirit.

An institutionalized mutual cooperation between different denominations even goes one step further. This model has become possible since an agreement was reached by the two major churches (German Bishops Conference & Protestant Church in Germany, 1998) about cooperative RE, outlining the various possibilities for cooperation in the classroom, in teacher training, curriculum development, etc. Interestingly, this model of denominational cooperative RE is not only derived from the above-mentioned theological presuppositions but, as empirical studies show, from children's needs as well (for the following see Schweitzer & Boschki, 2004). Paying more attention to a child's right to make up their own mind and to raise their voice concerning decisions that affect their life, it is important to listen to what pupils can tell us about their own perceptions, ideas, and viewpoints of education in general and RE in particular. As far as their denominational affiliation is concerned, interviews with children in primary schools show that in most cases they don't like separate RE classes because they want to stay together with their friends and peers. However, in the course of their school career, they perceive that there *are* differences between denominations, e.g., when they approach First Communion, in Germany usually at the age of 9, which is in the third grade of primary school. They learn that Protestant or Muslim or nonreligious peers don't participate in the preparation for the sacrament. Usually the catechesis for the First Communion is

held and organized in the parish, not in school RE. Here they learn about different affiliations and want to know what it's all about.

> Children encounter terms such as Protestant and Catholic in the same way they encounter other terms, names or institutions in society. In many cases children form their own interpretations and explanations of what such things may mean. In our view, it is part of the task of primary education to support children in this respect. In this context, the question of the children's own affiliation and belonging plays an important role as well. (Schweitzer & Boschki, 2004. p. 39)

Cooperative RE can support the children's attempts at understanding the world. It opens the closed form of denominational separation but at the same time it does not neglect denominational differences. It helps to strengthen the experience of Christian unity but also does justice to the differences of Christian traditions. Denominational cooperative RE can be organized in various forms (Schweitzer & Boschki, 2004, p. 44):

1. RE in denominationally separate courses including cooperation between teachers from different denominations
2. Switching between separate and denominationally mixed courses
3. Mixed groups—once in a while RE teachers change their groups temporarily
4. Team-teaching of RE teachers from different denominations in mixed groups

In these models and groups, more than "reconciled differences" between denominations can be taught and learned (Boschki, 2013). When pupils from different backgrounds, be they confessional, religious, social, ethnic, or national, come together in an atmosphere of mutual respect and valuation, of estimation, and appraisal for the other, they learn more than facts and cognitive concepts. In an ideal world they learn to change and shape their own attitude towards people who live differently and have different affiliations as compared to their own. Roman Catholic RE in the future could, and should, follow this vision: to respect (denominational) differences, to see differences as an enrichment for one's own life, to cooperate in RE courses with other denominations without disregarding or downgrading differences, to find as many commonalities as possible, and, last but not least, to help young learners to find their own perspective, their own position in relation to faith and (Christian) values—and all this is embedded in a dialogic, cooperative RE.

Catholic RE in Interreligious Settings

"Dialogue" could also be a main guideline for Catholic RE in interreligious perspective. As shown above, the major focus of the fundamental Second Vatican Council declaration *Nostra Aetate* is that of an attitude of respect. With regard to Hinduism and Buddhism, this document formulates a "revolutionary" sentence: "The Catholic Church rejects nothing that is true and holy in these religions" (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Nostra Aetate*, para. 2). Here, the church expresses esteem and valuation with reference to the spiritual practices and expressions of

religious life in other religions. Concerning Islam it says: "The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth…" (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Nostra Aetate*, para. 3). The very heart of the declaration is the rediscovery of the very special relationship of Christianity with Judaism (Second Vatican Council, 1965a, *Nostra Aetate*, para. 4), which is more than a relationship with "other" or "strange" or "different" religions; the Jewish tradition is part of the very identity of Christianity. In summary, it can be said that the consequence of these new theological positions must be an immense effort in teaching and learning. This affects Catholic school-based RE in its very center and will transform RE as it is traditionally instructed.

Again, these transitions come close to what children need. Members of the young generation in the postmodern, "liquid" world need the competence to find their own roots and belongings; at the same time they need the competence for dialogue and exchange. This dual perspective is crucial for rethinking RE today. Interreligious competence as the outcome of RE is not a matter of simply adding two or three competences to the regular social competences that are acquired in RE courses. As Stefan Altmeyer has worked out, interreligious abilities (dialogical competences such as self-awareness, empathy, appreciation, respect, tolerance of ambiguity, appropriate self-disclosure, behavioural flexibility, and the ability for meta-communications) must be strictly combined with religious competences in general (such as spiritual sensitivity, religious knowledge and reasoning, ability to relationship, capacity for action and expression; see Altmeyer, 2010, pp. 636f.).

When reflecting upon interreligious learning, it becomes once more crystal clear that a new shape of Catholic RE encompasses two main duties, that is, (i) to help students get rooted in the Catholic tradition and (ii) at the same time know how to dialogue with others, be they members of other denominations or other religions. In this dual or dialectical approach to RE, which could be labelled "identity in dialogue," lies the basis of a renewed form of Catholic RE in future.

"Identity in dialogue" could be realized in concrete forms of cooperation with RE of other religions. In state schools, for example, teachers of different religions might cooperate in the preparation of their classroom teaching, they could exchange ideas and teaching material. Furthermore, they could bring their various groups together for real encounter in classroom or in other settings, e.g., in common field trips to various sacred spaces like churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples. Encounter is a key concept for both religious education and interreligious education (Miedema, 2009).

Summary: The Future Shape of Catholic RE in Germany, Europe, and Beyond

As shown above, German society and religions and religious life in Germany are changing dramatically. Both society and religiosity are becoming absolutely pluralistic, diverse, and "liquid." Against this transformational background, it is clear that

(Catholic) RE is also undergoing a process of transformation. The future shape of RE is dependent on sociological, educational, theological, and subject-oriented aspects. "Rethinking RE" (Jackson, 2004) means to reflect on RE in terms of postmodernity, plurality, cultural and religious diversity, social conflicts, and "struggle for recognition" (as philosopher Axel Honneth puts it: Honneth, 1996). Solving these conflicts and struggles is the new task for Catholic RE, a task characterized by entirely new objectives compared with traditional ways of understanding Christian education and catechesis. RE can make a major contribution to social cohesion and understanding between various groups and religions in order "to heal a fractured world" (Sacks, 2005) if it is reshaped in the sense of interdenominational cooperation and interreligious dialogue.

Educational theorist and Catholic religious educator Gabriel Moran formulates the new approach to RE in a world of diversity as follows:

> My claim is that religious education is one of the central issues of international understanding in today's world. Future peace and security depend not only on politics, economics and technology, but on the successful transformation of religious education. … In the last half century there has been some progress in acknowledging that religion is central to international conflicts and that education is the key to resolving such conflicts. … we still have a long way to go in shifting the term 'religious education' so that it is recognized as a serious participant in worldwide struggles for peace, justice and freedom.(Moran, 2006, p. 38)

Given this kind of understanding, RE is much more than introducing people to a specific religious tradition or community. It is also much more than helping individuals to cope with contingency and to find ways for a better private life. (Catholic) RE is contributing to interreligious and intercultural education, to citizenship education, as well as value education. It will never again emphasize a monolithic explanation of world and belief and never again be mono-centered or mono-hermeneutical. The dialogical approach to RE is based on a fundamental relationship approach that encompasses all aspects of religious life and religious education (Boschki, 2006). RE gives impulses for (young) people to be sensitive in their relationship with themselves, with others (friends, different people, strangers), with the world that surrounds us (nature, culture, parish, church, society), with time ("objective" time, biographical time, timeline of history–present–future, biblical and historical tradition, terminated lifetime), and in all these various dimensions: to be sensitive for their relationship with God.

The latter, the relationship with God, constitutes the dignity of all people, religious or nonreligious. From a religious point of view, the differences between various lifestyles, world views, social patterns of communities, and personal identity constructions can be evaluated and estimated positively. In (Catholic) RE pupils can learn about the "dignity of difference" (Sacks, 2011). "It may well be," writes Rabbi Jonathan Sacks from a Jewish background, but which applies for the Catholic tradition as well, "that religious communities are one of the few environments in which these values are still sustained" (Sacks, 2011, p. 81). Values are not self-centered but focused on the fellow person, especially on those in need. Since the Second Vatican Council, the Catholic way is a way of dialogue and openness to other denominations, to religions, and to nonreligious explanations of the world. For this reason,

Catholic RE in schools contributes to a culture of respect, and this means that it contributes to the general education of young people in terms of civic education, citizenship education, and human rights education.

The Catholic way of today is twofold: preserving the tradition of the church on the one hand and at the same time being open for dialogue and encounter with others. Thus, RE can help to maintain Catholic principles, Catholic identity, and Catholic values in the context of a pluralistic and "liquid" world.

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Chapter 17
Catholic Religious Education in Schools in Poland: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Challenges

Elżbieta Osewska

The Polish Context

Poland is situated in the middle of Europe, and this geographical fact has played a very important role in the history of this land. Being located between Western and Eastern Europe, Poland has been influenced by Western and Eastern mentalities, by Roman Catholicism and orthodoxy and by Latin and Cyrillic script. Situated in this difficult and strategic position, Poland has managed to keep its unique character. In the past, Polish intellectuals, artists and Church leaders created an ideological image of Poland as the protector of Christianity. This image was supported by Polish military victories over the Turks and Russians (later Bolsheviks) and formed part of the Polish national mythology and symbolism. Poland's history testifies to the fact that its religious and national identity go hand in hand. Consequently, according to Polish mentality, Catholicism coincides with Polishness. This was especially so during the time of partition and of the soviet regime when the Roman Catholic Church became the defender of Polishness as it supported the spiritual strength of the nation and created an original 'theology of nation' which resulted in the sacralisation of the term and its values (Osewska, 2013). From 1945, after the entrance of the Russian Red Army until the fall of communism, the country was under Soviet domination. Following the Potsdam Agreement of 1945, even the borders of Poland were changed significantly when the whole country was moved geographically to the west by some 300–500 km. Dramatically, the Poles living in the eastern part of the country found that their land had been incorporated into the USSR. The post-war years were characterised by regress in Polish culture, symbolised by the Palace of Culture and Science built in Warsaw as a gift from Stalin to the Polish nation. However, Poles, as brave rebels, organised many anti-Soviet riots during the 1950s,

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1960s and up to the 1980s when a strike in Gdansk ordered by the trade union Solidarność spread to the whole country. The election of the bishop of Kraków, Karol Wojtyła, as Pope John Paul II in 1978, supported the Poles in the fight for freedom, dignity and faith (Davies, 2001).

Despite the many challenges, a considerable part of Polish society still responds to the Gospel and has kept many of its religious traditions. In order to understand better the nature, aims and content of Catholic Religious Education (CRE) in schools in Poland, this chapter will provide an outline of the history of religious education in Poland and will explore its underlining concepts and challenges.

A Brief History of Religious Education in Poland

Before the Second World War, the legal situation of religious education in Polish schools was based on the Concordat between Poland and the Holy See that was signed in Rome on 10 February 1925. According to Article 13, CRE became obligatory in all state schools, except for schools of higher education. The Roman Catholic Church was entitled to give religious education and instruction and to supervise the teaching content in schools (Zając & Mąkosa, 2009). However, the post-war communist regime revoked the agreement, and as from 1945 state schools had no connections with any religious institution. Private educational institutions, mostly run by the Roman Catholic Church, were suppressed, and the symbol of the cross was removed from schools. Atheist propaganda began to be presented in all institutions. The Polish bishops sent memoranda to the authorities regarding this matter, pointing to the need of the faithful to express their faith (Misiaszek, 2010). From the school year 1950–1951, the responsibility for the organisation of CRE lessons was shifted from the central level to the school principals, and shortly afterwards, further restrictions were imposed (Doppke, 1992). The principle of separation of church and state enshrined in the Stalin constitution of 1952 was interpreted according to the Soviet model (Tomasik, 2003).

In 1961, CRE was removed completely from schools. On 15 July 1961, the communist parliament passed a law on the development of the education system that in Article 2 decreed that schools and all educational institutions were secular (Act on the Development of Education and Upbringing). The socialist state, based on Marxist materialism, used the school as one of the main centres of ideological indoctrination. After 1961, the Roman Catholic Church in Poland had to organise a network of parish catechetical centres. Despite strong attempts to control parish catechesis, after resistance from priests and parish catechists, the government retreated from its insistence to oversee catechetical classes. Following widespread strikes in the country, in 1981 the Ministry of Education ordered school principals to coordinate the school timetable with the parish catechetical plan and furthermore allowed CRE in youth detention centres and sanatoriums (Tomasik, 2003).

The Basic Assumption of CRE in Polish Schools

The key historical, religious and cultural issues of the past have strongly impacted upon the current CRE in schools in Poland. The confessional nature of religious education as a part of school curriculum was one of the demands presented by the Church and by society in the beginning of sociopolitical transformation of Poland. Religious traditions moved to a different position and status in the social contexts of Europe. In this regard, the differences between the western and the eastern/central part of Europe are evident and cause misunderstandings. Societies in the east are much closer to the integration of the secular and the religious domain, which is difficult to accept by the western perception of the separation of Church and state. In Poland there is still a connection between secular and religious domain, between public and private expression of faith. Catholicism is present in a public sphere of life. For instance, national ceremonies include the liturgical celebrations. It is also noteworthy to remember that in Poland, Catholicism is a part of national identity, which is still prominent in the individual's identity make-up. The strong conviction that Poles have always been faithful to God have helped to move so decisively beyond repeated tragedies from the past. This is still evidenced by high rates of attendance at weekly mass (40 %) (ISKK, GUS, 2014) and pilgrimages (ISKK, GUS, 2014). This also explains the Poles' expectation that religious values should be recognised in a European constitution (Osewska, 2013).

In Poland religious education is a confessional subject, offered by the Roman Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant churches in state and confessional schools. Parents or (in secondary school) pupils can opt out and choose ethics course. There are only 530 Catholic schools, which is a rather low figure when considering Poland's population of 38.5 million people. This is probably because the majority of Poles do not see the necessity of sending their children to Catholic schools since they expect that state-run schools offer adequate CRE. Moreover, most of the school directors, teachers and pupils are Catholic, and they have influence on setting the ethos of the school. Religious education in school is often connected to the formation of moral/ethical attitudes of pupils. The essential elements of the school's educative syllabus are also included in the school retreats, which last for a few days, as well as the participation of pupils and teachers in the liturgy at the beginning and the break of a school year, on public holidays or on the school patron's holiday (Osewska & Stala, 2008; Rada Szkół Katolickich, 2014).

Another phenomenon typical of Poland is the existence of many state and private schools named after Pope John Paul II (there are currently more than 550 schools named after the great Pope, including two universities). These schools are connected through a network. Pupils and teachers belonging to John Paul II's school network are expected to get involved in spreading the papal teachings, implementing them in real-life situations and popularising them (Osewska & Stala, 2008). Many youngsters in Poland have interest in spiritual or ethical issues and often search for leadership offered by the Christian youth movements. The authority of Pope John Paul II is legendary and is followed by many young people in various groups.

The reintroduction of CRE in schools happened by virtue of the Education Act of 7 September 1991 and the provisions included in the Concordat between the Apostolic See and the Republic of Poland signed on 28 July 1993 (Dziennik Ustaw/ Journal of Laws 1998, no. 51 item 318 as cited in (Zając & Mąkosa, 2009, p. 170)). Sociopolitical transformations after 1989 have created better conditions for the development of CRE. Since 2007, grades obtained in RE or ethics count towards the grade point average. This provision was generally well received by pupils and parents. At first there were voices of dissent coming from post-socialist politicians who raised the issue of discrimination against pupils not attending RE classes, but the offering of the optional subject ethics stopped that discussion. Interestingly, in Poland some pupils from religious minorities attend CRE classes as a means of being introduced into Polish culture.

The development of RE in Poland is a subject of discussion. Representatives of educational sciences point out that if the school is a place of receiving RE, then the religious educational aims should be in accordance with general educational objectives. However, in practice, the Church supports more the pastoral, ecclesial and catechetical dimensions of the subject. Hence, problems concerning the defining of the character of CRE arise. Some theorists point out clear distinctions between evangelisation, catechesis and religious education, which are also recognised by the Church (Misiaszek, 2010). However, other specialists in RE do not make such a distinction and talk about CRE as part of catechesis, which not only leads children and young people into an exploration of the different aspects of Christianity, but also aims at deepening their faith. In this sense, catechesis is perceived as a 'dialogue among believers', intending to help people towards maturity of faith. They also stress upon the complementary nature of evangelisation, catechesis and CRE (Stala, 2011). Yet some experts hold the position that catechesis takes place within a faith community which is not available in a school context (Misiaszek, 2010). Some specialists have concentrated more on the issue of the presence of CRE in schools and less on its nature and aims. It seems that in the present situation where in Poland there is no empirical verification of the CRE curriculum and programme, the discussion in this area is bound to continue.

The idea of religious education as teaching about religions or even about Christianity is not widely accepted in Poland. This is due to Polish national specificity. On the one hand, this is due to the relation between Church and state, while on the other hand, it is due to the religious homogeneity present in Poland. Many experts in Poland argue that the study of religions through disciplines such as psychology and sociology implies the weakening of religion. In their opinion, taking a widely neutral viewpoint and analysing religions from 'the outsider position' reduce the importance of a specific religion and minimise religious practices. Christianity needs to have personal significance for the life of the pupil and for society (Misiaszek, 2010).

The Aims and Contents of CRE

In Poland, the main body responsible for the teaching of CRE, especially the content, is the Roman Catholic Church. The Ministry of Education is only responsible for organisation and classroom management. The approach to RE is confessional, based on the directives given by the Church, so it may be called catechetical and evangelising (Mąkosa, 2011; Misiaszek, 2010). The CRE teacher is not only a transmitter of knowledge and a pedagogue, but he/she is a witness of faith. The focus on deepening of the faith requires participants who believe or at least who are searching for the answers to basic, existential questions. For this reason, the CRE curriculum includes the deposit of faith, liturgy, morals, prayer, the community of believers and mission (Mąkosa, 2011; Stala, 2010, 2014; Zając & Mąkosa, 2009). The general aims of Catholic Religious Education are to promote:

- knowledge and understanding of the Catholic faith,
- existential acceptance of such content by the participants,
- interest in religious issues,
- contact with God in liturgy and prayer,
- the formation of a moral attitude,
- the skills required for analysis and interpretation of religious texts and the ability to present one own statement,
- ecclesial socialization,
- an awareness of God's call. (Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, 2010; Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, 2010)

However, in relation to nonbelievers, it is not simply designed to lead to conversion, but it is rather meant as a journey to help pupils discover the presence of God, Christian tradition and the Bible.

Mainly due to the reform of education in 1999 and due to the introduction of a new 'Core Curricula for Pre-school and General Education in particular types of schools' in 2008 (The System of Education in Poland, 2010), the new core curriculum for CRE was prepared under the auspices of the Conference of the Polish Episcopate (Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, 2001; Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, 2010; Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, 2001a, 2001b; Konferencja Episkopatu Polski, 2010). The content of CRE in schools is catechetical. It aims at the upbringing and formation of pupils' personality and faith through reference to God's self-revelation (Bible, tradition), through the teaching of the Church and through celebration of Christian mystery and prayer as well as human experience and culture. Children aged 3–5 may receive preprimary CRE based on God's love and relationship with God and people. In primary school (grades 1–3), teaching content is focused on Christian initiation, introducing pupils to the sacraments of penance and reconciliation as well as to the Eucharist. For senior primary school pupils (grades 4–6), content concentrates on mystagogy as a deeper initiation into the sacraments, liturgy and the Church. In lower secondary education/gymnasium (secondary grades 1–3), the syllabus concentrates on understanding and confessing the faith. Secondary education/post-gymnasium school (grades 1–3) content enables pupils to understand

the role of an adult person in society and concentrates on being a witness of Jesus Christ in everyday life (Komisja Wychowania Katolickiego Konferencji Episkopatu Polski, 2010; Zając & Mąkosa, 2009).

Since 1945, RE in Poland had to adjust itself a few times to the education system and sociopolitical context. Over the years, due to the huge work of the catechetical and pastoral institutes and the chairs of theology faculties, parish catechists and RE teachers, the focus of RE in Poland developed from simple teaching of the catechism, doctrine and morality to a multidimensional process highlighting evangelisation; from an apologetic system to a more open theological approach; from memorising catechetical formulas to a diversity of teaching methods; and from traditional classroom teaching to activity-based teaching and a community-based learning process with a variety of settings and interactions. CRE is not simply one subject among many, but according to Church documents, it should be linked with the catechetical process in the family and the parish. This is still possible in villages and small towns, but due to pluralism, it becomes problematic in the cities (Osewska, 2012). Misiaszek (2010) states that CRE in state schools in Poland stresses too much on ecclesial formation and does not pay enough attention to the development of personal and religious maturity of every pupil. There is a certain lack of coherence between generally formulated aims and tasks that are plotted for the process of religious learning.

From 2001 until 2013 there have been many CRE and catechetical textbooks, published under the supervision of the Roman Catholic Church, mostly prepared according to the curriculum issued by the Catholic Education Commission of the Polish Bishops' Conference. However, only further research that takes into consideration the achievements of psychology, pedagogy and educational sciences will enable authors of new RE textbooks to find proper models for CRE in today's context (Stala, 2010, 2014). The authors of syllabuses, programmes, curricula and RE textbooks aiming to help young people in their preparation for a future life in a pluralist society must be aware that the basis of this formation should be rooted in the development of the human being and in faithfulness to God. However, there has been a neglect of large-scale, empirical research (despite a few undertaken on a more regional scale) giving direct attention to the issues of learning and teaching RE within the Polish educational system.

Perspectives and Challenges

Religious education in schools takes place within a social and cultural reality. Since 2004, when Poland joined the European Union, pluralism in Polish society has been on the increase mainly due to migration, travelling, media and ICT, resulting in easy communication and exposure to diversified ideas. The Catholic Church in Poland responded to the growing pluralism in different ways. More traditional bishops supported a rather defensive strategy, presenting the impact of pluralism and postmodernity on personal identity as a great danger to Polish Catholic society. They

promoted the idea of associating Catholicism with national values, morality and citizenship by arguing that CRE in schools is an important and valid approach in order to prepare Poles for responsible work for their country and the EU. Consequently, Poland was recognised as an active participant in the evangelisation of Europe. Another response (coming from more liberal bishops) was the recognition of cultural and religious pluralism, and the growing secular tendencies in society, but meanwhile attempting to retain the integrity of Christianity as a system of belief and a source of morality and spirituality. This position intended to promote more ecumenical RE and Christian literacy and to help pupils to identify themselves with and to argue for their religious position. Even more progressive was the position of bishops, inspired by specialists in RE, that if pluralism and postmodernity demand dialogue, then Christian education must be more open to dialogue. This means that faith must be increasingly understood as a process of searching for maturity and responsibility. This in turn implies a CRE that is open to personal concerns, social challenges and discussion between faith and culture (Misiaszek, 2010).

Even the level of religiousness of pupils in the classroom reveals that the setting is a pluralist environment (believers to different degrees, searchers, doubters). The experience of *difference* seems to include incidents of competition, comparing and conflict, which for some pupils may be threatening. Thus, religious learning processes from the beginning need to encounter the diversity and dynamism of believers. Religious learning is an interactive process whose indirect goal is the achievement of respect and understanding. The learner is the main actor in achieving learning results and needs support and help in setting up learning experiences with influences coming from a variety of conditions and circumstances (Ziebertz, 2003).

Since 1990, the trends in CRE in Poland have been influenced by European developments. While the purpose of CRE has a significant relationship with catechesis and evangelisation, there has been a shift in emphasis from kerygmatic, theological, anthropological and political approach to a more integral one which endeavours to combine theology, social and human sciences, knowledge, experience, spirituality and faith formation. For CRE in Poland to be in line not only with knowledge and theology, but also with faith formation as relevant to the everyday life of youngsters, it needs to take into consideration many factors affecting this process. These include factors such as cultural and religious pluralism (intra and extra); the influence of mass media, especially the Internet; secularisation; relativism; consumerism; genderism; globalisation; and the growth of a pessimistic mood among youngsters in Poland, based on their parents' disappointment with the reality of democratic transformation. How are young people to develop their faith in confrontation with all these factors if they are not given much support in the development of critical thinking and understanding of the impact of pluralism? With the increasing possibilities of choice and of comparisons, do they find arguments for choosing Christianity/Catholicism over so many religions and nonreligious alternatives? With the strong influence of media celebrities, seen as postmodern messengers of the 'good news', are they being enabled to think critically and to make judgements? Mąkosa points out that, according to research carried out in Poland by

different research centres in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Catholic identity of the majority of Polish youth may be described as 'strong' with 90 % of Polish youth defining themselves as members of the Roman Catholic Church. Polish youth have a more positive attitude to the faith than their peers in the west, and 50 % of young Poles claim regular participation in religious practices. However, moral norms are contested by Polish youngsters, and consequently, their religiosity is getting more selective (Mąkosa, 2012). Polish Catholic bishops, instead of continuing with an unrealistic perception of children and youngsters and with the traditional RE teaching, should give them access to the various sources and help them to be active learners.

Pupils need to be well prepared to accept and undertake their personal, social and ecclesial responsibilities, so they must obtain the necessary knowledge and develop skills, values and attitudes which will enable them to contribute to society, the nation and the Church as active and mature members (Misiaszek, 2010). Society is changing so quickly that children and youngsters must be well equipped for the future. The new generation needs a more integral and holistic approach which grows out of the life of people and Revelation, the world and the Church, not in a contrasting or fragmented way, but in search for unity, developing in different conditions. The starting point should be the social, cultural, psychological and religious diversity, formed at the interfaces between Revelation and human experience, between the magisterium of the Church and the relevant scientific research and between the universal and the local. In CRE, many elements are intertwined: information, interpretation, communication, experiences, existential questions, theology, value formation, culture and faith (Majewski, 1995). With regard to CRE classes in Poland, particularly in the lower secondary and secondary RE curriculum, there is the need to encourage study, investigation and critical reflections as well as the promotion of growth and development of the whole person including the physical, psychological, spiritual, social, moral and religious dimensions. Further, this argument supports the proposals that RE needs to include the study of contemporary spiritual and moral issues in an open-ended, research-oriented way, including the critical interpretation of culture as a prominent source of implied and articulated meaning. This emphasis can help the CRE curriculum to focus more on the search for meaning, interpersonal communication and identity formation. This does not mean that educational issues should dominate the curriculum, but that they should coexist in harmony with theological ones (Rossiter, 2002).

Responding to present challenges, the author of this chapter together with professor Józef Stala and a group of catechists, theorists in catechetics, RE teachers and RE consultants has created a series of RE books based on a more integral, existential and communicative approach. In this set of books for children from 4 to 13 years old, using current theory of children's psychology, pedagogy and theology, the authors give pupils the space for learning, for making discoveries and for evaluating and reflecting upon their lives. Pupils are encouraged to become their own person and to find their way to God. RE books are not only based on the pupils' experience, but also on the process of spiral communication with children, relating to their questions, stories and reflections and to what appeals to them. Much time was spent in

finding children's words to describe certain religious phenomena, to choose the best way to make them participate in self-reflection, class discussions, storytelling and drama. The RE teacher's role is to facilitate this process and enable the pupils to discover links with the Scriptures, liturgy and traditions of the Church, but also to avoid easy correlations. The use of pupils' heroes, a girl, Zuzia, and a boy, Piotrek, who grow together with children from 4 years old up until the end of secondary school, is an additional help (Stala, 2011).

Conclusions

The transition from a socialist type of society to an individualistic, neo-liberal and plural one is very challenging, particularly with regard to education in Poland. In order to face the challenges that have emerged and to prepare the young generation to the new situation, CRE needs to adopt an attitude of dialogue. CRE needs to accept more theological concepts of dialogue in a learning process. There are many possibilities to access God's revelation, so CRE should be more open to presenting them. They also need to introduce learning for life. The discussion about religion is not limited to school, but this is a lifelong process connected to everyday situations. New methodology needs to concentrate upon the social relevance of what is to be learnt, given the concrete context and the challenges faith is confronted with. There need to be increased opportunities for the personal and religious development of pupils. Each age group has its own questions and problems, which need to be viewed from the perspective of the particular age. Furthermore, it is necessary to restore the dignity of the human person. Economy seems to dominate in the present society, so the acknowledgement of the transcendental dimension of human being reveals new prospects. The uniqueness of the person refers to God, who is the highest value. It is therefore necessary to arrange relationships based on the respect of every person. Religious education in schools needs to foster pupils' identity formation and strengthen the role of pupils' spirituality. While traditional CRE focused more on knowledge, today's CRE needs to create conditions for the learner's personal change and search for identity. It is vital that religious education teachers search for new ways of communication. The interactions between teacher and pupils, and among pupils themselves, lead to unexpected situations. All kinds of influences affect the participants in an open communication, and the input of each participant has a potential for achieving a successful learning outcome. Teachers need to focus on ways that enable students to develop critical thinking skills; the multitude of ideas, initiatives and interactions call for an ongoing critical discernment. Each person is supposed to make up his or her mind, to decide and to act at the individual level, in interaction with other people. Religious education in schools must support moral and/or ethical formation. In a plural society RE has to take into account the diversified approaches to values, norms and regulations and confront them with value conflicts allowing argumentation with the support of Christian principles. Religious education teachers and curriculum leaders need to continue to explore new models

of collaboration with the family, which models take into consideration the isolation of children especially due to parents' labour migration. There are various ways that may help parents and family members to recognise the needs of the young and that may motivate them to meet their children's expectations. There must be ongoing evaluation of the emerging trends and culture in the light of the Gospel and Christian teaching. The Second Vatican Council offered a challenging opportunity for a critical examination, on the one hand, and for a creative response to the invitation of the Gospel, on the other. Within the context of Poland, there is agreement that Catholicism (or Christianity) may bring social integration without the need of a policy of being against other religions. However, there currently does not appear to be much prospect of acceptance of a multireligious and/or interreligious concept. It is imperative that the present and future development of society be taken into account for Catholic Religious Education to be prepared for the challenges that it has to face.

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Chapter 18
A Theological Reflection on the Catholic Policy on Christian Religious Education in Nigeria

Mary-Chizurum Ugbor

Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to contribute to the enrichment of Christian Religious Education (CRE) of students in Nigeria. It is pertinent to say that the use of 'Christian' is deliberate because all faith-based schools and public schools in Nigeria are subject to the same national curriculum (either Islamic or Christian). However, in imparting this knowledge to students, teachers in

> Catholic schools will follow the curriculum specified in the *National Policy on Education* for all levels of education but shall alongside the content given by the policy, have an expanded curriculum that will give appropriate moral and religious instruction that is based on Catholic doctrine and practice. (Education Committee of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) 2005, p. 9)

This chapter proposes a change from *monological* and *confessional* approaches to an *integral* and *transformative* religious education (ITRE) approach. The ITRE is an approach that is sensitive and open to plurality of cultures and religious traditions, despite its confessional character that comes from a particular faith tradition (Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism).

The aim of this paper is to offer a CRE approach that corrects and transforms Nigeria's monological and confessional approaches. This is important because the existing approach does not go beyond memorisation, conversion and imposition of faith and is disconnected from the life experiences of people. The objective is to re-vise CRE in Catholic schools, making it dynamic and meaningful for students without undermining the particularity of the Christian identity.

Accordingly, this chapter is divided into three sections. The first section shall briefly examine the state of Nigeria's CRE. The second section presents a theological

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reflection on the Catholic policy on CRE. This chapter then proceeds to propose an ITRE approach in the third section as a model of CRE that can help faith-based schools to offer the possibility of teaching CRE in religiously and culturally diverse contexts as exist in Nigeria.

An Overview of Christian Religious Education in the Nigeria Context Today

Historically, Nigeria's educational system was influenced by three pedagogical cultures: the indigenous/traditional, Arabic-Islamic and Euro-Christian, which was imparted via the European colonial system, as well as in post-independent Nigeria.

Nigeria's CRE in the precolonial period began with the indigenous/traditional method as a means through which learners were orally educated in a way that developed their personalities and integrated them into community (Fafunwa, 1974). Consequently, the indigenous/traditional education had a core focus: faith and ways of becoming good moral subjects, establishing relationships and living in harmony with others in society. The Arabic language and Islamic religion have played important roles in Nigeria's history of Islamic Religious Knowledge/Studies (IRK/S), especially in Northern Nigeria. Islam as a way of life, especially amongst the Hausa, Fulani and Kanuri peoples, hinges on faith and moral principles (Hackett, 1999). Hence, IRK/S focused on training pupils to develop their religious identity through the memorisation of faith praxis. During the colonial period, Euro-Christianity stimulated the formulation of Christian Religious Knowledge/Studies (CRK/S) in post-independent Nigeria through building of churches and schools (Ivorgba, 2006). For instance, Shanahan (1994), an Irish missionary, used school education as a tool for evangelization in the rural areas to bring about Christianity. He used 'the students of his school as apostles of his faith. He made many of them catechists in the service of the Church' (p. 343). Notwithstanding, much emphasis was aimed at promoting commitment to Christ through converting non-Christian Nigerians to Christianity (Aghenta, 1993).

Furthermore, the British colonial governments (1800–1960) issued various educational policies that served as tools for CRE. For example, Lord Frederick Lugard's non-interventionist and restrictionist policies granted both Christian and Islamic religions special privileges to practise their religious faith (for further details, see Egonmwan, 1992; Ethel & Uwaezuoke, 2010).

The Nigerian postcolonial era (1960–2013) further maintained the same missionary-colonialist method of CRE since its focus was done in a mono-religious, confessional and denominational way (Nwagwu, 1979). Currently, the syllabus for CRE in Nigeria is exclusively biblical: it begins and ends with the bible, though it does not lose sight of the existential application. Okoro (2010) underlines 'knowledge of the Bible and fear of God; inculcating moral virtues; developing tolerance for other religions; creating a disciplined society and responsible citizenry and development of integrated personally, spiritual potentials, and problem solving

abilities' (p. 40) as Nigeria's CRE objectives that to date serve as an apparatus to teachers in either faith-based schools or public schools.

For Christians, the aims of teaching CRE in Nigeria are 'to teach the Bible, to teach morals and to teach catechesis or Christian nurture' (Gotan, 2005, pp. 20–24) to the students. Hence, the teaching method is rooted in the 'strong belief in Nigeria that CRE is closely connected to moral education' (Hackett, 1999, p. 558).

Within this framework, the Nigerian CRE, which is offered in both faith-based and public schools, is straightforward and monological. As Lawal, Ojo, and Osuji (2006) aver, students are taught moral lessons from the Old Testament, the synoptic Gospels and the epistles on selected themes. This syllabus hopes to connect with the need for reconciliation and peaceful relationship (through the study of the story of Jacob and Esau and the Parable of the Prodigal Son), to connect with the need for evangelisation instead of complacency (through the study of the Acts of the Apostles) and to meet the challenge of Christian living (through the study of Jesus Christ in the Gospels).

Again, Okoh (2012) argues that the curriculum for Nigerian Religious Education in 'both primary and secondary schools is exclusively Islamic or Christian, with no interreligious knowledge. Each religious tradition is responsible for instructing and forming their adherents; in most cases, the formation is religiously stereotyped or without reference to the other' (p. 204). He further contends that the teaching method is still monological since its themes, topics and contents focus more on God and the Bible. For instance, topics like 'God the creator, the goodness of God, God the provider and God the giver of family' come under the general theme, 'God's Goodness'. The contents' questions and answers read: 'who is God?' (invisible, everywhere, all powerful etc.), 'the creator?' (who made all things) and finally 'what are the things God created?' (the sun, stars, moon, plants, animals, etc.) The question that arises here is how could the monological approach, which is still used in Catholic schools by Nigerian teachers, be able to bring together more successfully the students and the content of the curriculum?

Problems with Christian Religious Education in Nigeria

A critical analysis of Nigerian CRE provides the following challenges. First, the teaching method is still monological, requiring students to receive, memorise and repeat what has been taught to them by the teacher. With regard to methodologically, the content delivery is still imprisoned in a 'rote learning' mode that focuses on the 'memorisation and regurgitation of facts', (Oduolowu, 2007, p. 96) and which does not engage students in high-level cognitive activities, problem-solving skills and decision-making. Hence, there is little or no chance for a relationship of dialogue between the teacher and student, and one wonders how the teacher could stimulate students' cognition (Okoh, 2012).

Second, the CRE method is oriented towards conversion to Christianity. What mattered was the evangelical way of 'teaching, preaching and healing through the

Bible' (Kolawole, 2003, p. 75). Within this praxis, the aim of CRE was either 'to win Africa for Christ', or 'to convert the heart' before one can 'instruct the mind' (Fafunwa, 1974, p. 84).

In such unhappy situation, the CBCN in September 2005 published a policy on education in Catholic schools as part of defending its schools' catholic identity and acknowledging the importance of holistic CRE in Nigeria.

Catholic Policy on Christian Religious Education in Nigeria: Synopsis

The document begins by stating its intention to offer a guide to the church and to help parents 'fulfil the obligation of providing Christian education for their children' (CBCN, n.p. 'introduction'). The policy states that Christian education in Catholic schools is holistic (for the formation of the human person), confessional ('so that all may attain eternal salvation in Christ') and civic ('at the same time promoting the common good of the society') (p. 1). Furthermore, the policy unequivocally states that its Christian education is Christocentric: 'the immediate and specific purpose of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian to express and form Christ himself in those who have been regenerated by baptism' (p. 2).

However, to counter an argument that CRE in Catholic schools is too confessional and evangelical, and not interested in civic issues, the policy states that 'the purpose of religion is not just to make converts. Rather, it is intended to make good citizens out of the pupils. Religious education will make pupils grow up to behave according to the upright norms of society' (p. 3). Additionally, the policy maintains that Catholic schools are not intolerant of the religious affiliation of others. It avows that the Christian education curriculum must 'be sensitive to cultural, racial and religious plurality, and cater for the development of the diversity of human talents with a balance of academic, technical and vocational skills' (p. 9). Therefore, to underscore its catholic identity and ethos, the policy stipulated those who should teach CRE at the different levels of Catholic education. For pupils in primary schools, they will be taught both religious studies as specified by the National Policy on Education as well an expansive 'Catholic doctrine' to be taught by 'well-trained Catholic teachers of CRK/S or by Catechists and Catechizers' (p. 13). In fact, for this position, only Catholic teachers who are 'grounded in their faith' (p. 13) should be employed. For students in secondary school, the CRE curriculum must include moral education which must include 'Catholic sex education' (p. 14). Subsequently, the confessional nature of Catholic schools is further revealed in the policy as regards the qualities of teachers in an ideal Catholic school. While they should be trained, appropriately qualified, have a natural love for imparting knowledge and be role models, they are nonetheless also expected 'to have received adequate

instruction in Catholic doctrine', bearing 'testimony by their lives and their teaching to the one teacher who is Christ' (pp. 31–32).

A Theological Reflection on the Catholic Policy on Christian Religious Education: Its Promises

The policy's contribution has been thought-provoking, particularly in the area of theology and education. The policy underlines five objectives of Christian education. First, from a theological perspective, the policy underscores the Catholic schools' confessionality and the 'ontological' identity of Christ: 'the … purpose of Christian education is to cooperate with divine grace in forming the true and perfect Christian, to express and form Christ himself in those who have been regenerated by baptism'. (n.p.). It further states that Christian education is the 'formation of the whole person so that all may attain eternal salvation in Christ' (n.p.). Hence, the centrality of Christian education is Christ as the teacher of all religion teachers.

The second objective is that Christian education is a process of inculcating moral and religious instruction based on Catholic doctrine and practice so that students may become better citizens. The third objective represents the tolerant feature of Catholic schools towards other religious affiliations; hence, emphasising the sensitivity which the Christian education curriculum must adopt to 'cultural, racial and religious plurality'.

The fourth and fifth objectives of Christian education underline the educational role models of religion teachers. Christian education should be holistic – embracing the 'physical, intellectual moral and spiritual' activities of the human person. Finally, the fifth objective states that only 'well-trained Catholic teachers of CRE or catechists and catechisers' who are grounded in true doctrine and who give witness by their Christian lives should be employed to teach religion. By implication, the policy requires the religion teacher to identify him/herself with a particular religious perspective, tradition and identity.

Contestations Confronting the Catholic Policy on Christian Religious Education in Nigeria

Those responsible for articulating the policy appear not to be concerned about pedagogical methods in order to realise its high ideals. There is only one reference to teaching method. The policy document proposes that Catholic schools 'should be well-equipped in modern means of learning in this technological age' (p. 11). It appears that religion teachers are left to their discretion with regard to teaching methods. Many of them resort to a rote-learning method that fails to engage students

in a faith dialogue. Accordingly, defective implementation of the policy has consequences in the CRE of students.

Exclusivist Approach to Christian Religious Education in Nigeria

In today's context, the policy's theological presupposition is exclusivist-oriented because it has a strong religious end – conversion of the whole person. This has its consequences in Nigerian CRE. For instance, in South-East Nigeria, religious educators either in a faith-based school or in a government school tend towards expressing their religious commitment, paying little or no attention to students who hold religious views that differ from theirs. As a result, educational and religious rights of Muslim students, for example, in such schools are marginalised since conversion is the core of the modules taught (Lemu, 2002). Therefore, religion which should play a vital role in the sociopolitical life of Nigerians has slowly turned into 'a battle-field for inter-religious struggle between Christianity and Islam' (Ori, 2009, n.p.). It has become a threat to education, most especially in institutions where young Nigerians (either in (non)-Catholic or (non)-Muslims schools) are trained to become religiously manipulated for interreligious violence. For instance, the long-existing religious violence and tensions in Nigeria were aggravated by the reintroduction of sharia between 1999 and 2002. And examples are cities of Kaduna and Zaria whose populations are religiously and ethnically very mixed, and the very poor states of the far northeast, where anti-establishment groups are emerged (Africa Report, 2010, n.p.). This claim has been substantiated by Ori's statements that institutions in which 'the ideology 'students-as-quaestors-after-knowledge' has been replaced by 'students-as-religious-disciples" (2009, n.p.).

Not Monological but Integral and Transformative Teaching Methodology

Quite often, teaching methods in Nigeria are teacher centred (Edevbaro, 1996). This approach calls for the teacher of religion to focus largely on rote learning, which is limited in imparting knowledge to students, and pays less attention to the integral and transformative learning process. The policy's second CRE objective focuses just on one religion, conscious of initiating students morally and spiritually to the religious community rather than aiming at developing their religious self through participation (Hackett). This has simply further entrenched confessional (mono-religious) CRE without any attention being given to the constitutional secularity and religio-cultural plurality of Nigeria (Nwagwu).

Teachers as Bearing Witness to Their Own Christian Faith

The policy states that teachers of religion must bear witness to their own particular Christian faith which is very important in any Catholic schools' identity. From a Christian perspective, CRE should lead to a firm and reasonable knowledge of a personal God that is worthy of absolute commitment mediated through Christian faith 'as a distinctive faith tradition with a claim to represent a divinely sanctioned narrative, praxis, and spirituality' (Merrigan, 1997, pp. 706–707). Hence, the policy does not sacrifice the distinctiveness of the Christian faith in the name of being open to religious plurality. However, given the actual context facing contemporary students, the overemphasis on the distinctiveness of a religion does not adequately pay attention to the identity crisis of students and does not allow them to grasp what is peculiar to their own religious traditions in the context of their integration within a plural society.

The educator of Roman Catholic religion, while bearing witness to his/her Christian faith, must do justice to the 'difference of alterity' (Pollefeyt, 2008, p. 309), which promotes a genuine interaction that appreciates, recognises and influences others (even to the point of transformation). It should be noted that this does not necessarily deny the possibility of radical alterity (Thompson, 2010). The contestation does not sacrifice the distinctiveness of the Christian faith but advocates for sensitivity to religious plurality present in the classroom. With this, the ITRE requires the teacher to act as a 'witness, specialist and moderator' (Pollefeyt, p. 312) in the religion class. This shall be explained later when discussing the ITRE model. Therefore, CRE in present day Nigeria must be critically reappraised especially in Catholic schools so that it can form, inform and reshape students' religious identities/philosophies of life, conflicts and crises. This article, thus proposes an ITRE model for this needed process.

Towards an Integral and Transformative Model of Religious Education in Nigeria

A principle claim of this article is that an integral and transformative religious education (ITRE) model with practical sensitivity to plurality is needed in Nigerian schools today so that students may be prepared to face the existential cultural challenges of the time and its religious and interreligious realities. Accordingly, the ITRE model consists of four principal proposals: first, it appeals for a whole human person-oriented approach that takes seriously the social issues confronting students in Nigeria. Second, the ITRE calls for content communicative methodology that empowers students with responsibility to search for their own biographies and diverse concrete contexts and experiences within the Christian tradition, including other traditions and worldviews. Third, the ITRE curriculum strives to bring 'faith into life' and 'life into faith'. The final point favours an educational plan that makes CRE more sensitive to peace education and justice.

Therefore, the ITRE that I am proposing is not just a new form of 'colonisation' or 'importation' of Leuven's and Groome's models of RE into Nigeria. Rather, it is about a liberative praxis built on hermeneutics because it focuses on interpretation of the context, to know the forces that generate social injustice. So, the ITRE is not a question of a Western model but a Christian model which is as well universal. It speaks about the human person as a hermeneutical being capable of seeking his/her own meaning in life. It is also dialogical, without denying the particularity and confessionality of religious education. The way it could be implemented in CRE in Nigeria will be delved into below.

The Wholeness of Person

The wholeness of person should be appreciated against the contextual reality of faith communication in Nigeria that presently pays too little attention to young people's contemporary pluralistic environment, where they have to deal with the complexities of people's religions and often their own existential crises. Beyond this, the ITRE, through the whole-person dimension (which the policy theoretically mentions but stops short of showing its practicability), offers a way to enable CRE students to participate actively in the learning process. Students are encouraged to become fully developed, responsible and competent to handle the challenges of their life since the whole-person approach takes seriously the centrality of 'discernment' as an anthropological task. Human persons, including students in RE classes, are constantly engaged in discernment within the four movements of 'listening, understanding, remembering/ dreaming and acting'. This discernment is important in CRE because it involves the whole person, which is the various 'human capacities of [the] heart, mind, soul and body' (White, 2005, p. 9).

Therefore, the educator's responsibility is to start from where the students are ('present' praxis) and engage the whole person's life experiences – their heads, hearts and hands, engaged as the capacities of an existential subject (Groome, 1991). Subsequently, CRE in Nigeria needs to employ Ogbonnaya's (2001) perspective on a Christian education: 'the CRE of the person was wholistic, involving the human person as a whole in all of the relationality, biological and non-biological forms represented and seen as an eco-systemic balancing act' (p. 117). Consequently, CRE should be holistic as to keep the vision of Christian life forever alive in people's hearts, minds and hands.

Content (Communication-Oriented) Dimension

The content (communication-oriented) dimension focuses on 'what' and 'how' specific topics and themes should be taught to the students in the class. The 'what' of content involves two elements: plurality and religious traditions. The responsive

ITRE model attempts to bridge the gap between religious tradition and contemporary society and culture by communicating the content to students in the class. This is not done by means of a linear exposition of either the students' life experiences or the Christian tradition, including other traditions and worldviews, but rather from a dynamic dual interpretation of both elements.

'How' the content should be communicated to the students proposes a hermeneutic approach that works at the same time both deductively (confrontation with the Christian tradition) and inductively (finding clues in human experience or in a life story) and conceives students as active/hermeneutical beings by starting from a critical communication with them in school. This hermeneutic approach moves beyond either. On the one hand, it presents the content to the students in a direct, top-down way (a single direction, originating from the teacher, who delivers the content which students are told to accept, typical of Nigeria CRE) or, on the other, starting from experience, then connecting it to the content of the tradition (i.e. the teacher easily starts with the human experience and then through it transports the student to the Christian tradition).

Accordingly, this component seeks to redress the Nigerian CRE that focused on a 'didactic teacher-centred pedagogy' (Tubbs, 2005, p. 245) where the teacher assumes the sole source of knowledge and prevents the students from participating, dialoguing and reflecting critically on what has been taught to them. Hence, 'the teacher talks and the students listen' (Okoh, p. 165). This is what Bieringer (2010) calls 'the linear, monological approach to RE in which an omniscient teacher has the task of imparting the pre-given knowledge (mostly reduced to content) to passively receptive students [as corresponding] with an understanding of revelation as a one-way street through which God reveals 'himself and the eternal decisions of his will' to a passive humanity' (pp. 373–374).

Consequently, the CRE teacher can transcend the linear, monological teaching method by acting as a 'witness, specialist and moderator' in the classroom. As a witness, the religion teacher in his/her own religious particularity remains open to dialogue with other religious traditions, worldviews and philosophies of life present in the classroom. As a specialist, he/she must be well-acquainted with Christianity and other religious traditions and worldviews and can systematically provide the various life philosophies and religions to the students in the class. Finally, the educator as a 'true moderator keeps a hold on pupils in their search for meaning, but at the same time sets them free when it is necessary to do so' (Pollefeyt, p. 323).

Religious (Hermeneutics of Life) Dimension

The component of religious hermeneutics of life is proposed against the current Nigerian CRE that promotes a confessional approach, since CRE is restricted within the framework of religious and moral education/instruction, based on Catholic doctrine and practice. With this, faith is brought into life not in a dialogical and dialectical pattern but rather in a monological way. Consequently, this dimension shall

encourage the adoption of a CRE curriculum that bridges the dichotomy between faith and the lived reality of many students in Nigeria through *bringing life into faith and faith into life*.

Religion teachers can implement this component by presenting CRE as a

participative and dialogical pedagogy in which people reflect critically on their historical agency in time and place and on their socio-cultural reality, have collective access to the Christian story/vision, and personally appropriate it in community with the creative intent of renewed praxis in Christian faith toward God's reign over all creation. (Groome, 1991, p. 134)

Hence, 'when education is viewed in its transformatory role and as realised through participatory learning, even CRE as an aspect of education, would not just enable the student to participate in a religious community, but also become a transformative resource for each student' (Agbara, 2010, pp. 179–180).

Justice and Peace Education: Liberative Praxis

The Nigeria's monological and confessional CRE model is in need of a common framework for a CRE syllabus whose content will promote national unity, social justice and peaceful coexistence with other religions. Pope Benedict XVI's (2011) post-synodal exhortation, *Africae Munus* (AM), makes a strong case for the indispensability of peace education within the classroom in faith-based schools. Catholic schools should be places where students learn Afro-Christian values that teach them how 'to create bonds of peace and harmony in society' (para. 134) in addition to learning to live ethically. Ultimately, peace education aims at moving participants from the 'hut of hatred' to the 'home of love and peace' (Kester, 2008).

Furthermore, teaching for justice raises students' responsiveness to injustice and creates in them a disposition to pursue justice passionately. This is one way students can begin to deconstruct their narratives of indivisibility and incompatibility, as a first step to 'a future of peaceful coexistence', (Miedema, 1999, p. 272) coupled with values taught during courses and workshops on a wide range of topics relevant to justice and peace.

To implement this component in Catholic schools, CRE should expose students to intractable problems in the class which will empower them not only to reflect on faith, as well as moral or sociocultural issues, but also to become more critically conscious of how to live justly (Sanders, 2006) and in peaceful coexistence with others. Thus, educators ready to nurture a passion for tolerance during CRE sessions should adhere to Umaru's (2013) recommendation on a peace building project in Nigeria, which insists that 'CRE must go hand in hand with peace education – a philosophy that teaches non-violence, love, compassion, and reverence,' and 'seeks way to transform and be proactive in addressing conditions and structures that gave rise to conflict and violence' (p. 206).

Conclusion

The central aim of this contribution is that ITRE with practical sensitivity for plurality is needed in Nigeria today so that Nigerian students may be prepared to face the existential cultural challenges of the time and its religious and interreligious realities. Research findings indicated that most of the CRE approaches in Nigeria today are monological (implies a deductive perspective, a kind of a rote learning that fails to engage the students in a faith dialogue with others) and confessional (because it is conversion oriented and has little or no regard to religious differences). Consequently, Nigeria's monological and confessional approaches have been used for decades as ways of a CRE of pupils which do not go beyond memorisation, conversion and imposition of faith. Hence, such an approach is not open to the religious 'Other', and little or no attention is given to dealing with identity in relation to the different ethnic groups and religious differences.

Therefore, this chapter offers ITRE as a model that would hopefully respond to the shortcomings in the Catholic policy and also help faith-based schools to offer the possibility of teaching RE in religiously and culturally diverse contexts. First, the ITRE principal message is that an integral and holistic CRE should be transformative. In this sense, CRE seeks to make its context personal, communal and creational. Thus, the wholeness of the person suggests that a conversion model is limited in dealing with the myriad of human needs which today's students must confront. Second, in communicating content to the students, teachers of CRE must consider the dual possibilities in which the visions of different students engage and challenge one another. Thus, due to the marked diversity found in the world, Nigerian teachers of religion should speak of culture more in the plural than in the singular, given the vastness and varied character of peoples and their experiences (Odozor, 2008). Third, Christian religious educators who are major stakeholders in primary and secondary education in Nigeria should recognise that though the Christian faith is universally valid, their students are grounded in various particular Christian traditions and even non-Christian traditions. Accordingly, though life issues are shaped in the context of Christian faith, educators should offer possibilities to engage participants in partnership, participation and dialogue with contemporary issues affecting them in society. Fourth, the ITRE model has shown the need for Christian faith to be a redemptive, humanising and liberating force for students in society, especially in Nigeria, which must sincerely respond to the coming Kingdom of God. For God in human form remains active in partnership with human agency by inviting us to remember our souls and our inner lives with God and by engaging us in a dream in which the world is reconciled.

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Chapter 19
Catholic Schools and Religious Education in South Africa

Paul Faller

Introduction

School-based religious education in South Africa is undergoing something of a desert experience. It has largely disappeared from the public school because of shifts in curriculum policy that confine it more and more to the margins of a learning area called life skills (in early grades) or life orientation. In the desert, though, there are some oases. Catholic schools, and some other faith-based schools, try to develop the practise and keep it alive, but the underground wells are running dry and the searing winds of negative political critique and national curriculum development are causing it to wither. The presence of religious education in Catholic schools can no longer be taken for granted, as the political transformation in South Africa from apartheid to a constitutional democracy has raised more acutely the critical question of the validity of this subject on educational grounds.

What is the nature of this desert experience? What brought religious education in South Africa into the desert? What will help it survive and bring it back to health? Answering these questions will mean a short exploration of the history of the subject in South Africa. The current context, an outcome of this history, within which religious education takes place, will be sketched, and we shall see how recent developments have led to the subject's marginalisation. We shall conclude with an overview of the strategies being employed to counter this negative impact and to foster a relevant and vibrant life within the oasis of the Catholic school. These strategies all point in the direction of making religious education a professional option for teachers, a subject in its own right and an area of curriculum whose validity is clearly shown by the difference it makes in the holistic process of human development.

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This account relies on an analysis of three kinds of textual resource: (1) available, though limited, literature on the history of Catholic education in South Africa; (2) church and state documentation on education; and (3) plans as reflected in the annual reports of the Catholic Institute of Education. Three names frequently referred to in this chapter will henceforth be abbreviated: religious education (RE), the Southern African Catholic Bishops' Conference (SACBC), and the Catholic Institute of Education (CIE).

History of Religious Education in South Africa

The history of RE in South Africa has not been a uniform one. Political, religious and social factors have caused, at various junctures, the development of this field to take a number of different paths. The plethora of names given this area – religious education, religious instruction, Bible study, religion education, religion studies and right living – each sometimes restricted to a particular religious or racial group – attests to this.

Pre-1994

From the founding of the refreshment station at the Cape by the Dutch in 1652 till the coming of democracy in 1994, RE in South Africa, by whatever name, was shaped by the interplay of two colonial forces brought by the settlement of the Dutch in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and of the British from 1800. Tait (1995) describes these two contrasting forces as follows:

> The British influence on South African education helped to promote tolerance in the teaching of religion … The Dutch legacy, conversely, is to be found in the ideals of Christian-National Education (CNE) which was more sectarian in its philosophy, seeking a reformed Protestant approach to education as a whole. (p. 3)

Under the Dutch, the Catholic Church was proscribed, and there was also initial resistance to the establishment of the Catholic Church by the British in the early nineteenth century. However, the advent of Catholic schooling in South Africa was made possible by the more liberal approach of the British colonisers who emerged from the Anglican tradition. The first Catholic school was established at Grahamstown in the Eastern Cape in 1849 by the Missionary Sisters of the Assumption. They were followed to South Africa by numerous religious orders, often invited by local bishops to serve the education of the children of Catholic immigrants, but also to establish missions in rural Black areas.

The approach to RE in Catholic schools up until the mid-twentieth century was for the most part a doctrinal one and catechism based. This gave the practice some common ground, but as experimentation set in during the 1960s and 1970s – there being no commonly agreed curriculum – what was offered in any given school was

determined by the particular formation of the religious personnel who were doing the teaching and by the availability of resources.

A critical moment for Catholic education came in 1953 with the passing of the Bantu Education Act. The Nationalist Party which came to power in 1948 made a concerted effort to fuse education policy with a conservative Calvinistic approach which supported the idea of separate development, or apartheid, on biblical grounds. Up to this time the education of the Black population had been largely in the hands of the churches. The Catholic Church at that time ran 688 state-aided schools and 130 private schools, educating about 15 % of the Black school-going population in South Africa (Chamberlain, Pavlicevic, & Tiernan, 1999, p. 191). In addition there were six Catholic training colleges in operation. The Act made it virtually impossible for these mission schools and colleges to remain open and independent. All schools had to register with the state, and only teachers who trained in state institutions would have their qualifications recognised (Christie, 1991, pp. 56 & 85).

The South African bishops eventually took a stand against the measures of the Act and were able to maintain some of the schools despite the fact that subsidies were progressively withdrawn, but it meant great sacrifices on the part of the teachers who were asked to accept lower salaries. On the other hand, none of the training colleges survived. It should be noted that Catholic education was also racially segregated during this period, and the status quo was only challenged, starting in 1976, by the open-schools movement (Christie, 1991, p. 92).

Prior to 1994 the attempt on the part of the government of the day to impose a philosophy of Christian National Education was the main reason for a very guarded approach by the new ANC-led government to discussions around the place of religion in education once democracy had been established.

Post-1994

Despite the negative sentiments noted above, there was reason for hope in that the African National Congress (ANC) devoted a chapter to the question in *A Policy Framework for Education and Training* (1995). The framework proposed a religion education with a core syllabus (p. 93) to 'help learners to understand, appreciate and respect religious differences and to participate in interfaith dialogue as a preparation for life in a multi-religious and multi-cultural society' (p. 92) and complementary programmes developed by local school communities to suit their particular needs. One of the aims suggested for the core syllabus was to 'provide a learning environment within which learners are able to examine their own life stance, to deepen their commitment and to respect that of others' (p. 93), and this, together with the envisaged complementary programmes, would give Catholic and other faith-based schools sufficient room to offer RE according to their specific vision.

Following the development in 1996 of a new national curriculum, and a statement therein that pleaded the difficulty of including RE, a ministerial committee was tasked with making recommendations concerning the place of religion in the

school system. The report they delivered, *Religion in Curriculum 2005*, stayed close to the ANC policy framework, proposing freedom for the school community to determine its approach on condition that it was in harmony with the outcomes of the national curriculum and was sensitive to learners' and teachers' rights enshrined in the Constitution (Department of Education, 1999).

The report, however, was not seriously entertained, and a newly appointed Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, established the Standing Advisory Committee for Religion in Education with representation from the various religious communities. This committee was given the task of critiquing and fine-tuning a document *Religion in Education* that had its genesis in academic circles. The policy document *Religion and Education* emerged from this process in September 2003. It acknowledges the vital role that religion plays in the lives of most of the country's citizens (Department of Education, 2003, para. 17), and it advocated the introduction of the newly named religion education as 'a curricular programme with clear and age-appropriate educational aims and objectives, for teaching and learning about religion, religions, and religious diversity in South Africa and the world'. It went on to describe this new subject in terms that went beyond the informative 'learning about religion' to include a more personal, formative note.

> Religion Education should enable pupils to engage with a variety of religious traditions in a way that encourages them to grow in their inner spiritual and moral dimensions. It must affirm their own identity, while leading them to an informed understanding of the religious identities of others. (para. 19)

This was encouraging from the point of view of Catholic education since it seemed to recognise the potential of the subject to make an important difference in students' lives. However, the implementation of the policy in terms of curriculum directives has turned out to be disappointing. Religion, in the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), receives inconsistent and trivial treatment. We shall see in the sections that follow how this leads to perhaps the most pressing challenge that RE faces in Catholic schools in South Africa today.

The Educational Context in South Africa Today

Education in South Africa takes place in a great variety of urban, township and rural contexts. Some are supportive of, and conducive to, quality education, but in the main, schools struggle against great odds. They are affected by the many social problems that are endemic to the society – 'poverty, unemployment, unmet democratic expectations, HIV and AIDS, child-headed households, crime, refugees from other countries, land distribution and ownership, poor service delivery, inadequate housing (millions of South Africans live in shacks in informal settlements), inadequate provision of and access to health care, and violence against women and children' (Catholic Schools Office, 2013). The lack of maintenance, resources and facilities in many schools and the inadequate training of many teachers that results in a lack of confidence and competence add to the pressure that they experience in

trying to offer an education that will help to break through the sense of hopelessness that many young people in the country experience.

Given these many urgent problems, it is hardly surprising that the question of the relevance of religious education in the school receives scant public attention, and, as already noted, we shall see how its marginalisation in the national curriculum has put added pressure on its delivery in Catholic schools.

Catholic Schools in South Africa

There are currently about 350 Catholic schools in South Africa, but whether they are public or independent, they exhibit the same range of contextual challenges as schools in the country generally. Prior to the publication of a new South African Schools Act (1996), many Catholic schools were state-aided with their teachers as state employees. On the promulgation of the Act, these state-aided schools, by default, became fully fledged state schools. Currently, about 70 % of Catholic schools fall into this category, termed 'public' in the Act, while the remainder are independent.

The public Catholic schools have, by the same Act, the benefit of a Deed of Agreement between the provincial educational authority and the owner of the school (para. 14). The deed recognises the school's distinctive religious character (para. 57) and entitles it to offer religious education according to 'the broad Catholic approach' (CIE, 1998, p. 14). But this entitlement is increasingly difficult to realise, because of departmental pressure to satisfy the rather detailed and onerous requirements of the national curriculum. Teachers of religion feel their loyalties divided between church and state, and the directions of the latter, being the employer, are usually prioritised.

The relationship between church and state is described in national policy as one of cooperation, affirming both the principle of legal separation and the possibility of creative interaction. In reality though, while the state repeatedly calls on the assistance of the religious communities to arrest the moral degeneration of society, it fails to make space for a meaningful RE in the schools. Catholic public schools owned by bishops or religious congregations often suffer from the ignorance of local officials as to the terms of these agreements. To remedy this situation, a booklet, *Partnership for the Common Good: Catholic Public Schools on Private Property* (Catholic Schools Proprietors' Association, 2010), aimed at affirming the rights of Catholic public schools to offer RE and prefaced by the Minister of Education, has been distributed among officials in all nine provinces.

Challenges for Religious Education

The reluctance to give religion its due place in the curriculum is arguably the major challenge that RE faces today. It may be due to the loss of religious or spiritual capital in the transition from apartheid to a democratic state. As the state grows from

being identified with a particular religion, namely, Christianity, to becoming a secular one, it seems not yet able to foster the creative interaction referred to earlier.

However, additional internal factors make a quality classroom practice in Catholic schools unattainable at present. Differences in theological positions among teachers assigned to teach RE – from fundamentalist to liberal – together with no nationally agreed curriculum and inadequate training mean that the reality of what is presented to students is unpredictable and rarely captures their imagination or meets their real needs. With only a small group of teachers with adequate formation in the field – usually religious belonging to international congregations, though their number is fast dwindling – most practitioners hang on to answers they were given in the past without being able to correlate them with contemporary youth's view of life in the world.

Perhaps the most debilitating factor is RE's lack of status, even in Catholic schools. Traditionally, it has not been assessed and typically does not feature, except as a token, in schools' reporting systems. It is often allocated to untrained teachers – because they are Catholic and willing – and does not receive the material support that 'more important' areas do. There is a conflict of interest here and a challenge to leadership to give material expression to the values the school says it upholds.

As in many other parts of the world, there is an additional complexity. The Catholic school in South Africa can no longer be regarded as a school for Catholic children, but rather as a multireligious school – one open to all who are in harmony with the vision of Catholic schooling. In fact the national average of Catholic students in Catholic schools is around 28 % (CIE, 2012, p. 5). A further challenge to offering an equitable RE lies in the fact that many African Christians, particularly in rural areas, live in two religious worlds, and no serious attempt has yet been made to create a curriculum that bridges this divide, despite the fact that according to the latest available statistics, 91 % of students in Catholic schools are Black (CIE, 2012, p. 5).

A Vision for Religious Education in South African Catholic Schools

What has been the response of Catholic school RE to the currents of history and the resulting context sketched above? How do we propose to keep the practise of RE alive in South Africa, and what will motivate schools and teachers to own a common vision and dedicate their energies, sometimes against great odds, to its realisation?

The vision for RE in Catholic schools in South Africa is set out in the policy document, *Fostering Hope* (Catholic Institute of Education, 2006), first adopted in 1997 by the SACBC and revised in 2006 to keep abreast of developments in national education. The policy understands the particular nature of RE in the school as

> an opportunity for learners to engage with the religious dimension of life in an educative way, so as to affirm them in their own religious identity, while coming to appreciate the religious diversity of the society in which they live. (p. 8)

The vision is an inclusive one and catholic in the sense that the school is open to all. Thus, its RE programme needs to be shaped in such a way that it is equally relevant to all who are engaged in it. In the words of the policy, it 'strives to be respectful and sensitive to the diversity of chosen and inherited religious paths of individuals within the school community' (p. 6). The policy accords with the vision of the Catholic Church in South Africa as a 'community serving humanity' (SACBC, 1989). It states that

> the Catholic School exists as an expression of the Catholic Church's mission to share the gospel of Jesus. But the Church does not exist for itself. The Catholic School therefore represents the Church in service of others, and not of self. (p. 6)

RE in the Catholic school, in common with the national curriculum, embraces the aim of learning *about* religion, but goes beyond this to incorporate learning *through* religion 'so that the riches of religious experience and tradition are brought to bear on the learners' development as whole human beings', as well as learning *for* religion 'so that they are able to live their (chosen or inherited) religious tradition in a committed and meaningful way' (Catholic Institute of Education, 2005, p. v).

Articulating a vision is a relatively easy thing to do. However, because of the patchwork of the previous history, Catholic schools in South Africa, founded by different congregations and ecclesiastical authorities and existing in very different socio-economic environments, have struggled to own a common vision and sense of identity and belonging. Two Catholic school congresses, in 1991 and 2004, have made some progress in this regard, but there is still considerable distance between the vision and the lived reality. While *Fostering Hope's* vision is in harmony with that set out in the *Catechetical Directory for Southern Africa* which makes a clear distinction between catechesis and RE (SACBC, 1991, p. 59), there is still in most schools a deeply engrained catechetical approach that needs to give way to one that does not make assumptions about the faith of students in the classroom.

Strategies which have been adopted in the network of Catholic schools in South Africa are the subject of the next section. They all point in the direction of making RE a professional option for teachers and a subject in its own right, motivated by a personal sense of responsibility to provide a learning environment of high quality, together with a social responsibility to help in the development of RE for the common good.

Strategies to Implement the Vision

In 1985 the CIE was established as an associate body of the SACBC to serve the needs of Catholic schools nationally. In the course of time, regional offices have been established in all provinces to provide more regular, on-the-ground assistance to schools individually and in clusters. From its inception, this institute has been the main catalyst in the process of giving Catholic schools a sense of common cause

and identity. Over the past 28 years, it has conceptualised, funded and managed an impressive array of projects with the assistance of local and international donors. The nature of these projects has been varied, depending on an ongoing analysis of needs. RE, however, is identified as CIE's core business, mainly because this area of curriculum is close to the heart of the Catholic school, but also because this curriculum area is not served at all by national or provincial education departments.

The strategies that have been proposed and developed to raise the quality and status of RE in Catholic schools since the democratisation of education in the 1990s will be treated in this section under a number of key headings – policy, curriculum and materials, teacher training, structures and networks and quality management.

Policy

With change in the air in 1994, and discussion around the place of religion in the national curriculum an emotive affair, the CIE initiated a nationwide consultation to develop policy for RE in Catholic schools in the light of the new constitution of South Africa and to bring it in line with the vision of the Second Vatican Council. Prior to this there had been no formal policy in place: most of those involved in the teaching and administration of the subject assumed they knew what they were about and that, therefore, there was nothing to discuss.

However, it was soon realised that Catholic education would have no voice in the national debate if it did not have its own house in order and have a clear position to advocate. A draft policy document was taken to consultative workshops in every corner of the country during 1995 and 1996. The final draft was adopted by the SACBC and published under the title of *Fostering Hope* in 1997. It was then translated into ten official local languages. In order to give the policy wider publicity and a better chance of being implemented, a series of launches took place in 1998 in 12 centres with invited guest speakers from the national and provincial education departments and local bishops attending. *Fostering Hope* has stood the test of time as a policy guideline with only minor adjustments necessary in 2006 to align it better with new development in the national curriculum. This, of course, is just a beginning: the implementation of the policy is beset by many contextual factors already mentioned. Practice lags behind to some extent in most schools and the further measures discussed below are all simultaneously necessary to its fulfilment.

Curriculum and Materials

Up to the mid-1960s, RE in Catholic schools consisted mainly of rote learning of the 'penny' catechism and the reading of the gospels. Post-Second Vatican Council currents brought with them the kerygmatic and anthropological approaches that

left much in the hands of teachers to determine the curriculum, although programmes from foreign English-speaking countries, such as Ireland and the USA, were implemented in some schools. The first local efforts at producing curriculum-based materials resulted in the People of God series for primary schools, published in the 1970s, and the CORD Curriculum for high schools, published in 1991. The former, which was quite widely used in schools and translated into key local languages, followed a catechetical, scripture-based approach. The latter took a much broader view of curriculum and consisted of 15 distinct processes, including theology, scripture, liturgy and personal morality, as in the past, but adding a strong emphasis to other elements such as spirituality, personal growth, social justice, arts and story.

The CORD analysis of a holistic RE curriculum became definitive for future development. Using it as a benchmark or canon, the CIE engaged in a consultative curriculum development project for primary schools in the late 1990s. In 2000, the project culminated in the publication of the Lifebound Curriculum together with teacher and learner materials for Grade R-7. This curriculum was seen as a bridge to a truly South African one for RE in Catholic schools, giving formative support to teachers who would become the developers of future programmes.

At present, the Lifebound Curriculum and the CORD Curriculum described above are definitive in the sense that they are endorsed by the SACBC, though they are not mandatory. Catholic schools have the freedom to determine their own curriculum as long as it is in harmony with the stipulation of the policy, *Fostering Hope*, to ensure 'a well-rounded RE curriculum' (p. 15). However, work is currently under way to define a core curriculum that will become normative for all schools. The need for this was recognised at least as far back as the first National Catholic Schools Congress in 1991 (CIE, 1992, p. 34). The development of a National Religious Education Curriculum for Catholic schools will give effect for the first time to the directive of *Fostering Hope* to reach agreement 'on common basic reference-points for the planning of each school's RE programme so as to facilitate common support and practical cooperation between schools' (p. 15). Ongoing curriculum development is essential if RE is to make its mark, but in itself, it will not solve the difficulties schools face in its implementation. The demands of the national curriculum, which accords minimal space for religion, tend to squeeze RE out of existence in Catholic public schools that do not value it or have the capacity and resources to offer it.

The question of assessment as an integral dimension of teaching and learning in RE receives a very mixed response. We will not raise the debate here, but in the conviction that the future of RE depends on its development along professional lines, the CIE has introduced a national assessment in Grade 6 and Grade 9, years which mark the end of two phases in General Education. The tests are optional, but the initial response from schools has been encouraging. After a trial period of 3 years – 2010–2012 – the nature of the assessments is being reviewed. The owners of Catholic schools are keen that they participate as it provides a way of holding schools accountable for the quality of RE they offer.

Teacher Training

Since the closure of Catholic teacher training colleges in the 1950s, it has been perennially difficult to create and sustain accessible opportunities for training in RE, given the expense of running national programmes for a relatively small group of schools that are scattered far and wide. The small number of qualified religious educators in South African Catholic schools is also due to a lack of foresight on the part of authorities in the past, who relied too much on European congregations for personnel and did not encourage local indigenous people to serve in the field (Chamberlain et al., 1999, p. 189).

In the 1980s and 1990s, a 1-year beginner's course, *Echoing The Word*, accredited by bishops in their dioceses, and a more advanced 2-year offering, *Life Witness*, with accreditation by the SACBC, were run by the CIE with limited success. Since 1994, the desire of teachers has been to enrol in programmes accredited by national education bodies. This led to a collaborative effort between the CIE and St. Augustine College, the Catholic University of South Africa, to develop and offer an undergraduate and a postgraduate programme in religious and values education. Again there has been limited uptake for these qualifications run in block release mode because of the expense of the programmes and the large distances for students to travel. Online courses are not yet an option to consider given the limited Internet access for many teachers. The possibility of engaging teachers in distance education is currently being considered.

Another incentive for teacher development will be the introduction of a system of continuing professional development points. Incentive for this comes from the newly introduced Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system by the South Africa Council for Educators. A current project in this line aims at identifying the minimum qualifications necessary and desirable for teaching RE in South African Catholic schools. This will enable teachers to gauge their level of qualification retrospectively and to plan their professional development. It will give school principals a tool for suitable employment and guide the development of teacher training programmes.

Structures and Networks

Another important element in the development of RE in South Africa is that of structures to advocate, support, coordinate and motivate the subject in national, regional and local forums of education officials, principals and teachers. The role of the CIE in this regard has already been noted. Perhaps the most significant of these structures is an annual meeting of regional office managers called to develop and promote the vision nationally, to discern needs in the network of schools and to set direction for the year ahead.

   To give religious educators a sense of belonging to a community of professionals, a number of strategies have been implemented in recent years. In order to bring religious educators together from different parts of the country and expose them to new thinking in the field, two national conferences have been held over the last 5 years, bringing together some 350 teachers and principals and speakers from Uganda, the USA, Ireland, England and Australia. Regional conferences with local input are organised in the years preceding these national conferences. At the first national conference in 2008, a Professional Society of Religious Educators was formed. The idea had been there, in principle, since the first Catholic Schools Congress (CIE, 1992, p. 34), but the second congress in 2004 made it more explicit by recommending 'the formation of a Professional Society of RE Teachers' (CIE, 2004). Among the aims of this society are the promotion of RE as a vocation and as a profession and its development as an educationally sound and challenging discipline in the curriculum. The society has a periodical, *The Well*, published three times a year together with a newsletter for members.

Quality Management

Finally, a word should be said about quality management. With a very loose configuration of schools and policy directives that leave much freedom for individual initiative in schools, the question of holding schools accountable has been fraught with difficulty. In recent years, certain measures have been taken to address this. There is a certain irony in the fact that an annual appraisal of its Catholic character – which, as we have seen, includes offering RE – is required of Catholic public schools in terms of the agreements with education authorities described earlier. Independent schools have this responsibility too, but as an internal process contributing to school development plans, it does not amount to a public accountability for religious education. Still in its pilot phase, a process of external validation has been put in place, whereby every 3 years school governance is required to provide evidence of its RE according to an agreed set of criteria.

The Future

What the future holds for RE in South African Catholic schools is hard to tell. In the current educational climate, the practice is countercultural, even though religion is acknowledged in national policy as 'the basis on which the lives of a very large part of the population rests' (Department of Education, 1997). Will the wells run dry and the oases blend into the desert, or will the desert bloom? Much will depend on the successful ownership and implementation of the strategies outlined above on the part of owners, school leaders and practitioners and on the willingness of education departments to honour the agreements in tangible ways.

But there is the hope that the policy climate will change and that the sound development of a relevant RE in Catholic schools will act as a leaven in society and, more concretely, be a resource freely shared for the common good.

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Chapter 20
The Teaching of Religion in Catholic Schools in the United States: One Faith Amidst Competing Ecclesiologies

Ronald J. Nuzzi

Introduction

Catholic schools have played an important role within the educational landscape of the United States and the overall educational mission of the church in the United States since the seventeenth century (Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2004). Over the centuries, however, dramatic changes have occurred in society, industry, and family life that necessitated ongoing adaptation on the part of Catholic schools and the Catholic Church. Recent research has chronicled the amazing successes of Catholic schools in academic excellence, enculturation, educating and socializing recent immigrants and ethnic minorities, and advancing important civic and democratic goals (Brinig, & Garnett, 2012; Hamilton, 2008; Notre Dame Task Force on Catholic Education, 2006) while simultaneously reporting a veritable crisis of enrollment that threatens the long-term viability of what was once a robust national system (Lackman, 2013).

This essay examines the current state of affairs regarding the teaching of religion in Catholic schools in the United States and contextualizes that experience within a historical framework that supplies important clues and hermeneutical insights to understand the various theological and ecclesiological dynamics in play. In order to describe major trends and analyze their significance, four major topics are considered: (1) challenges emanating from demographic data; (2) the intentional renewal of a Catholic ethos in schools after the decline of the availability of vowed religious women and men, including the commitment of resources to the formation of teachers and principals, the teaching of religion, and the revising of pedagogy, curriculum, and textbooks; (3) the advent of the age of accountability via assessment; and (4) the competing ecclesiologies permeating both the teaching of religion and the instantiation of a vibrant Catholic culture in schools.

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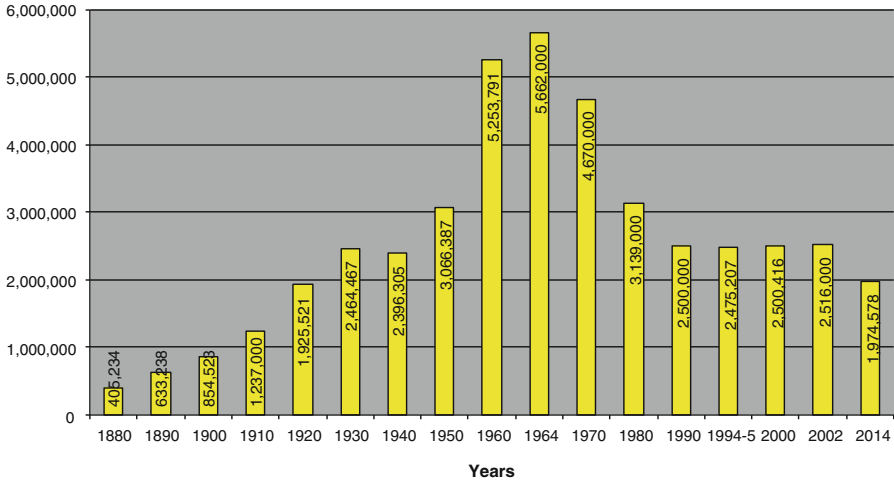
Challenges Emanating from Demographic Data

Catholic schools in the United States were highly successful vehicles for education, socialization, enculturation, and upward social mobility throughout the first half of the twentieth century (Convey, 1992; Hunt, Joseph, & Nuzzi, 2002). In terms of enrollment and the number of schools operated, Catholic schooling in the United States reached its zenith during the 1964–1965 academic year with nearly 11,000 elementary schools serving grades K-8 and 2500 secondary schools or high school serving grades 9–12 for a total student enrollment that surpassed 5.5 million. Immigration and industrialization were strong drivers of the need for education, especially as waves of immigrants to the United States settled in the northeastern part of the country. Many of the immigrant groups established their own parishes and schools, creating an ethnic enclave where traditions from the old country could be preserved, taught, and maintained in the new world (Walch, 2003).

The period of unfettered growth due to immigration was short-lived. Most of the ethnic or national Catholic parishes with schools were sustained in large part by the presence of vowed religious women and men—mostly sisters, brothers, and priests—who provided valuable services through teaching, coaching, and administration. It is not hyperbole to observe that Catholic schools were founded on the poverty of these vowed religious who lived simple lives and often worked without wages or benefits. Living nearby in convents or religious houses, these vowed religious servants offered their professional educational skills to the parish community as a way to live out their chosen vocations, and their embrace of poverty and simplicity allowed Catholic schools to grow and prosper. Along with the commitment and generosity of parishioners and large, ethnic families, the Catholic school became a symbol of great pride for local communities, a sign that Catholics had both arrived and succeeded. As theological developments within the Catholic Church accompanied a serious decline in the available numbers of vowed religious to staff the schools, and as Catholics moved up the socioeconomic ladder and out into suburbia, the means to maintain already existing schools or establish new ones were not readily available. A decline in Catholic school enrollment in the United States began in earnest in the late 1960s and has continued unabated through academic year 2013–2014 (see Table 20.1). While some leveling off arguably occurred during the period 1990–2000, national Catholic school enrollment has followed a consistent trend line downward for nearly five decades. The current situation in 2014 has led many to speculate about the future of Catholic schools, prompted discussions from leading Catholic institutions of higher learning, and has even managed to garner the attention of the White House and the political class (White House Domestic Policy Council, 2008).

The precipitous decline in enrollment has been attributed to a variety of factors that span this time frame and include: staffing changes from vowed religious women and men to lay teachers; tuition increases to pay for such staffing modifications; overall population shifts away from the urban centers to the suburbs; shifting student demographics, especially the increasing presence of Hispanic families; the

Table 20.1 National Catholic school enrolment

National Catholic School Student Enrollment From 1880 to 2014

Year	Enrollment
1880	405,234
1890	633,238
1900	854,523
1910	1,237,000
1920	1,925,521
1930	2,464,467
1940	2,396,305
1950	3,066,387
1960	5,253,791
1964	5,662,000
1970	4,670,000
1980	3,139,000
1990	2,500,000
1994-5	2,475,207
2000	2,500,416
2002	2,516,000
2014	1,974,578

general state of the US economy and job market; the introduction of charter schools into the educational marketplace; and the sexual abuse crisis involving Catholic priests and children and teenagers of minority age (Gray & Gautier, 2006). It was, however, the changes in staffing of Catholic schools that first precipitated an identity crisis of sorts in school leadership that eventually led to a cascade of challenges that are still be addressed today.

While there was certainly an economic benefit in having an inexpensive or free labor pool to staff Catholic schools, the blessing of the presence of vowed religious women and men went well beyond finances. These teachers provided a strong, daily witness to the faith by the quality of their lives and the nature of their community living. Having had the shared experienced of some common religious formation, they brought their personal faith convictions with them into the school and into the classroom. Distinctive religious habits, headgear, and clerical garb offered a striking and memorable visible testimony to the vocation that was theirs (Dwyer-McNulty, 2014). Their lives were set apart from others, dedicated to this important vocation of educating the young, and every aspect of their lives reflected that abiding difference. Through their sacrifice, lifestyle, dress, and teaching, these religious leaders shaped Catholic schools in their own image, and through the teaching of religion, the celebration of the sacraments—especially the Eucharist and frequent confession—and a myriad of religious practices and devotionals established and protected a dominant and compelling Catholic school culture throughout the nation.

That their gradual departure from the schools created a financial crunch there is no doubt. Tuition was not even necessary in many schools, so steadfast was the

support of many parishioners for their teaching sisters. But the need to hire qualified laymen and laywomen as teachers necessitated a new revenue stream, and most parishes found that source of funding in the charging of tuition. However, a larger, more mission-critical challenge remained: Where would these new teachers be formed in the faith of the church? How could the spiritual and religious formation of the vowed religious women and men, often received in community, be made available to married and single Catholics who lived family lives and did not have the benefit of any formal spiritual formation? In short, how was the ethos of the Catholic school to endure and prosper in the absence of vowed religious? The question is a complex one, for it involves more than a human resource management or staffing question. It is not simply a matter of finding a similar skill set in a new generation of workers. Rather, it involves aspects of Catholic schooling that are absolutely essential to its survival and success because of the unique elements of a Catholic education. The Catholic Church needed to find a way to move forward with integrity to ensure a Catholic culture in schools, even in the absence of vowed religious. Renewed commitment to the teaching of religion, the spiritual formation of teachers and leaders, and attention to curriculum, pedagogy, and textbooks were primary ways in which the church moved to do so.

The Intentional Renewal of a Catholic Ethos

What makes a Catholic school Catholic? In whatever manner one attempts to answer such a question, every answer will include the teaching of religion. And because such teaching necessarily comes at the hands of teachers, the preparation of teachers for such work, the resources available to them, and their familiarity with the tradition are all important considerations in describing the essential and constitutive elements of Catholic identity.

Passing on the faith to the next generation is a primary mission of the church. Catholic schools have participated in this evangelizing mission from the very beginning. So central is the teaching of religion to the mission of the church that many official documents have been issued to provide a suitable framework for this ministry and to offer guidance and inspiration to teachers. In the United States, teachers have found such guidance in documents such as the National Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1972, *To Teach as Jesus Did: A Pastoral Message on Catholic Education* and *Sharing the Light of Faith: National Catechetical Directory for Catholics in the United States* in 1979.

It is, however, authoritative teaching from the Congregation for Catholic Education that has provided the impetus for much of the renewal in the teaching of religion in Catholic schools in the United States. Specifically, *The Religious Dimension of Education in a Catholic School* (1988) highlighted the critical role of faith and catechesis in the Catholic school and acknowledged that teachers have a primary responsibility to give personal witness to the faith in their classrooms and

to help establish and maintain a Catholic ethos throughout the school. In a sweeping, comprehensive exhortation, this document claims that

> … from the first moment that a student sets foot in a Catholic school, he or she ought to have the impression of entering a new environment, one illumined by the light of faith and having its own unique characteristics. (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988, para. 25)

The claim is striking because its implication is that even the physical environment of the school building ought to reflect its religious purpose and that such purpose should be easily recognizable in the manner in which people are welcomed, treated, educated, and sent forth. This unique environment is created by the teachers whose faith must animate every aspect of school life.

Teachers also learned from these church documents important insights regarding their own professional backgrounds and education and the application of educational theory to the teaching of religion. For example, theories regarding the stages of human development, processes for learning, and age-appropriate activities and pedagogies were examined and celebrated. Teachers were attentive to such insights and, inspired by the reaction of students, renewed their approaches to religious education, catechesis, and the teaching of doctrine. The result was a richer and broader approach to not only the teaching and learning of religion but to its application in daily life. The religious dimension of education in a Catholic school came to include retreats, service projects, various works of charity and justice, age-appropriate social action, and peer-to-peer ministries in addition to the regular teaching of religion and celebration of the sacraments (Williams, 2004). These ways of living out the faith in daily life in addition to learning about the faith served to strengthen the Catholic ethos of schools (Buchanan & Hyde, 2008; Hogan, 1984). This broader approach was congruent with the views of the Congregation for Catholic Education and the Congregation for Clergy who taught that the teaching of religion ought to be the standard for all the other subjects taught in school. Religion should be scheduled with consistency and regularity, have a clear set of goals and objectives, and like all the other subjects, test for the accurate transmission of measurable content knowledge (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1988; Congregation for the Clergy, 1998). Having acquired said knowledge in what is technically a process of religious education or education in religion, students are then called into community in the life of the school and their classes, where, together with faculty and staff, they deepen their immersion in the life of faith through worship, prayer, and service in community (McDermott, 1985). The success of the teaching of religion in the Catholic school, therefore, goes beyond the academic comprehension of the tenets of the faith to include the spiritual and apostolic energy inspired by such knowledge.

To prepare teachers well for this type of ministry which goes beyond classroom teaching to call forth discipleship and witness, the professional preparation for teachers and leaders for Catholic schools has expanded in recent years to include explicit spiritual formation and religious education in addition to the more standard and general requirements of classroom pedagogy or educational administration.

The most common approach in use in Catholic higher education today conceives of the preparation and formation of Catholic educators as a threefold process involving academic preparation, life in community, and spiritual and liturgical life (Pressley, 2002). This approach values all three areas as essential to the preparation and formation of those who would serve in Catholic schools and, in fact, values all three equally. Rigorous academic expectations are in place but students are not expected to sink or swim on their own. They receive support from many others in the community of learners, live and work and pray together, and draw mutual support from the sacramental life of the church and from their immersion in this important work with other believing disciples. There is balance in this approach and some wisdom, for it values both learning and its application to the concrete life experience of aspiring Catholic educators (Watzke, 2007).

The teaching of religion in Catholic schools has benefitted from this new approach to the professional preparation of teachers and principals. In the 1970s, the renewal of the Catholic ethos in schools inspired the National Catholic Educational Association (NCEA) to develop scientific survey instruments to assess in longitudinal fashion the knowledge, attitudes, and religious practices of Catholic school students. By the 1990s, this process had become even more formalized with the advent of the Assessment of Catholic Religious Education (ACRE) for students and eventually of a similar instrument for adults (Information for Growth or IFG) (Williams, 2004). With such tools in place for assessment and to help direct instruction, revise curriculum, and plan professional development, the teaching of religion in Catholic schools made significant advancements in renewing the Catholic ethos of schools and in strategically leveraging the academic teaching of religion into a life of discipleship and faith founded on that teaching.

Assessment and the Age of Accountability

A new empiricism is afoot in US educational landscape that calls for the measurement of all things considered important and central to the mission of schools. This empiricism is seen in high-stakes testing, national standards, and the frequent comparison of student achievement scores both nationally and internationally (OECD, 2014). The movement toward greater school accountability has touched every aspect of school life from curriculum development and testing to teacher and principal preparation and evaluation (Wright, 2007).

The widespread use of ACRE within Catholic schools and parishes in the United Sates provided an empirical way to measure students' religious knowledge in a way that was comparable to assessments used in other subjects and domains and also offered an opportunity to compare the results of students in Catholic schools with other Catholic students in parish-based religious education programs who had not attended Catholic schools. Additionally, ACRE also explored the personal beliefs and attitudes of Catholic students regarding their faith, their engagement in family or personal religious practices and devotions, their feelings about religious instruc-

tion, and their overall dispositions toward the church, their parishes, and schools (Convey, 2010).

Among the findings from recent ACRE administrations are as follows: students enrolled in Catholic schools, whether they themselves are Catholic or not, tend to score higher on measures of faith knowledge than students participating in parish-based religious education programs; the highest student scores are typically seen in the domains related to God and the Church and the lowest scores tend to be in areas of morality, literacy, and church history.

All students displayed a high level of agreement with statements referring to their relationship with Jesus and to their personal image of God. Given the central role that Christology plays in the evangelizing mission of the church, ACRE results lead to the conclusion that "those Catholic students who participate in formal religious instruction in Catholic schools and parish programs have a good understanding of the person of Jesus and his salvific mission" (Convey, 2010, p. 119).

ACRE has also been a reliable predictor of religious practices, analyzing what sets of beliefs and behaviors typically appear together. For example, the best predictors of achievement in faith knowledge are the type of program in which students are enrolled, with students in Catholic schools performing better. Other variables with predictive validity include: praying the rosary and belief in the Gospel miracles of Jesus, the influence of a teacher, and the encouragement to volunteer. The strongest predictors of Mass attendance are the family praying together at home and participation in the sacrament of reconciliation (Convey, 2010).

ACRE results also revealed several lacunae in the teaching of religion in Catholic schools and parish programs. Such results indicate a need for some reconsideration about both the curriculum and instruction being used. The major topics or areas of concern were the doctrine of the Trinity, the knowledge of Scripture, the significance of major feast days, the concept of sin, church history, and basic literacy in the faith (Convey, 2010).

The impact of Catholic schools on the church in the United States is another theme in recent research, owing to the same interest in accountability, this time on the part of church leaders, bishops, pastors, and educational and central office administrators. The question is expansive and goes well beyond the impact of the teaching of religion in schools, but it is germane in that much of the impact is religious in nature or related to religious beliefs and practices. Generational changes abound as the declining national enrollment reveals important trend data. For example, in what sociologists have called the Millennial Generation—born 1982 or later—only 23 % of Catholics have attended Catholic primary school at some point. This number is down significantly from the pre-Second Vatican Council Generation—born before 1943—and the Second Vatican Council Generation, born between 1943 and 1960, where 51 % of Catholics attend Catholic schools (Gray, 2012).

Important ecclesial outcomes for those who have attended Catholic schools include increased attendance at Sunday Mass, increased likelihood of being confirmed, and an increase in the consideration of a vocation to the religious life and priesthood (Gray, 2012). For Mass attendance, the effect is most pronounced

among the Millennial Generation Catholics. Only 5 % of Millennials who never attended a Catholic school go to Mass weekly compared to more than a third (34 %) who attended Catholic school. For Confirmation, the numbers are even more striking. Ninety-one percent (91 %) of Catholics who attended a Catholic high school celebrated the sacrament. At the primary level, over eighty percent (80 %) celebrated Confirmation. For Catholic students not attending any Catholic school, that number falls to sixty-six percent (66 %). For Millennial Generation male Catholics who have attended a Catholic school, more than one in four states that they have seriously considered a vocation to the priesthood or religious life. Not even one in ten of those who did not attend a Catholic school share a similar interest. Among Millennial Generation female Catholics who have attended a Catholic school, thirteen percent (13 %) indicated having seriously considered a vocation to religious life. Only six percent (6 %) of those who did not attend a Catholic school reported a similar interest (Gray, 2012). The national Ordination Class of 2014 in the United States, a group which numbers 477 priests ordained during the calendar year, was significantly impacted by Catholic education. Half of the ordained attended a Catholic elementary school, forty-one percent (41 %) a Catholic high school, and forty-five percent (45 %) a Catholic college (Gautier & Saunders, 2014).

Research efforts will undoubtedly continue in order to better understand the impact of Catholic schooling in general; its longitudinal effects on adult religious behaviors, practices, and beliefs; and the overall effectiveness of the teaching of religion in Catholic schools in relation to these important adult outcomes. In fact, a large international and interdenominational study is currently underway in the United States and Canada, comparing the outcomes of private religious and Catholic schools with Protestant schools throughout North America (Cardus, 2011). Such efforts have their limitations, but they do contribute to the knowledge base in Catholic schooling and will likely be of service to educational leaders, teachers, and parents in revising curriculum, instruction, policies, and procedures to better meet the needs of students and fulfill the educational mission of the church.

Competing Ecclesiologies

It has been observed that all major disputes within the Catholic Church in recent years involve the basic question of ecclesiology, namely, what is the purpose and nature of the Church (Dulles, 1985; Martini, 1994; McBrien, 1981). The answer to the question is critical for it rightly shapes the program, policies, procedures, and very mission of the institution. Similarly, a question can be asked of Catholic schooling and, in particular, of the teaching of religion. What is the ultimate purpose of a Catholic school education? Is there a hierarchy of ends—some religious, others more civic—by which one can measure school success? Is the teaching of religion aimed at student acquisition of correct knowledge, or is such growth in knowledge ultimately at the service of a life a discipleship? Should Catholic school graduates and Catholic school success be evaluated by how well alumni know the faith or how

well and often they practice it? These are all questions of ecclesiology that go to the very nature of the Church and the ultimate mission of all ecclesiastical institutions including schools.

Most dioceses in the United States have answered these questions at least implicitly through the selection and approval of textbook series for the teaching of religion in Catholic schools and parish-based religious education programs. Following a protocol established by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB, 2012), publishers typically submit draft manuscripts of textbooks to a subcommittee of the USCCB and seek approval of the text prior to publication. The subcommittee then conducts a Conformity Review according to a specified process and ultimately works toward publication through a series of revisions and edits before giving its approval for publication and acknowledgment that the text is in conformity with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (http://www.usccb.org/about/evangelization-and-catechesis/subcommittee-on-catechism/conformity-review/index.cfm).

While having merit as an editorial and theological process to strengthen religion textbooks prior to publication, some variances have been observed in approved textbook series. In a recent study, significant theological and ecclesiological differences were found among different publishers and different series, results that strongly impact classroom pedagogy and often provide competing answers to the questions of purpose relative to Catholic schools and the teaching of religion (Engel, 2013).

A heavy reliance on deductive methodologies was found in several high school religion texts, and multiple lessons evinced a concentration on lower-order cognitive learning, thereby overlooking the engagement of students' affective learning. This finding is particularly regrettable given what modern science has found to be the enduring quality of learning that includes highly affective components (Anderson et al., 2001; Buchanan & Hyde, 2008; Davis & Hunkins, 1966; Eisner, 1979). Moreover, even when addressing the same content area or religious subject, for example, Christian morality or Christology, the complexity of the cognitive learning required of students and the frequency of efforts to engage dimensions of affective learning differed significantly among texts.

The question of ecclesiology arises not only in respect to the propriety of a specific classroom pedagogy but also to the overall purpose of Catholic schooling and the place of schools in the evangelizing mission of the Church. One study suggested that it is precisely this affective dimension of the faith that has been lost among Catholics in the United States especially regarding their schools (Nuzzi, Frabutt & Holter, 2008). While acknowledging the need to maintain high standards of academic excellence in Catholic schools, researchers concluded that Catholic schooling has lost its value proposition with Catholic families and called for a renewal and re-engagement of adult Catholics with the faith, with schools, and with parishes at a deeper, affective level. This finding suggests that one of the most meaningful goals of a Catholic school education is the integration of faith and life so that the practical, daily applicability of the faith to life is readily seen and consistently experienced. This includes certain domains of knowledge, but it places cognitive goals at the service of a more engaging and longer lasting affective experience that allows one's faith to shape the trajectory of life.

Conclusion

The teaching of religion in Catholic schools in the United States plays a vital role in the evangelizing mission of the Church. Because of sweeping demographic changes in the composition of faculty and the concomitant declining enrollment, Catholic school educators have become decidedly more intentional in establishing a Catholic ethos in schools and increasingly professionalized regarding the teaching of religion. Accountability via standardized test scores has reached even the domain of religious education and knowledge, and teachers of religion evaluate their success in no small measure by reliance on test scores. Those who attend Catholic schools tend to be knowledgeable about the faith, and this knowledge helps to shape ongoing religious practice into adulthood, including more regular Mass attendance, an increased likelihood of being confirmed, and a greater inclination to consider a vocation to the religious life of priesthood. Textbook and curriculum options abound, though final publication is tightly supervised by the National Episcopal Conference. Varying catechetical and pedagogical approaches are present in current instructional materials, inspired by differing views of the church and multiple understandings of the overall purpose of a Catholic education and the Catholic school. It remains to be seen whether such competing ecclesiologies will serve to create a richness of diversity in approaches that aims to serve all or whether it might result in harm to the overall sense of unity in Catholic education. Catholic schools in general and religious education in particular are highly effective enterprises in the US church, perhaps more so than any other educational or catechetical ministry. Understood as a vehicle for the new evangelization, the Catholic school is situated at the crossroads of theology and education and of faith and life. Catholic schools, through the explicit teaching of religion supported by a vibrant Catholic ethos throughout the school, will continue to help shape the cognitive and affective dispositions of the next generation of students.

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Chapter 21
Religious Education in Canadian Catholic Schools

Richard Rymarz

Some Historical Context

Canada is a diverse country with many genuine and historical differences between various regions. Indeed, to use the adjective Canadian as a descriptor can lead to unwarranted assumptions. In discussing religious education in Canadian Catholic schools, it is necessary, therefore, to make some important distinctions and to recognize that it is not possible to speak of a national approach to religious education in Catholic schools. In the same way there is no national Catholic school system. In Canada education is primarily the responsibility of provincial governments. As religious education in Catholic schools is conditional on extant Catholic schools, some preliminary discussion of Catholic schools and how they are funded is in order.

Provision of denominational schooling was an important consideration in the formation of Canada (Franklin, 1976 as cited in Peters, 1998). Prior to the passage of the first British North America Act in 1867 that established the Dominion of Canada, a critical consideration was allaying the fears of religious minorities in what was then Upper and Lower Canada (Morton, 2006). In 1841 the Act of Union between both regions formally recognized the colony's Catholic and Protestant schools (McDonough, 2012). In both areas religious minorities feared that their rights may not be respected in the new nation that was to replace British colonial oversight. To accommodate these concerns, Catholics in what would become Ontario and Protestants in what would become Quebec were assured that they would continue to be able to educate their children in fully funded denominational schools, at least up until a certain age level (Dixon, 2003). A similar accommodation was made for Catholic schools when the Western provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan entered the Dominion in 1905, when the resolutely Atlantic province of Newfoundland

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entered in 1949, and on the recognition of the three northern territories (Connors & Law, 2005; Fagan, 2004; Flynn, 2003; MacLaren, 1923). In keeping, however, with the idiosyncrasies of Canadian history, this accommodation of denominational schools has not been universal. In the central province of Manitoba, for instance, denominational schools, in particular Catholic schools, were deprived of full funding in what became known as the Manitoba Schools Question (Jaenen, 1968). This was a major political conflation in Canadian history and a key issue in the 1896 federal election which ended decades of Conservative rule (Morton, 2006; Smith & Foster, 2001). In the remaining Canadian provinces, a complex relationship between denominational and public schools developed. Suffice to say that in these other provinces, with the exception of British Columbia and Manitoba, Catholic schools did not receive any substantially form of funding (Flynn, 2003).

In setting a contemporary context for the discussion of religious education in Canadian Catholic schools, it is important to note changes in some parts of Canada where Catholic schools had a long and established history (McDonough, 2013). The most significant of these is the withdrawal of public funding for Catholic schools in some provinces. In the long aftermath of the Quiet Revolution, the dramatic collapse of Church influence in Quebec in the last decade of the twentieth century, denominational school boards were replaced by linguistically based ones (Baum, 1991 as cited in Boudreau, 2011). So in Quebec now, for example, there are publically funded Anglophone schools but no publically funded Catholic schools. In a similar but more expedited fashion, in Newfoundland, a uniform, publicly funded nondenominational school system was introduced for 1998–1999 school year. Just over 55 years after they were established and despite constitutional guarantees, publically funded Catholic schools in Newfoundland ceased to exist (OCOF, 1992 as cited in Fagan, 2004). In this chapter the discussion of religious education will focus on those provinces that have substantial numbers of publically funded Catholic schools: Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario. Some reference will also be made to British Columbia where especially in the Archdiocese of Vancouver there are a significant number of Catholic schools. In the other Canadian provinces, there are a small number of privately funded Catholic schools.

To conclude this brief historical overview, it can only be noted that one of the most interesting developments in religious education in recent times is the mandatory religious culture and ethics course in Quebec. This is designated for use in all schools in the province, including private Catholic schools (Rymarz, 2012a). Of enormous theoretical interest, this model falls outside the scope of this chapter. The future of the ethics and religious culture course is a topic of intense debate (Braley, 2011).

Approaches to Religious Education

To gain a useful overview as well as framing future analysis, a number of representative examples of religious education curricula used in Canadian Catholic schools will be given. The table below lists the scope and sequence for the Grade 3

curriculum in the *Born in the Spirit* English Canadian catechetical series. This series is approved for use in Catholic schools by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. It is a representative Canadian content model used in elementary school religious education.

The Grade 3 program described in Table 21.1 shows a clear catechetical emphasis. This is carried through to other year levels. This catechetical emphasis is a characteristic feature of religious education in Canadian Catholic schools (Rymarz, 2011). This emphasis is seen in content outlines for students in junior high and high schools.

Catholic junior high schools in Canada follow a curriculum program, "We Are Strong Together (WAST)", which was initiated in the mid-1990s under the auspices of the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Table 21.1 Scope and sequence: taken from Rymarz and Hyde (2013)

Year 3		
Unit 1	**Unit 2**	**Unit 3**
We welcome and gather in the Spirit	*The Holy Spirit gathers and feeds us at the Eucharist*	*The Holy Spirit calls and anoints us in Baptism and Conformation*
Welcoming	The Holy Spirit is at work among us	We belong to the Sunday assembly
Dreaming with God	The Holy Spirit is at work in the Eucharist	We come together signed with God's spirit
Let's celebrate	We celebrate the Eucharist	We are called into service by the Spirit
Unit 4	**Unit 5**	**Unit 6**
The Holy Spirit comes upon Advent people	*The Holy Spirit dwells in Jesus*	*The Holy Spirit dwells in the followers of Jesus*
In the Spirit we wait for God's coming	God dwells in us	Jesus shares his mission with the disciples
In the Spirit we wait for Mary	The Holy Spirit fills Jesus with God's power	The spirit is upon us
The Spirit is upon us as Advent	The Holy Spirit works in Jesus	We meet people of the Spirit
Unit 7	**Unit 8**	**Unit 9**
The Holy Spirit fills the whole earth	*The Holy Spirit reconciles people*	*The Holy Spirit gives new life*
You stretch out the heavens like a tent	Jesus brings the spirit of forgiveness	Alleluia! He is risen
Crowned with God's glory	In the power of the Spirit, we forgive	The Holy Spirit renews the face of the earth
The earth shall yield its truths	In the death of Jesus, we are reconciled	We have new life in the Spirit
Unit 10		
The Holy Spirit is alive		
We are the Church, spirit filled. We reach out to serve		
We celebrate that we are the Church		

The Grade 7–9 program also follows a strong catechetical assumption. The purpose of the program at Grade 7 is given as:

> To assist young believers in nurturing their relationship with God in and through Christ in the context of a Spirit-filled community. By using the faith summary of the Apostles Creed, this program allows young believers to participate with the Church in exploring the dimensions of our relationship with God, Jesus and the community of the Holy Spirit.

These strong catechetical foundations are also present in the curriculum planning documents for religious education in Catholic schools in British Columbia. The following are some suggested achievement indicators for the second pillar in the Grade 7 program (the four pillars are derived from the Catechism of the Catholic Church)

Students who have fully met the prescribed learning outcome are able to:

- Fulfill the parish/archdiocesan requirements for the preparation of and celebration of the Sacrament of Confirmation.
- Reflect on some aspect of the Sunday homily and service in parish community.
- List the positive effects of regularly receiving each sacrament and contrast them with the possible negative effects of not receiving the sacraments.
- Record in their reflective journal the connection between the First Reading and the Sunday Gospel and reflect on how it applies to their daily lives (CISVA, 2010).

Statements such as these specifically identify students in Catholic schools as "young believers" and it assumes that they have a relationship with Christ and are members of a faith community. Further evidence of the emphasis on catechesis is given in the teacher manual for the Year 12 program, *In Search of the Good*. The aim of the program is defined as:

> To assist young men and women to understand themselves as moral persons living the way of Christ through an examination of ethical theories, the revelation of sacred Scripture, and the experience and teaching of the Catholic Church. (Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004)

We see here an assumption that senior high school students are living, or will desire to live, "the way of Christ." While this may describe some students in Catholic schools, it does not recognize the powerful and relentless impact of secularization in Canada (Dawson & Thiessen, 2013; Voas, 2010). This trend has increased in both swiftness and intensity in recent decades (see Hay, 2014). Crockett and Voas (2005) point to very strong generational cohort effects, with each generation in the twentieth century in Great Britain and Canada being less religious than the previous one. And this is also a significant consideration among the Canadian Catholic population (Bibby, Russell, & Rolheiser, 2009). A significant aspect of this secularization is the diminishing salience of religion to many families who still regard themselves as Catholic and would be likely to consider Catholic schools for their children (Baker & Riordan, 1998; Flynn & Mok, 2002). The motivation for this decision reflects wider cultural factors which see Catholic schools as providing academic and moral training with less emphasis on religious formation. Uecker and Hill (2014) capture well some of this sentiment when they comment on students' outcomes for those who have gone through Catholic schools, "Catholic school graduates have adapted the life course model of the upper socioeconomic classes" (p. 213).

In more recent times, there is some evidence that Canadian Church documents on religious education take into account a more nuanced understanding of the cultural context in which religious education is taught. The 2006 Ontario Catholic Secondary Curriculum Policy document, *Religious Education* (RE), for instance, shows some development in understanding religious education in a contemporary context. It recognizes that many of the students who attend Catholic schools are not part of strong communities of faith: "The reality in Ontario is that most of our students come from families whose attachment and commitment to the Church is relatively fragile" (p. 19).

Religious Education, nonetheless, describes the function of religious education in Catholic schools in the following terms: "At the heart of Religious Education is a vision of the person, formed through catechesis for a life of service in and for God" (*Religious Education*, 2006, p. 19).

Within this strong catechetical emphasis, there is recognition, however, that religious education is a part of the wider process. Its particular function is to provide an academic focus, but this remains a component of a wider catechetical intent. "In Catholic secondary schools, Religious Education functions as the academic component within the nexus of activities that seek to evangelize and catechize students" (*Religious Education*, 2006).

The relationship between catechesis and religious education in schools is derived from the well-established principle that in Catholic schools catechesis can compliment religious education but is distinct from it. This is recorded most notably in the *General Directory of Catechesis* (1997).

The more recent, 2012, Ontario Catholic Elementary Curriculum (OCEC) document also expresses the need to distinguish between catechesis and religious education but also the complementarity of the two:

> No doubt, religious education will have a catechetical dimension for those believing students…this is why the present policy document names the "hopes" we have for the faith-lives of our students from grade to grade. Though religious education is not specifically catechetical in nature, it plays an important role in the new evangelization as it strives to bring seeking and non-believing students into contact with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. (OCEC 15)

This renewed understanding is reflected in the concept overview provided in the 2012 Ontario Catholic schools curriculum documents. The curriculum concepts are given in Table 21.2. These remain catechetical in orientation, but in light of changes in the demographic profile of Catholic schools, there is more emphasis on educative goals.

The Way Forward

A substantial issue for religious education in Canadian Catholic schools is that curriculum documents and support material do not, at this stage, reflect the idea that religious education and catechesis are distinct but complementary processes

Table 21.2 Curriculum concepts the Ontario Catholic Curriculum (OCCRE): religious education for Grades 1–8, p 25–26

Curriculum concepts linked to catechism of the Catholic church strand	Concepts	Catechism reference (CCC)
Believing	A. God's self-revelation in Scripture and tradition	A. Part 1, Section 2
	B. The Creed as summary and profession of Catholic beliefs	B. Part 1, Section 2
	C. In God's plan of salvation Christ founded the Church as One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic	C. Part 1, Section 2, Chapter 3
Celebrating	A. The 7 sacraments of the Church	A. Part 2, Section 1 and 2, Chapters 1 through 4
	B. The Mass is the source and summit of Christian life	B. Part 2, Section 2, Chapter 1
	C. The celebrations of the Church's liturgical year	C. Part 2, Section 1, Chapter 2
Living a moral life	A. Moral living defined in scripture (law)	A. Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 1
	B. Conscience formation and human freedom	B. Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 1
	C. Virtue, grace, law, sin, and the call to holiness	C. Part 3, Section 1, Chapters 1, 3
Living in communion	A. The marks, mission and nature of the Church	A. Part 1, Section 2, Chapter 3
	B. Life as members of the Body of Christ	B. Part 1, Section 2, Chapter 3
	C. The Communion of Saints	C. Part 1, Section 2, Chapter 3
Living in Solidarity	A. Living as Christians in the world; vocation	A. Part 1, Section 2, Chapter 3,
	B. Catholic principles of social justice	B. Part 3, Section 1, Chapter 2; Section 2, Chapter 2
	C. Encountering people of other religions	C. Part 1, Section 2, Chapter 3, Articles 3 and 4

(Rymarz, 2011). In addition, the curriculum documents do not reveal a level of educational sophistication that is comparable to curriculum documents in other disciplines. In schools at present, a national curriculum approved by the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops is followed and this is accompanied by a textbook series. This is, however, not a strong program.

These are significant challenges for religious educators in Canadian Catholic schools and point to an ongoing structural problem, namely, a lack of ongoing institutional support for religious education (Rymarz, 2012a). Rymarz (2012b) has

pointed out that in Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Ontario, the level of bureaucratic support for Catholic schools is relatively modest. In addition, schools enjoy a level of autonomy and there is little incentive for individual schools to allocated resources to RE when other areas seem to be a higher priority. There are bureaucracies associated with Catholic schools in Canada, but these appear not to have the staff to take a decisive role in supporting and developing religious education in schools. This weakness is reflected on both a national and provincial level. In Alberta, for example, key bureaucracies such as the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association (ACSTA) lack the funding and mandate to provide strong ongoing support for RE in schools and serve a much more administrative function.

The type of support that a contested discipline like RE needs is tied to logistical requirements that only sufficient levels of staff can deliver (Buchanan & Rymarz, 2008). A lack of strong structural support is critical if the RE curriculum is to develop in a way that reflects the educational demands of the discipline. How schools choose to implement the curriculum, especially in junior high and high schools, tends to reflect the priorities of the schools. Over and above this there are poorly resourced agencies that try to provide programs and resources to assist in classroom religious education. A key question that remains, though, is how are these programs and resources utilized in the classroom. To illustrate how this discontinuity plays out at school level, consider the following example. During the past decade, the Alberta bishops have wanted a more content focused high school program of religious studies. A key part of this strategy has been adopting for use in Grade 11 classes the textbook, *World Religions: A Canadian Perspective*. The book was produced in Ontario by two commercial publishers commissioned by the Ontario Catholic bishops. In the preface of the textbook, it states, "This program was initiated by and developed in collaboration with the Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario."

A critical question here: who is going to develop what is referred to here as "the program"? In developing a quality RE curriculum, the input of a variety of agencies should be sought, and, where possible, the insights and experience of teachers be given a privileged place in planning deliberations (Braithwaite, 1993). With the lack of ongoing supportive structures in Canadian Catholic school religious education community, it is not obvious how the input of teachers and other members of the educational community can be funneled toward producing a high-quality, indigenous religious education curriculum much less textbooks that support this program. Related to this point is: Who is going to evaluate how the new textbook is being used, as well as other oversight issues? Later in this chapter a more detailed critique of overreliance on textbooks at the expense of a detailed curriculum will be offered.

Compounding the lack of support for religious education is the absence of a strong scholarly community of reference for those interested in RE in Canadian Catholic schools. This community is distinct from those employed by Catholic school boards but is also associated with the absence of strong educational bureaucracies. These agencies often sponsor and initiate scholarly networks that are pivotal for renewal projects such as updating the curriculum and the development of new resources. A critical indicator of this deficiency within the Canadian

Catholic school community is the paucity of published academic literature on RE in Canadian Catholic schools. With some exceptions, little work on the pedagogical dimensions of RE has appeared in the conventional scholarly literature (Donlevy, 2002; McDonough, 2012, 2013; Rymarz, 2004). Areas such as the role of teachers in schools, curriculum development and analysis, and integration of RE with wider trends have not been explored. This means that, among other things, those working in RE in Canadian Catholic schools must continually reference their work with examples from other countries. There is some overlap between the issues facing religious educators in Catholic schools on a global scale, but without directed and focused scholarship, the Canadian perspective will not be fully realized. The role of Catholic educational bureaucracies in funding, promoting, and, perhaps most importantly of all, being interested in this research cannot be overstated. In the absence of perceived need, it is unlikely that the foundational scholarly work will be done.

Use of Textbooks

The Ontario bishops have concluded that emphasis in the future will be placed on developing textbooks to accompany a curriculum framework such as the new Grade 1–8 program provided in Ontario. To this end they have reached an agreement with a commercial publisher to produce books that will be used in Ontario Catholic schools. It appears that the bishops of Alberta will also agree to use these new religious education books in some capacity. The bishops here are following a model that is used in the United States where the principal effort in religious education in Catholic schools is toward the production of textbooks (Rymarz, 2012a, 2012b). These books are written by commercial publishers and approved for use by the bishops. This can be seen as an understandable response given the issues surrounding institutional and scholarly support discussed above.

Provision of textbooks can support high-quality religious education in Canadian Catholic schools. Textbooks can be especially useful in conceptually difficult areas (Rymarz, 2004). Although these topics are often the cornerstones of a content-driven religious education program because of their complexity, they are often avoided (Rymarz, 2007). In addition, conceptually rich topics are often areas that students do not have significant prior knowledge of or experience with (Hughes, 2003). If students lack strong content knowledge of a particular area, then they find it difficult to orientate themselves if these topics are introduced (Mayer, 2004). What can happen in these instances is that the amount of new material that students encounter can severely restrict new learning (Mayer & Moreno, 2003). In religious education, teachers should be aware that students can often very quickly become disorientated and disengaged when doing topics that they have very little connection to. In these instances quality textbooks can provide a mechanism by which

students can enter into the conversation by at least giving them some key vocabulary and concepts.

While cognizant of the restraints under which Catholic schools operate, however, textbooks in religious education cannot be seen as the complete solution to underlying issues that require ongoing attention. Rymarz and Engebretson (2005) have noted that while an important component of religious education, textbooks cannot substitute some of the structural deficiencies that hinder religious education in Catholic schools. For instance, it has been noted that many Catholic school religious education teachers lack specialist content knowledge to teach the discipline. To address this issue adequately requires provision of assistance to teachers to develop their skills and competencies in this area. In the context of Canadian Catholic schools, a legitimate question is: How this support and ongoing training of classroom RE teachers will be provided? This is a question that cannot be adequately answered by reference to classroom textbooks alone. What is required is an ongoing well-resourced program of teacher development and formation.

Textbooks should not be seen as the primary way of overcoming, in this case, relatively poor training and background on the part of RE teachers. Shulman (1986) has pointed out that for teaching mastery to be evident, the teacher must be able to readily translate their own content knowledge into the narratives, metaphors, and structured learning that mediates knowledge for students. The critical assumption here is that teachers themselves have the necessary content knowledge of their respective disciplines. If a teacher is, to use the well-known phrase, one page ahead of the student no matter what the quality of the text, it is unlikely that a genuine context for learning can be established.

Textbooks need to be embedded in a well-developed and supported curriculum, one that, for example, clearly acknowledges the distinction between religious education and catechesis. This is a critical understanding of how best to use textbooks in religious education (Engebretson, 2002). They should always be seen as part of an overall approach to learning. Many of the fears of teachers about using textbooks come from experience of it being used as the sole or dominant pedagogical form (Hopkins, Harris, West, Aincow, & Beresford, 1997). There is ample evidence that this is an unsatisfactory pedagogical model (Hattie, 2009). When using textbooks in religious education, a critical question is, "What comes next?" This is both in the sense of what happens in the classroom but also how the text is integrated into a systematic, sequenced, and spiraled curriculum. Without such a curriculum, textbook use is problematic.

In concluding this discussion on textbooks, a number of salient points can be made. There is a place for them in religious education, but textbooks cannot substitute for a well-planned and supported curriculum. A good curriculum needs to be monitored, evaluated, and revised in light of changing circumstances. Textbooks should support the objectives of the curriculum and be seen as its servant and not its master.

Conclusion

In writing this chapter I sent a preliminary draft to a colleague with a wide and international experience of religious education in Catholic schools for her comments. She was surprised by what she read and made some telling observations. She noted that religious education in Catholic schools had not taken on the challenges and demands that were evident in other comparable countries. She said that she expected a little more of Canadians! I think there is some truth in this sentiment. Canada has a well-earned reputation in a variety of educational fields and can in many regards be seen as a world leader. This is not the case with the quality of religious education in Catholic schools. This is not to insinuate that religious education in the contemporary cultural context is easy. This is far from the case. But in order to have a better prospect of engaging students today, religious education, as a discipline, in Canadian Catholic schools needs to become more prominent in all aspects of educational planning. Only then will it have a chance to develop a well-grounded contemporary approach to religious education. This would prioritize educational goal, find a place for catechetical aspirations where good quality resources augment a strong, monitored curriculum. All of this needs to be carried forward with recognition of the changed social context in which religious education in Catholic schools is carried out.

The need for an integrated approach to curriculum planning, resource production, and teacher training and formation in religious education is evident. Moreover, all of these endeavors need to be monitored and ongoing to ensure that proper review and modification can take place. A well-established central agency that can coordinate efforts across school districts will make these tasks much easier. The locus for this agency should be in the provinces with the most extensive Catholic schools as the demands of religious education in school settings are different for those in other settings such as parishes.

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Chapter 22
Investigating Hermeneutical Structures in Catholic Religious Education Curriculum from a Canadian Perspective

Margaret Myrtle Power

Introduction

"The word blessing evokes a sense of warmth and protection; it suggests that no life is alone or unreachable," claims O'Donohue (2008, p. xiii). Reflecting further on the word, O'Donohue writes:

> In the parched deserts of postmodernity a blessing can be like the discovery of a fresh well. It would be lovely if we could rediscover our power to bless one another. I believe each of us can bless. When a blessing is invoked, the atmosphere changes. Some of the plenitude flows into our hearts from the invisible neighbourhood of loving kindness. In the light and reverence of blessing, a person or situation becomes illuminated in a completely new way. (p. xv)

With this chapter's emphasis on the aesthetic dimensions of teaching, curriculum development, and methodology, O'Donohue's image of a fresh well offers a whole new way of envisioning the classroom, a whole new access and opening where one can view the classroom as a space of blessing and invocation, a space of hospitality and belonging, a space of gathering and discovery, and as an ethical space with an abiding and illuminating reverence of approach. In the context of this chapter, the aesthetic dimension is rooted in the theoretical tradition of Paul Ricoeur's narrative hermeneutics as it applies itself to a catechetical and religious education curriculum. In this applied framework, the "aesthetic" reaches beyond cognitive and practical dimensions to a level of being, appropriation, and enriched self-understanding (Ricoeur, 1983–1985).

In his text *Healing the Heart of Democracy*, Palmer (2011) contends that the "wellspring of all notional space is the human heart … that the heart-source is invisible, but the impact of what flows from it is visible everywhere" (p. 152). Palmer

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(1997) argues that what will transform education is not another theory or another book or another formula, but rather "a transformed way of being in the world" (p. 1). In Palmer's view, we must go deep to recover "the hidden wholeness" that Thomas Merton upholds and to recover our sense of the sacred, "our sense of community with each other and with all of creation" – what the poet Rilke called the great things of the world and the grace of great things (p. 9). In exploring how classrooms and congregations have the potential to make major contributions to the cause of democracy, Palmer (2011) writes: "Inner-life questions are embedded in *all* the subjects we teach, *if* we teach them not merely as collections of facts and concepts but also as fields of meaning" (p. 125).

Keeping in mind the aforementioned insights of O'Donohue (2008) and Palmer (2011), this chapter explores religious education in primary and junior Catholic schools in Canada by way of the design of curriculum structures and methodology in teaching. Standing on an interdisciplinary bridge that connects education with theology, this inquiry explores the intimate link between narrative and religious education, between hermeneutics and catechesis.

Moore (1998) states that the bridge linking education with theology is important "because even the most disembodied theological system affects and is affected by educational practice" (p. 16). Moore points out the need for theologians and educators to become "more aware that they are already doing their work on bridges, that they are already deeply formed by theological and educational insights" (p. 16). This inquiry examines the Canadian catechetical text *You Shall Be My Witnesses* (Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1999a, 1999b) to demonstrate how a practical hermeneutical approach functions on an integral level in the design and use of catechetical texts in classrooms. The study underscores a narrative hermeneutical structure as occasion for revelation in two ways: (1) as it applies to the Canadian cultural context and (2) as it inserts itself and takes shape in religious education and catechesis.

The investigation is structured around four main sections. Section 1, "*You Shall Be My Witnesses* and the Moral Life," introduces the text *You Shall Be My Witnesses* and identifies its content and overall aim. Section 2, "*You Shall Be My Witnesses* and Contemporary Perspectives," situates the underlying vision and orientation of the text in light of contemporary perspectives on narrative, education, and curriculum. Section 3, "A Hermeneutical Approach," presents the practical hermeneutical approach in three stages of reflection, illustrating how hermeneutics is applied to a catechetical process. Section 4, "Making a Difference with Narrative," further expounds the metaphorical dimensions of narrative and brings closure to the chapter.

You Shall Be My Witnesses and the Moral Life

Developed by the National Office of Religious Education, Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops, the *Born of the Spirit* series has been a chief catechetical resource for children ages 4–12 for the past several decades. Responding to the contemporary

experience of faith for children, the resources in the series have been designed for use in homes, parishes, and schools in Canada. This inquiry will focus mainly on catechesis in schools by examining several integral aspects of the resource *You Shall Be My Witnesses*. Chief consideration is given to the way story and symbol function in the curriculum, to its hermeneutical structure and use of narrative modes. Emphasis is given to the transformative power of narrative and applied hermeneutics in capturing the aesthetic dimensions of educational encounters. *You Shall Be My Witnesses*, a catechetical text on the moral life of the young Christian, was designed in 1999 at the National Office of Religious Education in Canada. It was developed in three comprehensive formats for use in family, parish, and school settings in Canada.

The aim of this text is "to explore how young Christians, rooted in the Christian tradition, are witnesses of God's justice and love" (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, p. 16). Focusing on the moral life, the content of *You Shall Be My Witnesses* is "based on the Bible and presents how God's covenant with the peoples of the earth is reflected in moral existence by the witnesses of love, justice and compassion" (p. 16). Over the course of the catechesis, the world of God that Jesus laid open for us is explored in ten images: (1) the God of friendship; (2) the God of the covenant with Moses; (3) the God of the Ten Commandments; (4) the God who became incarnate in Jesus; (5) the God of the kingdom preached by Jesus; (6) the God of the Beatitudes; (7) the God revealed in the needy and poor; (8) the God revealed in the cross of Jesus; (9) the God of the resurrection; and (10) the God revealed in Christian witness (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, p. 13).

The gathering symbol for the catechesis is a lantern, to symbolize how human actions reflect God's light and benefit others (p. 25). In the Bible, frequent mention is made of lamps and light as metaphors for the place of God in moral living (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, p. 21). In his song of thanksgiving, King David looked back over his life and praised God: "Indeed you are my lamp, O Lord, the Lord lightens my darkness" (2 Samuel 22:29). Job speaks of God's lamp which shone over his head (Job 29:3), as if God's light enveloped him and filled him with light (CCCB, p. 21). Jesus used the metaphor of a lamp to praise John the Baptist: "He was a burning and shining lamp" (John 5:35) – because John witnessed to the light which was Jesus (CCCB, p. 21). Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness" (John 8:12).

In *You Shall Be My Witnesses*, the metaphor of lamp is especially inspired by a text of Psalm 119:105, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." When participants choose a lantern early on in the catechesis and enthrone it beside the Bible, the words of Psalm 119:105 bear an aura of blessing. In this investigation, *You Shall Be My Witnesses* serves as a window through which to view the narrative hermeneutical approach undergirding catechetical texts created by the National Office of Religious Education in Canada. The text's outward thrust and narrative orientation are explored next in light of significant insights from several contemporary scholars.

You Shall Be My Witnesses and Contemporary Perspectives

Ethical Spaces of Human Agency

Kabat-Zinn (2005) reminds us that "Ethics and morality are seen, known, and recognized through being lived far more than they are through words, however eloquent" (p. 107). In developing *You Shall Be My Witnesses*, communities across Canada were encouraged to send along their stories of light, of courage, of witness. Drawn to the symbol of the lantern, the adult community at large sent countless stories to the National Office of Religious Education: stories that reflected the generous hospitality of people who opened their doors to strangers in the great Manitoba/Alberta flood of 1995, of people who became lights in the darkness for the victims of the Quebec/Ontario ice storm of 1998, and of people who reached out to the families of those lost when Swissair Flight 111 crashed into the ocean off Peggy's Cove, Nova Scotia, in 1998. Acts of kindness were witnessed in these stories – in the language of the text, those acts were rays of Christ's lantern.

An account written by the teacher and students whose school was closest to the site of the Swissair Flight 111 crash off Peggy's Cove attests to this witness:

> It seemed like a dark time around the world and in our little community. The sadness caused by the airplane crash was everywhere, but just like a lighthouse in the middle of the stormy waves, God's care shone out.
>
> It was impossible to forget about the tragedy for very long. Soldiers were all around the area and their large green tents were pitched everywhere. I was stopped every day on my way to and from school at army checkpoints. Even though these soldiers were exhausted from keeping the crash site secure, they were always caring and sincere as they asked about my destination. Standing in the wind and rain on the road didn't seem to bother them.
>
> The Peggy's Cove lighthouse was always in view from the road. When I saw it now, it drew my eyes to the many boats on the water and the hundreds of people working side by side at all hours of the day and night.
>
> It wasn't just the amazing acts of compassion and generosity that showed God's presence, but the feelings you experienced while watching the hundreds of volunteers and the families of the victims. Normal things like seeing people give hugs or pass a cup of hot coffee to a stranger made you realize the goodness in all of us. (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, pp. 127–128)

The *participatory* nature of this catechesis is echoed in the insights of Moore (1998), who writes: "… if we are to take seriously an organic approach to narrative teaching, we will tell stories from different eras of history and different parts of the world, but we will also tell stories happening in our midst" (p. 158). In Moore's words,

> We will see ourselves as living in the middle of story, so we will seek to tell, interpret, and participate more fully in that living story. We will ask other people to tell *their* stories, to draw stories from their own imaginations, and to make decisions about how they want to script the next chapter of their stories. (p. 158)

Of particular interest is Moore's emphasis on narrative as "a significant mode of communication, and a critic and bearer of culture, and a potentially profound and far-reaching educational method" (pp. 132–133).

Living Symbols

"Symbols are to be lived out," writes Martinez (2003). "When we live out our ritual symbols, that is to say, when we cherish them, experience them, and open ourselves to their inexhaustible significance, our lives become transformed in the process" (p. 21). He points out that symbols "live and die in relationship to a particular community, a concrete culture, in which symbols create themselves." In Martinez' words: "They are living symbols when they evoke participation by revealing to people their basic religious experience … thereby [enabling] them to enrich their lives" (pp. 21–22).

The symbols of *You Shall Be My Witnesses* come to life in the testimony and witness of people's lives and the communities to which they belong: in the life of a police officer in Nanaimo, British Columbia, who was affected by the stranger at a dumpster in a back alley one Sunday morning; in the life of a lighthouse keeper named Sarah in Prince Edward Island, whose untiring efforts saved a captain and his crew at sea one stormy night; in the life of a young Olympic athlete who later became the Director of the Ottawa Food Bank and was responsible for a Bill that passed in the Ontario Legislature in 1994 called "The Donation of Food Act," which allows companies to donate leftover food that would otherwise be thrown away. In this way, *You Shall Be My Witnesses* is designed narratively. As Mitchell (1977) points out: "A symbol is not an object to be manipulated through mime and memory, but an environment to be inhabited. Symbols are places to live, breathing spaces that help us discover the possibilities that life offers" (1). In a similar vein, Kathleen Fischer (1983) upholds that the truth of the imagination demands participation, that only "by fully participating in the details of the symbol can we experience the wholeness of the truth it conveys" (p. 18). In this sense, "imaginative truth is a dwelling place" and participation in it "is able to transform us" (p. 18).

Brueggemann (1989) suggests that "the deep places in our lives – places of resistance and embrace – are not ultimately reached by instruction. Those places of resistance and embrace are reached only by stories, images, metaphors and phrases that line out the world differently, apart from our fear and hurt" (p. 109). Furthermore, Boff (1987) asserts that the structure of the language of sacraments is narrative because sacraments, "whether profane or sacred, arise out of a human interaction with the world and God" (5). Boff underscores "the religious richness contained in the symbolic and sacramental universe that inhabits our daily life" and emphasizes that sacraments "are essentially evocations of a past and a future that are lived in the present" (p. 7).

Slattery (1995) explains how in a postmodern notion of curriculum, understanding "is not restricted to the modern program of studies in the schools of the twentieth century as codified in textbooks, guides, scope and sequences, and behavioural lesson plans":

> Rather, the verb form of curriculum, *currere*, which refers to running of the race rather than the race course itself, is primary. This process view of curriculum as *currere* … emphasizes the individual's own capacity to reconceptualize his or her autobiography, recognize con-

nections with other people, recover and reconstitute the past, imagine and create possibilities for the future, and come to a greater personal and communal awareness. (p. 77)

Slattery proposes that from this postmodern vantage point, "the curriculum as *currere* is an interpretation of lived experiences rather than a static course of studies to be completed" (p. 77).

In *Releasing the Imagination*, Greene (1995) highlights the imagination "as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world," because imagination "makes empathy possible" (p. 3). "It is what enables us to cross the empty spaces between ourselves and those we teachers have called 'other' over the years" (p. 3). In Greene's understanding, a person's "*consciousness* is the way in which he or she thrusts into the world" (pp. 25–26).

In line with the participatory nature of *You Shall Be My Witnesses*, Harris (1989) highlights "the necessity of community as starting point in educational ministry" (p. 75). Harris insists that we are now "in a time of movement toward a broader, more inclusive, and more complete understanding of what it means to educate" (p. 48), in which "the whole community is educating and empowering the whole community to engage in ministry in the midst of the world" (p. 46). In Harris's viewpoint, the thrust is outward in that the agent is no longer an individual but rather the whole community, and the activity shifts from instructing or indoctrinating to educating and empowering. For example, to view the design and development of the *You Shall Be My Witnesses* resource, or any educational curriculum resource, as a mere creation of printed or online resources, and to pay little attention to the underground depths of cultural experiences and the rhythms of community life would be to miss the integral curriculum that "is constituted by community life itself" (Harris, p. 65). Emphasizing the deep "connective tissue of the sacred," Palmer (1997) writes:

> One of the greatest sins in education is reductionism, the destruction of that precious otherness by cramming everything into categories that we find comfortable, ignoring data, ignoring writers, ignoring voices, ignoring information, ignoring simple facts that don't fit into our shoebox, because we don't have a respect for otherness. We have a fear of otherness that comes from having flattened the terrain and desacralized it. A people who know the sacred know otherness, and we don't know that anymore. (pp. 7–9)

The inquiry thickens in Section 3, "A Hermeneutical Approach," with the emergence of a practical hermeneutics as it applies itself in the catechetical process.

A Hermeneutical Approach

As accompanying theologian in the development of *You Shall Be My Witness*es, van den Hengel (2003) describes the hermeneutical method, pointing out that hermeneutics is a way of understanding and interpreting human existence (van den Hengel, 2003). In the applied catechetical framework of *You Shall Be My Witnesses*, van den Hengel suggests three key stages of reflection and examines each hermeneutical applied stage:

Stage 1: Participation and Experience

This first hermeneutical stage recognizes the lived situations of the young Christians – how they are inserted in their culture. Having already lived life in varying degrees of depth, they come with different backgrounds, family situations, and upbringing, with different cultural frameworks of understanding and knowing. As such, the hermeneutical structure imitates in large measure the narrative structure of experience. As van den Hengel (2003) suggests, "this first insertion into life's experiences is the starting point for catechesis. In other words, I participate in a culture, in faith, in moral living before I have the ability to name it or to become aware of it." This hermeneutical stage or starting point is called "participation" (2003).

Stage 2: Exploration and Explanation

The second stage of catechesis for *You Shall Be My Witnesses* is the interaction of the young Christians with the Gospel reflection on human behaviour and with the moral and ethical tradition (van den Hengel, 2003). *You Shall Be My Witnesses* invites the young people "to enter into this world of God that Jesus laid open for us" (van den Hengel). Each of its ten moments of catechesis "shows how to each revelation of God in the Bible there corresponds a certain human behaviour, a certain way of human acting" (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, p. 13). It shows that there is an intimate link "between the revelation of God and the revelation of who we are. In what we do to one another, the way in which we live with and for the other, in the way we care for the earth, we are living out our relationship with God" (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, p. 13). Each of the moments offers an image of God as revealed by Jesus Christ, such as the God of friendship, the God revealed in the needy and poor, and the God revealed in Christian witness (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, p. 13). The symbolic story and symbolic ritual play a significant role in the catechesis during this time.

This second stage of interaction provides opportunity for the young Christians to deepen their understanding of themselves as moral and ethical persons. By inviting them to explore other ways of seeing and understanding how they are part of this world, new awakenings and new ways of seeing emerge. "This stage is important," states van den Hengel (2003). To gain understanding of themselves as moral beings, these young Christians are invited to step back from their current understanding and to allow a new way of understanding to confront and challenge them. "We cannot grow in self-understanding unless we are willing to consider a higher viewpoint, a better explanation, a more comprehensive view" (van den Hengel, 2003).

This second hermeneutical stage of exploration and explanation, where the students are helped to stand back from their immediate experiences to get a better grasp of the issues, takes up the greater part of the catechesis.

Stage 3: Appropriation and Application

According to van den Hengel (2003), the third and most important stage of herme-neutical reflection for catechesis is appropriation: "The circle of understanding is not complete until these young people have been able to make their own what they heard, read, researched, shared, or discovered in the previous two stages." This stage is structured around a more enriched self-understanding, being able to see the world differently, gaining new possibilities for living, and becoming more adept at making a difference in their world or culture. In *You Shall Be My Witnesses*, this third hermeneutical stage has three components, as explicitly outlined in the resource. What the young people have appropriated touches on growth and makes a difference at three levels:

> The *cognitive* indicates the additional knowledge to be gained by the student in the [cate-chesis]. It may be as simple as knowing that Jesus was a miracle worker or as complicated as knowing the Apostles' Creed.
>
> The *practical* looks to the new abilities the student acquires through the activities of the [catechesis]. If the cognitive answers to what the students will know, the practical manifests itself in what they will be able to do with greater facility than before. In the field of religion, the practical indicates all those actions and abilities that come from being a full member of the Church. Catechists introduce the students to the practical life of the Christians so that they can act with ease and familiarity in the things pertaining to faith. Such actions might include the ability to find one's way in the Bible, to prepare a celebration of the Word with others, or to identify the signs of the kingdom of God in the community.
>
> The *aesthetic* dimension touches the deepest level of growth for the student. It goes beyond knowing and beyond abilities to the level of being. The aesthetic touches the change or transformation that the student undergoes in his or her person as faith takes root more and more. The aesthetic operates at the level of feeling and attitudes. It is ultimately caught up with our stance before God …. (CCCB, 1999a, 1999b, p. 23)

In summary, what is appropriated makes a difference at the levels of understand-ing, living, and witnessing. In the aesthetic dimension, understanding becomes a way of being in the world that permeates the depths of one's relationships and the ethic by which one lives. With a deepened self-understanding, one is able to see the world differently, with new openings for living and new possibilities for making a difference in the world.

In Paul Ricoeur's theoretical framework of hermeneutics, understanding is the goal of hermeneutics. For him, understanding is not a primarily theoretical exercise, but a practical one. In religious education, we intend that participants will have not only a notional knowledge of some aspect of Christian faith, but will be at home in it; it will become like second nature. To understand, for Ricoeur, is something like that:

> It is the capability to insert yourself in a particular world – in this case, the world of faith – and to find yourself at home there. It is the capacity to act within that world as a free person. Ricoeur himself defined understanding as a capacity to "orient ourselves comprehensively" in situations. This means knowing what one can do, or knowing that one is capable of doing something in a particular situation. As such, understanding brings one to a point where one can become creative and insert oneself actively into a historical process. Understanding is,

therefore, much more than a cognitive penetration into a status quo. It is a capacity to be in situations where one initiates things. Understanding is a way of being in the world. (Power and van den Hengel, 2011, p. 470)

Making a Difference with Narrative

When asked about the interrelationship between content and form in her fiction, Canadian novelist Margaret Laurence shared these words:

> I am concerned mainly, I think, with finding a form which will enable a novel to reveal itself, a form through which the characters can breathe. When I try to think of form by itself, I have to put it into visual terms – I see it not like a house or a cathedral or any enclosing edifice, but rather as a forest, through which one can see outward, in which the shapes of trees do not prevent air and sun, and in which the trees themselves are growing structures, something alive. (Kuester, 1994, p. 20)

This metaphorical dimension of narrative fiction as a "living space," and its ability to open up the imagination of children, is of chief importance throughout this chapter (see Power, 2010).

Furthermore, Ricoeur's (1983) theory of the inherent ability of narrative fiction to "remake" reality in a way that leads to human action provides a hinge for this inquiry. In his words:

> Fiction has the power to "remake" reality and, within the framework of narrative fiction in particular, to remake real praxis to the extent that the text intentionally aims at a horizon of new reality which we may call a world. It is this world of the text which intervenes in the world of action in order to give it a new configuration or, as we might say, in order to transfigure it. (pp. 185)

Simms (2003) emphasizes that there is a *point* to reading or hearing a narrative that reaches out beyond the narrative itself (p. 85). For Ricoeur (1983), this marks "the intersection of the world of the text and the world of the hearer or reader" (p. 71). The notion of narrative form as occasion for revelation is echoed in Ricoeur's observation:

> Narrative fiction "imitates" human action, not only in that, before referring to the text, it refers to our own pre-understanding of the meaningful structures of action and of its temporal dimensions but also in that it contributes, beyond the text, to reshaping these structures and dimensions in accordance with the imaginary configuration of the plot. (p. 185)

Similarly, Stone (1995) proposes that a sensitive use of narrative can help us discover that "illusive presence on the edges of our experience … that can move us beyond ourselves in order to take a good look at ourselves" (p. 281).

Adams, Hyde, and Woolley (2008) suggest that "the task of nourishing spirituality is one of releasing, not constricting, children's understanding and imagination" (p. 46). These authors encourage adults "to become more aware of the 'geography' of children's spirituality [and] to engage more fully with children's worlds – how

children experience their inner worlds, and how the inner and outer worlds interact to shape the spiritual dimension of their lives" (p. 9).

Overall, this investigation illuminates the bridge between narrative and religious education, between practical hermeneutics and catechesis. It illustrates the significant contribution of a practical hermeneutical method that shapes the catechetical process in a way that inspires the creation of new applications, new designs, new openings, and new inclusivity. In Greene's (1988) words,

> If we are seriously interested in education for freedom as well as for the opening of cognitive perspectives, it is also important to find a way of developing a *praxis* of educational consequence that opens the spaces necessary for the remaking of a democratic community. (p. 126)

This investigation supports Greene's challenge and its call for "a new commitment to intelligence, a new fidelity in communication, and a new regard for imagination" (pp. 126–127). It explores the metaphorical dimensions of narrative as ethical space, thereby unveiling its relational and revelatory potential for religious education, curriculum design, and teaching.

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Chapter 23
Religious Education in Brazil: An Overview of Pedagogical Developments

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Introduction

The Brazilian Constitution (Brasil, 1988, Article 5.VI) guarantees the inviolable freedom of conscience and religion and the free exercise of religion and religious cults and ensures the protection of places of worship and their rites. It also declared Brazil to be a Federative Republic that guarantees religious freedom, thereby reaffirming the country as a secular state. In the twenty-first century, Brazil is addressing its religious plurality with a rethink of religious education in both public and private institutions. This has impacted on religious education in schools and motivated the inclusion of a school curriculum component that studies diverse religious contexts and traditions (Fracaro & Junqueira, 2009). This is a challenging task as the discipline of religious education in Brazil must cater for two schooling structures. Schools in Brazil can be categorised in two broad structures: public schools maintained by the government and private schools, particularly religiously affiliated private schools. Given the emerging religious plurality of the nation, religious education as part of the curriculum aims to satisfy the perspectives of each schooling structure whilst taking into account the religious diversity of the Brazilian population.

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The Religious Context in Brazil

In order to understand the pedagogical actions and the content of Brazilian religious education, it is important to contextualise the religious instance in the country, especially taking into account the demographic census of 2010 which provided evidence about the national situation.

Official data affirmed that Catholicism is the majority religion among the Brazilian people. However, it was surprising to note that besides a growth of new religious traditions, there is also a continued growth of those declaring to belong to no religious tradition. In the 1991 census the latter represented 4.7 % of the total population, but by the end of the millennium, the percentages rose to 7.28 % in 2000 and reached 8.0 % (15 million Brazilians) in 2010. These people are not necessarily atheists, but it is quite probable that they have found a new space to follow their religious convictions outside of the religious institution (IBGE, 2011, Table 14, 1). Another research found that there has been a growth in certain religious devotions and practices that are not necessarily identical to those practices in traditional religious institutions. Many find answers to immediate and concrete problems in daily life in the neo-Pentecostal movement and churches. This is especially so for the less economically favoured social classes who, through the social losses suffered (land, housing, employment, education, health, etc.), also experience a loss of identity, lack of cultural roots and emotional instability. It is in these new movements that they find equilibrium and a new meaning to their daily lives (Neri, 2011).

The strength of these movements and churches stems from a humanism that is centred on individualism stripped of transcendent realities, and that is dominated by economic concerns. This way of understanding reality encourages people to seek religious institutions only during affliction and suffering.

By highlighting autonomy and the benefit of the individual to the detriment of society, the culture of individualism generates a flexible ethical model, where the moral measure is the individual and his/her particular needs. This model is transposed to the transcendent, meaning that the faithful seek out religious movements or churches where the ethical and moral requirements are made flexible, and the sacred is adapted to the demands of a globalised world. This explains the increase in the number of people declaring themselves with no religion, generally as a result of one of three factors, namely, uncommitted practice of the Catholic religion, cultural and religious miscegenation, and the search for religions that facilitate worship. This is a very different setting than that which existed 30 years ago when the country's identity was predominantly Catholic. Brazilian Catholicism is passing through a historical phase of loss of hegemony dictated, above all, by modernity, which does not eliminate religion but transforms it continually in a process of recomposition and losses. Men and women recreate their systems of meanings leading to the restructuring of beliefs and the emergence of new religious proposals.

One of the challenges of Catholicism is recognising sensitivities and being open to them and the capacity to restructure its own language and pastoral practice (Alves, 2009). The growth of evangelical churches is linked with the new social reality that is founded strongly on individualism and with the demand for institutions that are more mobile and less dogmatic in nature. These churches are seen as being more responsive to objective needs, whether of a spiritual, material or emotional nature. A considerable number of evangelicals include young people with good educational background, who are relatively well situated economically and who seem to have converted for social reasons than for theological reasons. Many were converted because of their parents or friends having converted first. Such conversions also result in very high mobility of adherence between churches, as many change religious denomination with great spontaneity and without any problems of a doctrinal nature (Neri, 2011).

Notwithstanding these changes, ecumenical experiences and religious dialogue have been occurring in Brazil for many years. However, there is also a growing tendency towards religious intolerance. This is mainly due to the characteristics of new religious movements which are generally organised around the ideas of charismatic leaders whose priority is the immediate growth of their religious movement. They tend to generate the idea that the converted one belongs to an exclusive group of elected who are separated from the rest of the world, which is depicted as a place in which evil and sin rule and which therefore needs to be exorcised (de Oliveira, 2007).

These new religious movements reinforce the issue of conversion, which consists in rejecting one world in favour of another. All of the religious languages associated with conversion revolve around death, regeneration and resurrection. The great religious experiences of conversion include stories of trance, ecstasy and temporary fugues which, in reality, constitute the passage through death back to a new life. At this moment the converted one swaps freedom and pleasure for peace and security, but between the new and the old, there is not a complete separation as there remain elements of the old in the new and remnants of old beliefs, despite being masqueraded as something new.

The few research studies that have been carried out in the field of religious identity increasingly clarify this new reality. The data provided by the 2010 census confirms this new scenario in the religious identity of the Brazilian population (de Oliveira, 2007, p. 1231). A considerable proportion of the faithful profess a religion that is not the same as that in which they were nurtured during their infancy. These are converted adepts, many of whom have experimented with successive options. There was a time when changing one's religion represented a social and cultural rupture. Conversion was a personal and family drama, representing a drastic change in life. However, currently, changing one's religion does not seem to sensitise anyone. Nowadays, disciples change their religion with the same ease as changing consumer brands. The religious follower has thus been transformed into a kind of religious consumer (Filho, 2008, pp. 46–49).

The Educational Political Process in Brazil

The Brazilian Constitution affirms that education is a universal right and an obligation of the state and the family to be promoted and incentivized with the collaboration of society, aimed at the development of the individual, preparation for citizenship and qualification for work (Constitution, art. 205). The educational system in the country is organised into two large segments: compulsory education which occurs up to the age of 18 and higher education, aimed at professional training and postgraduate studies (Cervi, 2005).

Religious education is a subject that is included at the three levels of compulsory education, namely, during early education (education that occurs until when the child reaches 5 years of age), primary education (from 6 to 14 years), and secondary education (from 15 to 18 years). During compulsory education, schools should contribute towards the development of the capacity to learn, with the basic means being full mastery of reading, writing and arithmetic; comprehension of the natural and social environment, the political system, the technology and the arts; as well as the nurture of the values upon which society is based. In the latter regards, schools should specifically contribute towards the formation of attitudes and values as well as the strengthening of family ties, human solidarity and mutual tolerance understood as a foundation for social life (Law 9.394/1996, art. 32). Religious education is understood to contribute towards the latter educational goal. Brazilian education is imparted in two types of educational institutions, namely, public institutions, understood as those created or built, maintained and administrated by the public authorities, and private institutions, understood as those maintained and administrated by legal or natural persons (Education Act of 1996–9.394/1996, art. 19). The second group of schools includes confessional institutions run by groups of individuals or private entities that provide specific confessional orientation and ideology (Law 9.394/1996, art. 20). In order to understand the inclusion of religious education in the Brazilian educational contexts, it is essential to review the historical construction of this component in the curriculum of Brazilian public schools. This distinction is important for understanding the development of religious education within national education (Cervi, 2005).

History of Religious Education in Brazil

Since the founding of Brazil, religious education has undergone a slow process of change. Through the periods of colonialism and the Brazilian Empire (fifteenth to nineteenth centuries), education was characterised by a Christianisation process meant at justifying the established power. Education was implemented and delivered under the auspices of the Jesuits. The government did not intervene directly nor did it propose an educational philosophy since this was perceived to be the responsibility of the religious. However, education was monitored by the government. The

guiding educational philosophy during this phase was mainly humanist, centred on the values that where proposed by the Renaissance and that favoured the reigning ideology. Religious education was dictated by the agreements established between the Roman Catholic Church and the Kingdom of Portugal. In general, the laws, decrees and instructions supported a process which prioritised the evangelisation of gentiles. Catechesis led to the transmission of a culture aimed at adherence to Catholicism (de Oliveira, 2007).

At this time, religious education was more private and domestic in nature than institutional. Part of it took place through religious confraternities that helped to eliminate the hiatus existing between European and African culture. However, this ended up propitiating the implementation of religious syncretism.

The religious plan for education did not conflict with the political plans of the sovereigns and aristocracy. Evangelisation was put into practice in accordance with the models at the time. Religious education in the country was basically Catholic religious education aimed at the evangelisation of gentiles and the catechesis of the non-white population, as required by the Padroado agreement (Fracaro & Junqueira, 2009). The Padroado, a political/religious agreement between the Portuguese and Spanish crowns with the Roman Catholic Church, guaranteed the Catholic predominance and hegemony in the country for most part of the last five centuries.

The manifestation of an effort at the schooling of religion can be seen in the law of October 15, 1827, which regulated clause 32 of Article 179 of the Imperial Constitution. But throughout the Empire, the idea of respect for diversity in the population was born. In a project on the Constitution, Rui Barbosa, a prominent politician who was influential in the drafting of the first Republican Constitution, proposed that no faith should be imposed on schools maintained by the state.

After the proclamation of the Republic on November 15, 1889, the so-called tendencies towards secularisation existing within the Empire were assumed by the new regime based on positivist ideology. In the field of education, this meant the defence of free, public and obligatory secular schools and the consequent rejection of Catholic ideology that held the monopoly over an elitist type of education.

In its first Republican Constitution (1891), Article 72 states that education offered in public schools will be secular, and the Church will not receive any subsidy from the government, nor can it have an alliance with the government or the states (Brazil, 1891 article 72). A confrontation soon ensued between the Church and the Brazilian State. This provision led the Catholic episcopate to take a defensive position with regard to religious education. The Bishops defended religious education in schools on the premise of religious freedom and freedom of conscience (de Oliveira, 2007).

As a result of these confrontations throughout the Republican period, the Catholic Church in Brazil was able to reach new agreements with the Brazilian government. Religious education became an obligatory subject in all schools, with the possibility for students to opt out from the class. This agreement led the way to the proper identity of religious education in schools. There was an effort to renew the pedagogical methods as well as the delineation of the content covered in the subject (Figueiredo, 1995, pp. 12–15).

The redefinition of the role of religious education in schools, coupled with the discussion of its maintenance in terms of legislation, was of great importance in the constitutional revision process in the 1980s, which culminated in the promulgation of the Constitution in 1988. This led to the definition of the subject's profile in the National Education Act (Brazil, 1997, 9475) which oversees Brazilian education and includes specific guidelines relating to religious education.

The revision of article 33 in 1997 by means of Law 9.475/1997 affirmed that religious education, though an optional subject, is an integral part of the basic education of the citizen and is a subject within the normal hours of public schools. The law regulates the procedures for defining the content of religious education and establishes the standards for qualifying and admitting teachers who are bound to respect religious cultural diversity in Brazil. Any form of proselytism is prohibited. This is furthermore reinforced by the fact that education systems are bound to listen to civil organisations constituted by different religious denominations before defining the content of religious education.

On a federal level, religious education must follow the principles of national education (Brasil, 1996, 93994) which states that all education, both public and private, in Brazil must guarantee the freedom to learn, teach and research; the promotion of culture, thought, art and knowledge; the pluralism of ideas and conceptions of teaching; the respect for freedom and appreciation of tolerance; as well as the promotion of linkage between education, work and social practices, especially with regard to ethno-racial diversity. Furthermore, each state in the Brazilian federation may, through national legislation, guide the definition of the content and the profile of the teacher, including the religious educator (de Oliveira, 2007).

A new agreement on religious education between the Federal Republic of Brazil and the Catholic Church (Holy See) was signed in 2008. According to this agreement, religious education should be denominational, even though the educational legislation (Brasil, 1997) does not allow any form of religious proselytising in public education. For this reason, the content of religious education should support a phenomenological reading of religious manifestations. Currently, this agreement is being discussed in the Supreme Court of the country. Even if this agreement is in dispute, it is essential to clarify the approach to teaching religious education.

Developing a Phenomenological Approach to Religious Education in Brazil

The presence of the Catholic religious congregations in the educational environment increased at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries as a result of their proliferation throughout the national territory. During each period of Brazilian education, the congregations have sought to adapt the requirements of the Brazilian government, the community and the Church (Moura, 2000).

The Education Act of 1996 (National Education Guidelines and Framework Law) required a reorganisation of all curricular components, including religious education for both public and private schools, including the confessional ones. The curricular components include other functions such as mastery of the national language (reading, writing, comprehension, etc.), understanding of the phenomena in the environment and ability to construct logical arguments, all aimed at enabling students to overcome the most diverse situations successfully. It is assumed that these components are important to guarantee access to socially produced knowledge and that they constitute instruments for socialisation, citizenship and the exercise and performance of democracy and by which one is empowered to refute, or reformulate, distorted knowledge, at different dogmatic value levels. Many teachers and specialists made a coordinated effort to formulate a pedagogical proposal for religious education in order to make it a curricular component. Phenomenological research methods were used to conduct studies in many Catholic schools in the country.

Religious education has always been a controversial subject. Much of the controversy relates to the fact that the perceived high standard of education offered by Catholic schools in Brazil has always attracted student populations from diverse religious backgrounds. Therefore, the structuration of religious education as a component belonging to the school context is, in reality, a response to a challenge configured more than a century ago, which requires paying attention to some variables that interfere in its school composition. One plea is that this means dealing with a school subject in a direct manner that accompanies the pedagogical trajectory of the school curriculum (Fracaro & Junqueira, 2009).

The new national legislation for education (*Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education* (9394/1996). Brasília, 1996.) makes it necessary for religious education to take into consideration such matters as local society, students' families, the schools system, individual students' life stories, the belief systems in society and socialisation methods. In developing religious education, one needs to take into account the plurality that exists in society and among individuals. One should also respect the philosophy, objectives and priorities of the school system.

As a result of these references, there is a tendency in Catholic, public and private schools for religious education to contribute to exploring different religious expressions. Importance is given to critical inquiry. This is necessary since religious education as a curricular component treats the religious as the capacity to interpret reality in greater depth and to operate within society in a transformative and liberating manner.

If the intention of Brazilian schools, Catholic or not, is to operate beyond the surface of signs, it is important to consider the phenomenological studies of religion. The human person is a 'naturaliter religiosus,' and therefore, religion appears a constant characteristic among humans in all periods. Thus, historically there have been different concepts of divinity, as well as profoundly antagonistic belief systems and rituals. Nevertheless, for phenomenologists this would in no way exclude the possibility of individuating constant aspects of such manifestations (Martelli, 1995).

In each family and each religious community, there are forces of conservation and change, repression and liberation, authoritarianism and service to the common virtue combined for a greater good (Gruen, 1984). There are more numerous power conflicts than perceived at first glance, and it is easy to imagine how complex the interactions are within each of these spaces as well as between them, thereby affecting the educational policy for religious education.

The intention is not one of opposition or dualism, or mere identification, but the gradual discovery of the religious phenomenon (Gruen, 1988). The important point is that religious education does not abide merely in information and curiosities but includes education for transformative action (Gruen, 1996).

Given this situation, religious education assumes the position of provoking one to question the existence of humans participating in these intricate relations, alongside each of the components of the educational community. Likewise, it favours knowledge about various religious traditions responsible for constructing the culture of the country, including the Roman Catholic tradition.

Religious education in Brazil as a whole thus takes on a phenomenological approach. "Religion" could signify very different religious realities yet having in common the factor that they may be qualified systems with coherent beliefs and practices rooted in a particular culture of a people and that this concept is not exclusive (Meslin, 1992).

The conditions necessary for the correct comprehension of religious phenomenon include the use of methodological instruments, the analysis of the constancy in determining values or credos, the use of primary documents, intercultural readings of primary documents, and the avoiding of any type of historical or sociological interpretation without an attempt at explaining essential moments of religious experience (Junqueira, 2012).

The religious phenomenon may be compared with social or similar phenomena in terms of a system of relations with others. Could the religious phenomenon be described as a world of strict relation structure? Behind every truly religious situation, there is a reference to the ultimate foundations of humankind: its origin, end and profundity. The religious problem touches humankind at its ontological root. It is not a superficial phenomenon, but involves the person as a whole. In other words, religion is associated with the ultimate meaning of the person, history and the world (de Oliveira, 2007). The concern of experts to establish the etymological understanding of the terms used in formatting the current model was to facilitate the structuring of the religious education curriculum, especially in a country with significant cultural differences, which interfere with objectively psycho-pedagogical operationalisation of the discipline.

Consequently, religious education works within a framework which (a) values the pluralism and cultural diversity present in Brazilian society and (b) aims at simplifying the understanding of the forms in which the transcendent is expressed and which determine the underlying historical process of humanity. This way of conceptualising religious education necessarily means that the subject must take into account both the informative and formative aspects of education. In this context, the informative means indicating the basic elements of religious phenomenon, structure

and meaning of various religious traditions. One does not only give knowledge but one needs to work with students to systematise the information gathered. In this way one aims at promoting higher-order thinking skills and at helping students to be critical in the appropriation of information. On the other hand, the formative aspect implies that one needs to take into consideration the context of the student's origin, students' formulation of existential questions, personal and community attitudes resulting from religious manifestations and the inalienable right to religious freedom (Andrade, 1993).

Yet, the verbs used in the development of learning activities such as propitiate, support, facilitate and enable may give the impression that the educational process is more teacher-centred. This is especially so when one notes that the only verbs that indicate student-centred type of learning are the verbs analyse and reflect. Nonetheless, despite this semantic limitation, there is no doubt that the child is still at the centre of the scholastic subject, given that the entire process focuses on the life story of the student whilst seeking to review it from a religious perspective. It is obvious that the objectives proposed imply that students do not only have to understand the knowledge at hand but also have to apply it to their lives and reflect upon it.

The above frameworks and objectives have been concretely translated into a programme that is based on five main pillars, namely, religious cultures and traditions, sacred texts, beliefs, rites and ethics. All five pillars aim to help students understand better and in a systemic way different religious traditions (Fracaro & Junqueira, 2009).

The content is related to everyday life situations which in turn help pupils to reflect and learn on such values as solidarity, honesty, justice, gratuity, a sense of sharing, hope, generosity, perseverance, responsibility, admiration, love and respect. Furthermore, the content enables a sense of connectedness to one's self and a relationship with others, with the environment as well as with the transcendent. In so doing, it seeks to awaken sensitivity to inhumane situations that degrade human dignity, as well as help students to value modes of action and being that generate life and that provide dignity to human beings.

Another important element of the religious education content is the promotion of a religious literacy that encompasses the understanding and recognition of different religious denominations as well as the anthropological foundations of symbolism. It is believed that it is through this literacy that students are enabled to read and interpret historical facts and narrations related to the religious phenomenon.

The preferred learning method that was chosen was the phenomenological methodology as indicated by Filoramo and Prandi (1987), whereby students are encouraged to observe or experience the particular expression; reflect and synthesise the observed expression; and, lastly, witness or share the reflection. This methodology is coherent and may easily be taught within an interdisciplinary curriculum. In this way, it is hoped that this type of religious education contributes towards the formation of higher-order thinking skills, an ecological awareness, and a capability of arriving at a synthesis in the interrelationship between cultural and religious experience.

Conclusion

To apply the current proposal for religious education, it is necessary to take a holistic stance. If schools intend to form conscious citizens, they need to help children to read their country's culture, teaching them to give coherence to the world. This is everybody's responsibility, but it cannot be done from one day to the next, or in isolation. Above all, it is necessary to coordinate subjects and build a national-induced system. Each individual should be capable of realising integrative actions.

Each school has the opportunity to choose their methodology provided that the pedagogical project is approved by teachers, representatives of the students, families and relevant stakeholders in the community. Thus, the methodology of religious education classes should follow the proposal approved by the school, especially the appreciation of local culture without propagating any particular religion, and in dialogue with other subjects of the curriculum.

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Chapter 24
Let's Talk About Teacher Professionalism: The Teaching of Catholic Religion in Chile

Rodrigo Fuentealba Jara and Patricia Imbarack Dagach

Introduction

Similar to what has occurred in other parts of the world, the state of the educational system in Chile, at all its levels, has been the focus of much debate. During the past decade, discussion in this area has penetrated both the academic as well as the public arena.

Since 2006, the type of institutionalism on which the whole educational system rested was brought to the core of the debate and was marked by the beginning of a series of student protests (Astudillo & Imbarack, 2013). The major discussion was centered on teacher professionalism, in terms of how to attract and educate teachers, so as to obtain results that would ultimately position teachers in Chile in a privileged position according to international standards.

Although some progress has been made, the debate has not been exempted from difficulties. Within the perception of the teachers' role in Chile, a view still coexists that considers them to be simple task executors, where their work is regulated externally and they are supplied with inputs for improvement. This often leads to situations in which curriculum dispositions must be implemented without any consideration of the aspects of contextualization.

Understanding the profession in this way places it on the border between what Hargreaves, Earl, and Manning (1999) calls the pre-professional age and the age of

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the autonomous professional, where the teachers' work has to do with the "delivery" and the service that are mainly developed, although being isolated both institutionally and personally.

Nevertheless, this profession can be observed from another perspective that goes beyond mechanization. An alternative view recognizes teachers to be professionally committed protagonists who are guided by self-reflection and a comprehensive understanding of the educational process and the socio-cultural context. Such a viewpoint provides teachers with professional status that recognizes their autonomy, ethical responsibility, and knowledge specific to their profession (Ávalos, 1994). In this case, the profession lies within what Hargreaves et al. (1999) denominates the stage of postmodern and unionized professions, where the expectation is that institutions for teacher education, schools, and teachers are more focused on the improvement of student learning in schools.

This view on professionalism allows for an alternative stance for teachers. It approaches teaching as intellectual work, where the teacher must generate professional knowledge from his or her own practice. In this sense, the teacher can be conceived as a subject that builds knowledge not only from the critical appropriation of what was "created by others", but also from individual/collective reflection about their actions as teachers (Noguera et al., 2002).

In Chile, there are diverse tensions concerning these perspectives of teacher professionalism which are sometimes difficult to identify given the wide range of teachers across the various schooling systems. For example, teachers of Catholic Religious Education in Chile are in a unique situation and the tensions surrounding their professionalism differ from those in other contexts, considering that the discipline is taught by only 1.6 % of the teacher population in Chile. However, since this subject is not assessed like other subjects in the school curriculum, it is not esteemed to have the same importance as other scholastic disciplines that contribute to the formation of a nation's future citizens.

This chapter focuses on teachers of the Catholic religion in Chile, highlighting problems, tensions, and challenges faced by teachers which have an impact on their sense of professionalism and add to the current devaluation of the teaching of this religion, despite the fact that this group of teachers exerts an important influence on the formation of students. Insights on the professional needs of Catholic religion teachers will be drawn upon in the analysis of two research projects undertaken by the Archdiocese of Santiago. The first project gathered testimonies from 200 religious education teachers who participated in the "Meeting of Religion Teachers" hosted by the Archbishop of Santiago on January 11, 2014. The second was data collected from the "Survey of Professional Needs" conducted by the Vicar for Education in April 2013, in which 226 religion teachers in Santiago participated.

What Is Happening with Teachers of Catholic Religious Education?

The following section explores reflections on the demands and tensions associated with constructing and strengthening the professional standards of Catholic Religious Education teachers. These demands and tensions are grouped into two categories: Context and pedagogical practice.

Context: Times of Secularization

Chile has experienced profound changes in its social fabric over the past few years: "the [Catholic] religious unanimity that stood for more than 400 years has started to crack through the sustained progress of Pentecostalism and the more recent opening of a process of secularization in religious identification, particularly among the youth" (Valenzuela, Bargsted, & Somma, 2013, p. 1). This has started to blur the face of a society that was historically strengthened by the Catholic faith. In 1995, 74 % of Chile's religious followers were Catholic, with 65 points of difference between atheists/agnostics/non-religious (8 %) and evangelical Christians (9 %). In 2013, Chile lost 17 % of its Catholic followers, decreasing its percentage to 57 %, while the non-religious (atheists/agnostics) increased to 25 %. Moreover, Chile figures statistically as the Latin American country in which religion is least practiced. The fall abruptly occurred in the last 3 years, especially among Catholics, where religious practice decreased from 41 % in 2010 to 38 % in 2011 and 27 % in 2013 (Latinobarómetro, 2014). An intense wave of secularization has eroded the political, religious, and cultural influence of the Catholic Church in Latin America, including Chile.

The causes of this erosion can be found within the Church as well as from emerging social and cultural realities. These factors have contributed to a decline in beliefs and attitudes that were once motivated by religion. There is a sense of disenchantment or loss of the sacred dimension as an important part of reality. The growth in secularism has challenged the ability of religion to coexist within a differentiated society.

> We are living a change of epoch which is deeply rooted in cultural change. The holistic conception of the human being, his relationship with the world and with God, is vanishing….There is a strong emergence of overvaluation of individual subjectivity …. Individualism weakens the communal links and proposes a radical transformation of time and space, giving a major role to imagination. It leaves aside the concern for the common good to give way to the immediate satisfaction of individual desires, creating new and often arbitrary individual rights … (CELAM, 2007, p. 44)

Secularization has translated into a decline in the level of trust in the Catholic Church as a social institution (Hagopian, 2008) in a systematic way – from 1996 until today, its average has dropped from 76 to 67 percentage points, 10 points less

in comparison with the decade of the 1990s (Sandoval, 2013, p. 142). There have been turning points in the credibility of the Church between the years 2003 and 2009, linked to controversial issues in the Church (Valenzuela et al., 2013). On the other hand, secularization has impacted the population, particularly among the youth which no longer stands up for unchangeable laws and has lost its open-mindedness to what is transcendent. More than 60 % of the Chilean youth view religion as of little to no importance at all (CEJU, 2012).

Context: What Is Not Measured Is Not Valued; A Culture of Evaluation

The new social demands have brought important changes and transformations within the framework of functioning and developing educational systems. For example, there has been a growing interest in conducting and participating in educational achievement measurements that are increasingly more complex and periodical (Aske, Connolly, & Corman, 2013). At the educational level, standardization, the culture of tests, and the exaggerated value given to effectiveness have impoverished and decreased the set of necessary knowledge that should be expected of any citizen by the end of compulsory schooling. This has…

> coarsened our curriculum and burdened our schools with a bureaucracy that is even more despotic and arbitrary whose inflexibility is undermining adaptation to the future. These old ideas about educational change that emerged in the XXth century are absolutely outdated and are useless for this rapid, flexible and vulnerable new world of the XXI century. (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009, p. 13)

We are valuing what is measured instead of measuring what we value. The accumulation of data is read independently from professional judgment. We live in a culture that exacerbates the value of evidence while undervaluing shared learning and common sense. Data and evaluations are approached as key elements in school improvement and progress in achievement. Consequently, this data is being used without any professional discretion to conduct and implement reforms that are imposed by a designed political agenda (Carrasco, 2013). Despite the copious amount of international evidence about the impact of reforms on motivation and interest, involvement, enjoyment, the integration of skills, autonomy, and self-regulation of learning, Chile continues to promote a culture that points to ever increasing results that accentuate *doing* and *production*.

> The new educational reforms of our continent … appear to be centered mainly on the acquisition of knowledge and skills and denote an evident anthropological reductionism, since they conceive education mainly in terms of production, competitiveness and the market (…) In this way they do not display the best values of the youth nor their religious spirit (Consejo Episcopal Latinoamericano, CELAM, 2007).

In this context, the value of Catholic Religious Education, which in most schools is not subjected to standardized measurement and has no impact on students'

progression from 1 year to the next, is often questioned. This affects the understanding of its relevance in the education of students and the value of its inclusion in the official national curriculum; according to the law, the evaluation of religion classes will be expressed with concepts. This information will be sent to parents or guardians, along with the evaluation of the student's performance in the other school subjects included in the corresponding study plan. The dictatorship of evaluation in Chile, understood as marking and not as a learning process in the various subjects of the school system is perceived as a privilege. It is deemed to be an index of success or school failure, exclusively under the logic of scores that students achieve in examinations.

Pedagogical Practices: Teacher Education – Approaches, Styles and Requirements

The current discussion recognizes that the quality education of teachers is central to the whole educational system (Bellei, 2013; Elacqua, 2011). Pre-service teacher education for Catholic religion teachers in Chile requires a heterogeneous review. This only becomes visible once the institutions that prepare teachers undergo stressful processes of institutional and program accreditation, generally requiring intense curricular reform and greater autonomy. In this context, the question of how and where religion teachers are being trained, as well as the question about the type of teacher that we want to form, becomes central in the analysis of the current state of affairs of education in Chile.

Traditionally, training programs for religious education teachers were provided by institutions outside tertiary education. During the 1930s, the Catechetical Institute, originally called Catechetical Shelter, started training programs for catechists, not teachers, which then started to offer its services in schools. Religion teacher training was originally provided by the Church rather than by academic institutions. However, the Church gradually started to accept the need to consider pedagogical aspects when certifying a religion teacher. It became apparent that, just like other certified educators of any other subject, religion teachers needed the appropriation of a certain body of knowledge, in this case of the Catholic religion, coupled with the necessary pedagogical knowledge. Such teacher training would reveal the demarcation between teacher education and the experience of catechesis.

Significant changes began to emerge from 1983, when a government decree called all schools across the country to offer mandatory religion classes for their students (who could choose from different creeds, even though Catholicism was preponderant). This decree marked a radical turning point in Chile. Preparation of religion teachers was now a responsibility of the universities. Nowadays, teacher education programs for all subjects can only be offered by universities.

This government initiative strengthened the formation of religion teacher candidates and strengthened their professionalism and classroom teaching practices. Such practices have little to do with the pedagogical sense of an education program; but rather it ended up creating a distance between the religion teacher and the rest of the members of their professional space, which also procured them with a different status among the body of teachers and by extension in their discipline. It has resulted in a lack of clarity about the meaning of religious education and has hindered the possibilities of strengthening professionalism of religious education teachers.

On the other hand, it dignifies the status of the subject as "Catholic religion education is part of the national official curriculum, and as such, it is a subject with its own body of knowledge and with technical and pedagogical characteristics that are proper in the educational system" (Pérez & Olivares, 2013). The Catholic religion class needs to redefine its curricular identity, since it would allow for its pertinence and necessity to be justified as a discipline on its own and adapt to the school environment. It is an important part – just like any other discipline – of the objective attainment of the national curriculum, respecting its loyalty to the Church, and at the same time, taking up its double dimension: a contribution to the curriculum and to the evangelization of the school.

This is how a curricular approach to the teaching of Catholic religion in Chile allows for a clear differentiation between the teaching of the religion and catechetical exercises, understood as the transmission of the evangelical message. The difference between the two lies in that catechesis presupposes the acceptance of the Christian message and contextualises it within a specific community that lives its faith in time and space beyond school life. This is something that is not necessarily seen in the teaching of religion since it does not start from the acceptance of the message, but rather sets as a starting point the need to make the identity of Christianity known, highlighting aspects of its rationality and promoting religious experience (CECH, 1995).

As being a part of the national curriculum, Catholic education is necessary in order to certify the quality of pre-service teacher education and the heterogeneity of graduation modalities. Of all teacher graduates in 2012, the ones who graduated from a religious education program represent 1.6 % of the total at the national level which corresponds to the percentage of registered religion teachers. However, an equally important percentage of non-identified teachers hold a diploma or other forms of certification in religion; others have completed a variety of training programs in religion, and a considerable number of teachers of other disciplines have an authorization from their boards of directors to teach classes of religion, which is justified by the "lack of suitable personnel" (Table 24.1).

In summary, the answer to the question "Who is teaching them?" reflects the heterogeneity of the field. Even though there are some references about which institutions of higher education are certifying graduates in the discipline, today it is possible to find nine institutions providing education in the area; however, it is necessary to advance in the systematizing of a stronger option in initial teacher education.

**Table 24.1** What education have you completed to teach religion classes?

Specialization	Quantity	Percentage (%)
Certified teacher of religion	132	66
Primary or high school teacher with a specialization in religion	42	21
Student teacher of religion	9	5
Bachelor in theology	7	4
Teacher of another discipline without specialization in religion	5	3
Catechist	3	2
Devoted with no degree in religious education	1	1

Source: "Survey on professional needs" – Araya & Tobar, Vicar for Education in April 2013
Sample: 226 religion teachers in Santiago

With regard to the question "What kind of teacher do we want to educate?", the universities that have taken up the challenge of educating Catholic religion teachers have been responsive to the diversity of contexts in which they are situated, particularly through the design of academic graduate profiles that incorporate both the advancements and needs of the discipline and the identity traits of each institution (Pérez, 2010). All of this occurs while having to follow the guidelines of the Church for Catholic school education and trying to articulate and link both realities.

In the case of Catholic religion teachers in particular, it is known that seven universities and one college in Chile provide such pre-service education. These professional profiles transit around three main dyads: the first one being the view of role (pastoral agent/theologian), the second one is related to the religiousness (religious experience, faith, and life relationship), and the third one to social contribution (school culture, underprivileged contexts), as shown in Graph 24.1.

The first dyad refers to the need for future teachers to have solid theological knowledge, a knowledge that in most cases is described as the service of that knowledge which emerges from pedagogy. The relevance of strong theological knowledge predominates among the different views of the education of Catholic religion teachers. Within this dyad, and on the opposite pole, there is the view of the teacher as a pastoral agent, that is to say, as someone who carries out a preaching service for the
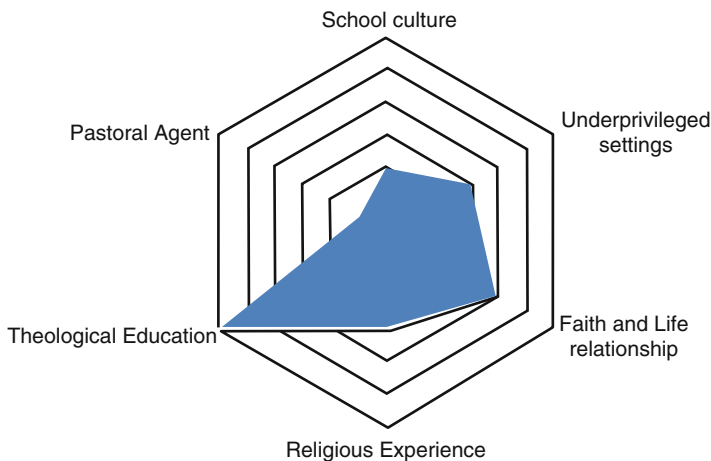
Graph 24.1 Views on religious initial teacher education in Chile

Church to a determined group of people in a concrete setting, in this particular case the school. The view of the teacher as a pastoral agent emphasizes the idea of service, the announcement and witness through his or her own life – which when seen exclusively in this way, neglects pedagogical elements. The second dyad, the religious aspect, underscores the need of a religious experience, both in teachers themselves and in students. Such an experience should be oriented towards reflection, to dialogue and to making contribution to learning. Within this same dimension, it is argued that such an experience must serve the need to educate competent Catholic religion teachers in order to develop an affective and systematic dialogue between faith and reason, faith and life, faith and culture, all of which happens within the educational system and through the practice of teaching Catholic Religious Education. The third dyad of social contribution highlights the potential influence of religion teachers, putting an accent on two dimensions: on the one hand, the contribution of the school as a whole, and on the other, the context of vulnerability where it might take place.

From a general point of view, the institutions that educate teachers of Catholic religion do not present explicitly and adequately the relationship between pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. Likewise, while the particular institutional identity is expected to appear, the emphasis that each institution presents is very diverse, therefore making it difficult to have a clear understanding of their vision of the education of teachers of Catholic religion in Chile.

Pedagogical Practices: Evaluation and Teacher Certification

The system of Teacher Evaluation started in 2003, as part of a tripartite agreement between the institutions that are involved directly with teachers, namely, the Ministry of Education, the Association of Municipalities and the Teachers Union.

This initiative is responsible for the development of the processes for Teacher Performance Evaluation and the implementation of performance-based systems of incentives at the national level. Its objective is the promotion of professional and organizational development of teachers and, through them, the improvement of learning standards reached by students (OECD, 2009; Vaillant, 2008). The standards of performance, that is to say, what is expected in terms of teacher achievement, are clearly defined and organized into four levels: Outstanding, Competent, Basic, and Unsatisfactory.

After analyzing the data from the evaluation of religion teachers between the years 2008 and 2011, one notes that (VED, 2014) while 73 % of teachers of other disciplines achieve Competent and Outstanding levels, only 47.5 % of religion teachers achieve these levels. Paradoxically, in the item of self-evaluation, all teachers of Catholic religion are within an expected range of performance, which has little influence on the final grade (10 %). However, in the final evaluation of the portfolio, the tendency is reversed and the evaluations are significantly below expectations. When it comes to the performance of Catholic religion teachers and their results in the "portfolio" instrument of evaluation– which consists of a description of a content unit of 8 h and a video recording of that class – from a total of 2148 teachers who were evaluated, 4.2 % were graded as Outstanding; 49.02 % as Competent; 43.06 % as Basic; and 3.63 % as Unsatisfactory (Pérez, 2010; Tobar, 2013). Also, the results of the teacher evaluation from 2009 to 2012 show that the weakest areas of religion teachers' portfolios are assessment (1.79 points out of 4) and reflections on assessments (1.74 points out of 4).

The Teacher Evaluation applied to religion teachers is seen by many as a review of their performance that opens up spaces for professional development. At the same time, it offers opportunities to demonstrate high levels of performance and is perceived as a strategy that validates them as well as strengthens the subject in the context of the school curriculum. However, for a significant group of teachers, it represents facing fears that are typical of a culture of evaluation that associates performance evaluation to punishment or promotion (Assaél & Pavez, 2008). This is intensified in religion teachers, particularly since they are evaluated based on a disarticulated program of religious education, since the program is not linked to the current Curricular Framework and operates under different and outdated vocabulary.

Teacher Professionalism and Teachers of Catholic Religion

When considering ways of approaching religious education in an increasingly secularized and pluralistic society, the religion class requires a special viewpoint. Other forms of religious education, such as catechesis inserted within the context of a school, open up opportunities for a significant group of young people and adults who may not normally have the chance to have a profound encounter with faith. This provides a challenging context for the teaching of religion in Chile and demands a proactive perspective on faith – one that is able to discern the signs of the times

and provide an alternative response to the growing devaluation of its role and importance in Chilean society.

Nevertheless, there are some remaining questions. How can the teaching of Catholic religion in Chile be strengthened? What else can be done to encourage people to take up Catholic religion teaching as a profession? The starting point needs to be oriented towards dialogues about professionalism among religion teachers and the strengthening of the work of those who are teaching, being the only certain path for the achievement of this objective.

It is possible to increase the effectiveness of teachers in the classroom and their sense of professionalism by valuing and strengthening the teachers' work (Day, 2002). This can also be contextualized and applied to the teaching of religion. One must strengthen the sense of collegiality among teachers, which can translate in overcoming obstacles to enhance the construction of spaces for professional collaboration. Teachers must see that knowledge is not only individual property, but rather a kind of learning, since it is the result of an "amplified-other" with whom we share knowledge through interaction and collaboration. This provides teachers with the opportunity to analyze and question their work from the perspective of their peers, thereby giving them the opportunity to improve their practice. Religion teachers, as teachers, must understand that their professionalism is linked to their ties and bonds with their guild and an associative life. The sense of belonging and participation in associations must become opportunities for collaboration and enrichment from the perspective of the social doctrine of the Church. They must make a Christian effort towards the solution of the many problems that afflict the guild of teachers to which they belong. In this context, they must be able to elevate the discussion, and along with looking after the rights of their peers, make sure that they are fulfilling the responsibilities of the profession, having as a reference the rights of the school community (CECH, 1995).

Along with this, they must also advance in the sense of collectivity as a space for reframing their work. This space also allows for the construction of a sense of shared purpose as religion teachers, which involves assuming that both the dimension of the transcendent and the dimension of pedagogy contribute to the nurturing of a future path, more than just explaining or defending a certain position in front of other professionals. Defying their identity as teachers may result in the absence of recognition, which not only undermines the strengthening of individual identity in teachers but also harms the capacity for a collective identity, which in turn may lead to dissatisfaction, and therefore, a decrease in commitment on several levels. When the objectives of the teaching activity become blurred, its traits of identity are blurred as well. When the conflicts and deficiencies of education are constantly highlighted, we are sending a message of mistrust against the competence of teachers and the efficacy of their work (Gómez & Rojas, 2009). The teaching profession in the teaching of religion, just as in other disciplines, recognizes certain milestones.

The first ones conceive a paradigm that associates the practice of teaching with the image of the "apostolate" or "social service". This model, which by admitting its unconditional calling and projecting an image of sacrifice and renunciation, ends up omitting the dimensions that are proper to teaching professionalism, like qualifications and the associated processes of certification.

Understanding and encouraging the teaching profession involves the recognition of a specific education that certifies professional practice and a framework of regulations of functions and actions, just like any other professional culture (Larrosa, 2010), "which does not mean the abandonment of the profound human sense of the education process (and its transcendence) but the understanding that teachers are professionals of education that require capacities and competencies to work in different and changing settings" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 15). If it simply assumes vocation as the only paradigm, the teaching profession loses its balance in settings of greater complexities and social change. This "requires us to think that we need a professional practice that can strengthen the sense of human and social commitment of teaching" (UNESCO, 2005, p. 15). The statements above are feasible if we can assume that vocation holds a double dimension. On the one hand, it is a force that sets in motion and boosts the search and realization of a plan from within humans, but on the other hand, it assumes an exterior force that exhorts the meeting of social prerogatives, tracing a frame for action and particular expression (Villalobos, Baquedano, Melo, & Pérez, 2011). In parallel, the teaching vocation and commitment constitute a rational way to establish fidelity to an assumed mission, not only when things are working well but also when this does not happen; contextual variables discussed in this chapter are deepened in terms of required attention on this idea.

The particular identity of the Catholic religion teacher is taking on the transcendent questions that emerge from human experience, then guiding and providing inputs to answer them, thus creating conditions of possibilities for an encounter with God, offering new horizons of meaning for human existence. The importance lies in strengthening what teachers are and do in their pedagogical practice. With these concepts, the disciplinary field of the teaching of religion is defined; the construction of religious thought, which becomes a way of understanding existence and contributes a new way of seeing life and the situation of the world, makes the establishment of new relationships with others possible. Moreover, even though the objectives for the presence of religious knowledge in schools are educational, rather than confessional or proselytizing, the purpose of religious education in the school setting is to merge the teaching of religious education into a well-defined professional activity in a profound way.

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