

Chapter 15

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

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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 non-denominational 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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