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The dawning of a new decade is, perhaps, an appropriate time to think about new visions, movements and directions in the context of curriculum, pedagogy and other relevant elements that have generated the teaching of religious education in the past ten years.

Certainly, one of the essential features of the past decade was the development of new curriculum materials in many dioceses in Australia. In some cases these were collaborations between dioceses, in others, they were specific to particular dioceses. The overwhelming result was the development of a vast array of curriculum materials that have provided, in varying degrees, inspiring, useful and rich resources for the classroom practitioner. Alongside this, there has been continued support in the way of professional development and sponsored study for religious education teachers, all aimed at enhancing practice and improving students’ knowledge, skills and values of, and attitudes to the subject. Another feature of these years has been the singular intention to improve the links between the teaching of religious education and the teaching of other subjects so that some religious education curriculum documents have adopted the language of state curricula frameworks in their discussion of pedagogy and assessment. As well, the writers that have appeared in this journal over the past decade, through their research and practice, have helped to inform the discussion and debate by identifying pertinent factors and examining the best ways to teach religious education.

All of these initiatives have, potentially, made real contributions to enhancing teaching and learning in religious education although the results of these efforts have yet to be determined through further research as a generation of school children from the past decade move into young adulthood. Inevitably, the secular nature of Australian society means that many of our children and young people have little backup to support the religious and spiritual dimensions of their lives once they are removed from the influence of school religious programs, and, in some cases, religious family backgrounds. They are surrounded by a culture that takes little or no notice of the beneficial contributions that religious beliefs and practices may make to the cohesiveness and wellbeing of a community. They experience, instead, the sceptical attitudes from the media and from some sections of the public towards most things pertaining to religion, and often these may escalate into open hostility.

The positive elements of religion, for instance, the interreligious movement as was evidenced by the Parliament of World Religions in December in Melbourne, which attracted around 6000 people from across the world, received very little attention in the Australian media. Around the time of the Parliament, the Tiger Wood’s peccadilloes received more news coverage and community response. It is no wonder, then, that when I met my third year religious education students last week and mentioned the Parliament, not a single one of them had heard about it, knew what the Parliament was or evidenced much interest in the outcome. Against such a cultural backdrop, the work of researchers, policy makers, curriculum planners and practitioners continues to be challenging, and they need to search for windows of inspiration and enlightenment in their professional every day, to raise their spirits, strengthen their resolve and provide them with hope as they continue their endeavours to reach their students in the religious education classroom.
Given such a context, this issue of the journal continues its direction in providing windows of inspiration and opportunity for teaching and learning in religious education. Its pages bring new ideas, thoughts and writings to the field. The first article by Brendan Hyde examines the notion of the agency of children, that is, the acknowledgement that children have an instinctive ability to make meaning of their worlds and to actively respond to it. With such an understanding, there are clear indications for religious education in primary classrooms if children are to be allowed and encouraged to make meaning through their experiences of their faith tradition. Hyde discusses this concept within the context of the Godly Play classroom, in particular, he explores the process and implications of non-verbal communication that is so much part of children’s play.

The next article is the second part of Peter Mudge’s discussion on four-fold learning in religious education. The first part was published in a previous issue, Volume 57 (2) 2009. Mudge provides a substantial and detailed analysis of models of learning in religious education and suggests that the four-fold model has the potential to expand ways of knowing in the context of religious education and spirituality.

An analysis of a variety of Church documents that look at the role of parents as the prime religious educators of their children forms the basis of the next article by Carmel Suart. In this, which is the first part of a 2-part article, Suart focuses on the historical contexts that have played a determining role in the shift of perception and understanding from Church authorities about parents and faith education. In particular, she has highlighted the diversity of positions assumed by the Church regarding the role of parents as prime faith educators.

Helen Healy and Heidi Bush, in the following article, report on an initiative undertaken by the Diocese of Hobart in relation to moderation in religious education assessment. Its particular strength appears to be its effectiveness in building collaborative communities of learning. Religious educators have responded favourably to the process, not least because it has promoted opportunities for professional dialogue and making professional judgments about student learning; as well as an involvement in co-constructing units of work and common assessment tasks.

The next two articles come from different perspectives. Chris Hackett discusses the role of experiential content knowledge as an essential component in the formation of beginning RE teachers and argues that there is a clear link between experiential content knowledge and the development of a sense of vocation amongst pre-service teachers in Religious Education. Finally, Sally Liddy reports on the positive aspects of a year-long post school, adult religious education program for women conducted in Australia and New Zealand – the Madeleine Sophie Program.

Certainly, there are many ideas that may be seen as windows of opportunities and moments of inspiration in the offerings in this issue which may assist religious educators in their planning for a new decade.

Marian de Souza
Editor
AGENCY AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION: A CASE STUDY FROM A GODLY PLAY CLASSROOM

Abstract

Contemporary thinking in relation to the social constructions of childhood places an emphasis on the concept of agency – the ability of children to understand their own world and to act upon it. Children are not merely individuals but also active participants in a wide range of meaningful social interactions. Agency may not always involve the child’s literal voice. It could entail non-verbal communication through play and through acting upon the world. This paper examines, through a case study from a Godly Play classroom, the way in which agency may be exercised through a child’s non-verbal communication in religious education. It argues that the concept of agency for children in religious education, although often neglected or assumed, is critical if children are to make meaning from the faith tradition, and if they are to be enabled to confront existential issues and concerns.

Introduction

The notion of agency and other related concepts such as the rights and voice of the child, abound in early childhood literature generally. However, it is only recently that such concepts have been applied in a serious way to catechetical religious education in early childhood and early years’ of schooling contexts, often with some tensions emerging (Grajczonek, 2008). In many instances, religious education curricula purport to take into account the needs of children, yet present learners with a fixed account of the Christian worldview with little genuine attempt to take into account children’s own voices and experiences (Ota, 1998). Children in the early childhood religious educational contexts are highly capable learners who bring rich and diverse experiences to the classroom. This paper seeks to highlight the importance of the notion of agency in enabling both learning and spiritual development to occur in early childhood religious education through the non-verbal communication system and play. To achieve this aim, the paper begins by exploring both the concepts of agency and non-verbal communication. It then presents a case study involving a three-and-a-half year old child from a Godly Play classroom to illustrate how, in practice, agency may be exercised through non-verbal communication and play in religious education. It tentatively suggests how such agency resulted in both learning and the spiritual development of this child, particularly in relation to making meaning and confronting the existential concerns of the child.

Agency

Whereas once children were viewed in a paternalistic way – as being passive, helpless and incapable of making decisions for themselves, the contemporary literature understands and promotes the notion of children as being active participants and co-constructors of meaning (Adams, in press; Leeson & Griffiths, 2004; MacNaughton, Robertson, 2006; Smith & Davis, 2007; Soo Hoo, 1993). As noted by Adams, Hyde & Woolley (2008), the voice of the child has been legislated for and has been high on the political agenda for quite some time. One of the key reasons for this was The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989), which gave children the right to participate in decisions that affect them (Article 12), the right to freedom of expression (Article 13) and the right to thought, conscience and religion (Article 14). Children now have a voice in a range of formal areas, including health, family separation and child protection. Children now have more opportunities to express their views and to shape their experiences than ever before in history (Adams, Hyde & Woolley, 2008).

However, the notion of children as being active participants and co-constructors of meaning entails more
than voice alone. A key concept emerging from the idea of the voice of the child is that of agency – the ability of children to understand their world and to act upon it (Waller, 2005). Ansell (2005) maintains that children are not simply passive recipients of adult culture. They are “not ‘human becomings’ but [are] ‘human beings’ with culture of their own” (p. 22) (emphasis added). Children are socially competent, not in terms of having acquired a range of adult competencies, but rather because they already successfully manage interactions with both their peers and adults, and pursue agendas of their own. They are “active agents in their own lives” (p. 22). In support of this argument, the research of MacNaughton (2004) clearly indicates that by the age of four, children have learnt “the meaning of many of our cultural artefacts, to construct their own meaning in and through those artefacts, and to manipulate meanings according to context” (p. 43).

In discussing the possible constructions of Christian theologies of childhood, Bunge (2006) also notes that children have agency. Not only do children have extrinsic worth (as well as rights and responsibilities that correspond to that worth), but they should be fully respected as persons, valued as gifts, “and viewed as agents” (p. 58). Viewing children in this way, as “gifts of God to the whole community” (p. 59) challenges some of the commonly held assumptions of children by Christianity as being the “‘property’ of parents, as consumers, or as ‘economic burdens’ to the community” (p. 59). Such thinking echoes the thoughts of others who have worked with children in religious and pastoral roles (for example, Carter, 2007). More specifically in terms of religious education, Grajczonek and Hanifin (2007) argue that the child in the early years’ religion classroom should “be seen as an agent of learning and an active constructor of knowledge” (p. 159). Children in the early years’ religion classroom should be viewed as highly capable learners who bring rich and diverse experiences to the classroom.

Children may be seen, then, not merely as individuals but also as active participants in a wide range of meaningful social interactions. They have agency and are able to influence their own learning, as well as to construct and make meaning for themselves – sometimes in areas in which this has not always been deemed appropriate or necessary. Christensen and James (cited in MacNaughton, Smith & Davis, 2007) remind those who work with young children that “[We need to treat children] as social actors in their own right in contexts where, traditionally, they have been denied those rights of participation and their voices have remained unheard” (p. 169). Some would argue that religious education in faith-based contexts has often been one such area in which children have been denied such rights and voice (see for example, Gearon, 2001; Human Philosopher’s Group, 2001; Marples, 2005). Specifically in Catholic educational contexts, Grajczonek (2008) notes that both official Church and local diocesan documents tend to place children “in the passive voice” (p. 7). They are acted upon. In these documents children are often constructed as recipients of the faith tradition, and are subject to the school, their parents, and the parish. It is imperative therefore, that the agency of young children in the Catholic religious education classroom is recognised and affirmed.

However, the notion of agency may not always involve the child’s literal voice, that is, formal language. It could entail non-verbal communication through play and through acting upon the world.

**Non-verbal communication**

Berryman (2001) argues that non-verbal communication is important in religious education and that it signals expressions of spirituality. It involves the idea of **connotation**, which is rooted in the human being’s pre-object-formation way of knowing, and which ultimately influences the use of verbal language. It communicates through what Gardner (1993) terms as modes and vectors - kinds of deep body knowing. Berryman (2001) draws on Gardner’s work to explore the notion of non-verbal communication and its centrality in both spirituality and religious education through reference to a series of paired modes and vectors. These modes include: full and empty, animate and inanimate, crying and laughter, ecstasy and devastation. Of particular relevance to this discussion and the case study presented in this paper, are the modes and vectors associated with the notion of silence.
According to Berryman (2001), silence communicates and signals as a “call” but involves no sound\textsuperscript{1}. There is a cluster of words in English which refer to communication without sound – “stillness”, “silence” and “quiet”. All three words in this cluster are needed, since no one single word captures all that reflects the essence of silence. By pairing these words on related axes of modes and vectors as represented in Figure 1 below, Berryman articulates the non-verbal nature of silence to signal an aspect of spirituality.

\begin{center}
\begin{tikzpicture}
    \draw[->] (0,0) -- (5,0) node[right] {Silence};
    \draw[->] (0,0) -- (0,5) node[above] {Quiet};
    \draw[->] (0,0) -- (0,-5) node[below] {Stillness as Sound};
    \draw[->] (0,0) -- (5,5) node[above left] {Stillness as Movement};
\end{tikzpicture}
\end{center}

\textbf{Figure 1: Pairs of modes and vectors for silence (Berryman, 2001)}

The vertical axis depicts stillness with reference to movement and sound. For example when a lake or forest is still, it is not moving. It is also silent. Movement and sound are related. In terms of physics, the relationship concerns the movement in the medium of light (waves or quanta) as it stimulates a person’s eyes and in the medium of air as sound waves may stimulate a person’s ears.

With reference to the horizontal axis, Berryman (2001) notes that the distinction between quiet and silence concerns motivation. The motivation for quiet is inward, whilst silence is imposed from the outside. For example, a child may choose to work quietly, whilst, alternatively, a teacher may impose silence to force an outward calm, yet this outward calm could simultaneously increase inward agitation.

The intersecting axes then provide the possibility of situating an individual’s non-verbal communication in any one of four quadrants. For example, a person’s non-verbal communication may be expressed as silence (imposed from the outside) and may also involve that person remaining quite still. This is represented by the upper right quadrant. Similarly a person’s non-verbal communication may involve quiet (inward motivation) and contemplative listening. This would be represented by the lower left quadrant.

Young children in particular communicate using non-verbal cues – body language, facial expressions, a smile, a grimace, and so forth. This is in part because they have not as yet learnt to master language, and so rely on non-verbal cues as a means by which to communicate. They can especially communicate through quiet and stillness as indicated in the series of modes and vectors in Figure 1 above. For Berryman, play is signalled by the non-verbal communication system to which children are particularly sensitive and through which children often express their spirituality (Berryman, 2009; see also Adams, Hyde & Woolley, 2008; Hyde, 2009). Therefore, terms of religious education and young children, the non-verbal communication system is important. Educators need to be able to “listen to” and “listen for” (Champagne, 2001) expressions of children’s religious and spiritual development through play and the non-verbal communication system.

Agency and non-verbal communication can combine in powerful ways in early childhood which may promote both spiritual development and active learning in religious education if educators cultivate environments which enable this to occur. Through play and non-verbal communication, a child may exercise agency and construct meaning in the very act of her or his acting upon the world.

Presented below is a case study from a Godly Play classroom, which is indicative of the way in which agency may be exercised through a child’s non-verbal communication (specifically the notion of silence) in religious education. The case study involves a three-and-a-half year old child, whose fictionalized name is Daniel. The
case study has, in the first instance been written as a hermeneutic phenomenological text (van Manen, 1990), consistent with the author’s original program of research (Hyde, 2005, 2008). The discussion which follows attempts to illustrate how this child exercised agency through the non-verbal communication system to construct meaning and to act upon the world.

The case study

Daniel was three-and-a half years of age and of Anglo-Saxon descent. His grandparents were well known within the parish community. In fact, it was his grandfather who had brought him to the Godly Play classroom on this occasion. The following text centres on the work in which Daniel chose to engage during the response element of the Godly Play process, when the children were invited by the Storyteller to take out their work. Although the Parable of the Great Pearl was the presentation of that day, Daniel chose to work instead with the Parable of the Good Shepherd materials.

Daniel was attracted to the Parable of the Good Shepherd materials, which had been presented some weeks beforehand. With care, he unpacked the contents of the parable box. Slowly and deliberately, he manipulated the pieces of the presentation. In particular, he took great care in placing each of the sheep, one by one, onto the shoulders of the Good Shepherd, just as the Good Shepherd put the lost sheep onto his shoulders in the parable. He then manipulated the materials so that the Good Shepherd individually took each one of the sheep on his shoulders into the sheepfold. Daniel seemed to be absorbed in this activity. The care with which he displayed in moving of the pieces suggests that, for him at that moment in time, nothing else existed outside of this activity.

Daniel appeared to have “unfinished business” (Lamont, 2007) with this parable. The Storyteller later indicated to me that Daniel had also chosen this parable for his work in the session the previous week. He was in the process of making meaning from this parable. He had taken the Storyteller’s words to heart – that if at first you can’t get inside the parable, don’t be discouraged, but keep coming back to it. For Daniel it seemed that this presentation held particular significance. He was searching for that significance by revisiting the parable and manipulating the materials. The significance may have been in his placing, one by one, each of the sheep onto the shoulders of the Good Shepherd so that each could be individually carried safely back into the sheepfold.

Throughout his engagement in this activity, Daniel did not speak. He looked intently at the materials as he manoeuvred them, slowly and deliberately. He was engaged in seriously playful play, which carried with it a sense of sacredness, which he honoured through quiet and reverence.

Discussion

The first thing to note about this particular case study is that Daniel did not speak. His communication was situated clearly and solely within the nonverbal system, and this combined with his own agency. In terms of Berryman’s (2001) modes and vectors in relation to silence, Daniel was “positioned” in the upper left quadrant, in which silence is depicted as both “quiet” and “stillness as movement”. He chose to work in quiet. Silence was not imposed by the Storyteller, but rather, quiet was freely chosen – an inward motivation on Daniel’s part. In fact, it could be described as meditative quiet. The repetitive action involved in manoeuvring the sheep and the shepherd are reflective of the type of movements a person may make when meditating upon the mysteries of the Rosary (in manipulating the individual beads), or in becoming aware of one’s own breathing in meditation (the conscious act of slowly breathing in, and out). As well, in Daniel’s meditative quiet, there was movement. Daniel was engaged in a sensorial and tactile activity. He used his hands and fingers to manipulate each of the individual pieces of the Parable of the Good Shepherd slowly and deliberately in his quest to find meaning in the parable. This bodily movement involved both mental and physical capacities. His perception of and physical interaction with the materials led to a conscious thinking and acting upon the task. He was drawing upon the wisdom of his body – his felt sense – as a natural way of knowing (Hyde, 2008). Therefore, in this instance stillness and movement for Daniel may have resulted in a type of sensorial logic (Berryman, 1991) as a way of knowing. In other words,
Daniel exercised his agency in working quietly, meditatively, and physically upon this task as a means by which to learn about this parable.

Constructing meaning

The fact that Daniel had chosen to work with this parable on more than one occasion during recent weeks in the Godly Play classroom – and had been allowed to do so – is significant. Daniel was able to exercise agency in his choice of work in order to make meaning from the parable. Lamont (2007) employs the term “unfinished business” in relation to children who return again to Godly Play materials which have been previously presented, and with which children themselves previously have worked. The notion of having “unfinished business” suggests that a child who chooses to work with a set of materials again is still attempting to uncover the meaning which that particular presentation (sacred story, parable, or liturgical action) may have for the child her or himself (see also Cavalletti, 1983). For Daniel a key to the significance of this parable lay in the way he moved the sheep and the shepherd. Individually, he placed each one of the sheep on to the shoulders of the Good Shepherd, and took each safely back to the sheepfold. In doing so, it is possible that he was confronting at least one existential issue in his life. Berryman (1991, 2009) maintains that existential issues mark the boundaries of human experience. They include the experience of what happens at death, the sense of aloneness, the need to create meaning, and an appreciation of what it means to be free. Berryman maintains that these limits are just as fundamental to the lives of children as they are to adults. While children may experience them, speak of them and approach them in ways different to adults, they are nonetheless real for them.

The case study suggests that there may have been two existential issues Daniel was confronting. Firstly, he was confronting the need to create meaning from this parable. Earlier work with this parable in previous weeks had not enabled Daniel to derive sufficient meaning, and so he chose deliberately to work with the parable again in an attempt to complete his unfinished business. Some early research of Berryman (1991) indicates that children may return to the same presentation many times over a number of Godly Play sessions in order to make meaning from it. It is therefore necessary that children be allowed to do so, and that they are supported by the adults in the Godly Play classroom in their quest. Secondly, Daniel may also have been confronting the existential issue of freedom. Freedom can present as a paradox for human beings. People crave freedom, yet when it is acquired people often retreat to the safety of boundaries. In some sense, freedom is perceived as a threat by people. It is eagerly sought after, yet when attained people often do not know what to do with their new found freedom. Somehow, it is safer to remain within the confines of boundaries. In the parable, the Good Shepherd guides and shows the way. He shows the sheep how to be free by leading them to the “good grass”, to the cool, fresh water, through the places of danger, and back safely to the sheepfold. When freedom leads to one of the sheep finding itself lost and in dangerous territory, the Good shepherd leads it to safety. The Good Shepherd even searches in places of danger for a sheep, which, because of an excess of freedom, has become lost. In working with the parable materials again, Daniel was confronting this existential issue, and possibly coming to see that Jesus – the Good Shepherd – was one who, rather than curtailing his freedom, could lead and guide him safely to it.

In this sense, it could be argued that Daniel encountered Jesus as the Good Shepherd. In the process of making meaning from this parable and confronting his existential limits, Daniel discovered the Good Shepherd to be Jesus, who guides, protects, and himself to be one of the sheep. Put another way, it was as if the creator of the parable (Jesus) and the seeker of meaning (Daniel) met in their common creative acts as Creator and creature, both of whom play and co-create together.

Daniel’s agency is then reflected not only in his choice of work – the revisiting of the Parable of the Good Shepherd materials – but also in terms of his ability to understand the world, that is, to construct meaning in and through a series of artefacts in relation to the particularity of his own context (MacNaughton, 2004). The adults in the Godly Play classroom respected his agency and his ability to construct meaning for himself, and allowed him to attend to that task. They supported, but did not interfere, with his confrontation with existential issues and his ability to derive meaning from them in relation to his own context.
Conclusion

There are two important points which have emerged in light of this case study in terms of Daniel’s exercise of agency. The first concerns his choice and use of the Good Shepherd parable materials. If Daniel had been allowed only to work with lesson of the day (which was the Parable of the Great Pearl), he would not have been able to return to the Parable of the Good Shepherd to create meaning, to confront his existential limits and so complete his unfinished business with the parable. Similarly, if Daniel had simply been told by the Storyteller that, in reality, he was one of the sheep, and that Jesus was the Good Shepherd, then he would have been robbed of the opportunity of making such a discovery for himself, and the parable would not have impacted upon him in a way that enabled his spirituality to be nurtured. Therefore, children must be given agency in their choice of work. This reiterates Berryman’s (1991) contention that children need to be able to choose their own work in the Godly Play classroom so that they can return again and again to images that bear meaning for them to enable them to confront and cope with their existential limits and ultimate concerns.

Secondly, while Daniel was using the Parable of the Good Shepherd to make meaning about his life, he was internalizing not only the parable itself, but also how to use it in his developing understanding of the Christian language system. Although in this particular case study, Daniel used meditative quiet rather than spoken language, he has clearly drawn on the Storyteller’s original telling of the parable in his usage of the materials. This became evident in watching him manipulate the lesson materials. In meditative silence, Daniel used the Storyteller’s original language in his own meaning–making process. This has implications for the Storyteller in facilitating and nurturing Daniel’s transition from non-verbal communication to the use of the language of the Christian tradition. Berryman’s work stresses the importance of rendering non-verbal spirituality in a specific language tradition. However, such a transition will carry with it the challenge of supporting Daniel in his use of the language of the Christian tradition, while at the same time, enabling him to continue to exercise agency. A danger here is that when religious language is formally taught, it can, however unintentionally, become uprooted from its creative and life-giving source, and result in indoctrination as it becomes full of “animus and destruction” (Berryman, 2001).

It is pertinent to note, also, that Berryman (2002) reiterates the Christian language system includes not only parables, sacred stories and liturgical actions, but also meditative silence. There was considerable meditative silence – quiet – in Daniel’s work in this particular case study. His exercise of agency enabled him to engage meaningfully with this parable, thereby not only facilitating his own learning in religious education, but also nurturing his spiritual life.

References


Berryman’s use of the term “call” does not simply imply language without words. A call refers to the signalling of an internal state. As such, calls can convey complex and important information.

This particular insight was developed through personal communication with Jerome Berryman, 9 July, 2009. Although Berryman used the phrase “meditative silence”, I have used the term “meditative quiet”, consistent with his original usage of the modes and vectors in relation to the call of silence.

Berryman (1991) documents the work of two boys over a ten week period during the response time of the Godly Play process and their continual returning to the Parable of the Mustard Seed in order to make meaning from it, particularly in relation to confronting the existential issues of freedom and death.

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TWO-FOLD AND FOUR-FOLD LEARNING MODELS – AN ANALYSIS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AND FOR STRETCHING WAYS OF KNOWING
(PART 2 OF 2)

Introduction

This article is a continuation of one that appeared in a earlier issue of this journal (Mudge, 2009b; hereafter ‘part one’). While the previous article explored and analysed various two-fold models for ways of knowing, this article examines some of the more common four-fold learning models used in religious education. This article accepts as givens the assumptions stated in part one – namely that secular, Christian, Jewish and other traditions of knowing and education, taken together, offer a more powerful foundation for expanding our current ways of knowing and learning compared to typical secular or humanist models. Similarly, it assumes that the classroom teacher is committed to ‘stretching’ ways of knowing beyond any one individual style of knowing to enhance and maximise students’ learning (Atkin, 1997, p.3; cf. Holt, in Atkin, 2007, p.22). Finally, its arguments are contextualised within a framework that links religious education and spirituality, and understands spirituality as ‘a conscious way of life based on a transcendent referent’ (Mason, Webber, Singleton, and Hughes, 2006, p.2). In the Catholic Christian context, this is a spirituality that is Trinitarian, visionary, sacramental, relational, and transformational (cf. McBrien, 1981, p.1093).

Four fold complementary models of knowing

‘For that has always been the [point], since philosophy began: a systematic discrepancy, a step to one side, a change of viewpoint – perhaps a very slight one to begin with – which can reveal the landscape under a quite different angle’ (Droit, 2002, p.x)

Continuing from the arguments and examples used in part one of this paper, this article commences with Table One below, which seeks to summarise the similarities and differences between some of the most commonly used four-fold models of knowing, at least as these occur in schools and Catholic Education/Diocesan Offices in which the author has worked. These include the taxonomies of Atkin, Belenky, Gardner, Kolb and others. The two left hand side boxes point to what are generally considered left-hemisphere operations (or at least where these operations are believed to originate in the brain). The two right hand side boxes represent the same for right hand hemisphere operations.

The orientations of the various theories do not always correspond exactly, but they do illustrate a general trend across both hemispheres. Of particular significance are the shared understandings across various models such as – the way in which the ‘brain-based learner’ is capable of seeing differently in different contexts and subject to different stimuli; the use of multiple intelligences and ways of knowing; the pursuit of questions that prompt different ways of knowing; the manner in which the brain sometimes focuses on parts then the whole, the expected pattern and then the novel idea; and the idea that ‘ways of knowing’ ought to include an admission of our ‘not knowing’, ‘confusion’, or ‘darkness’ which then becomes the stimulus for deeper knowing and wisdom.
Table One – Summary of Four-fold Models of Knowing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Left brain hemispherical ways of knowing’</th>
<th>‘Right brain hemispherical ways of knowing’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(A) Animadversion (noticing details)</td>
<td>(A) Hololepsis (seeing the whole as the whole)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(B) Received Knowledge, Subjective Knowledge</td>
<td>(B) Connected and Holistic Knowledge; Constructed and Attached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(G) Logical-mathematical intelligence</td>
<td>(G) Spatial intelligence; Intrapersonal intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(H/A) Upper Left Quadrant – logical, analytical,</td>
<td>(H/A) Upper Right Quadrant – creative, synthesiser, artistic,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mathematical, technical, problem solving</td>
<td>holistic, conceptual (Quadrant D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(K) Diverger (concrete, reflective) – Asks: ‘Why?’;</td>
<td>(K) Accommodator (concrete, active) – Asks: ‘What if?’; Learns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learns by: observation, brainstorming, gathering information</td>
<td>by: applying new material in problem-solving situations,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(M) Initial insights and understandings based on our own</td>
<td>working in a people-oriented, hands on environment;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human condition</td>
<td>relies on feelings rather than logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(TI) Intellectual ways of knowing</td>
<td>(M) Relearning, new insights and wisdom, more wholistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(U) Learning to know</td>
<td>understandings, followed by deciding, judging, and responding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(V) The Explorer</td>
<td>cognitively, behaviourally and/or affectively (restart cycle)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| (A) Concursus (seeing relation between parts)                  | (A) The ‘lingering caress’ and Catalepsis (mutual absorption)   |
| (B) Procedural Knowledge                                       | (B) Speaking and Listening, Affective Knowledge                 |
| (G) Linguistic intelligence                                     | (G) Musical intelligence; Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence;    |
| (H/A) Lower Left Quadrant – controlled, organisational,        | Interpersonal intelligence                                     |
| planning, detailed, administrative (Quadrant B)                | (H/A) Lower Right Quadrant – interpersonal, emotional,         |
| (K) Assimilator (abstract, reflective) – Asks: ‘What?';        | musical, spiritual, expressive (Quadrant C)                     |
| Learns by: accessing organised, concise information, reflecting,| (K) Converger (abstract, active) – Asks: ‘How?’; Learns by:     |
| observing                                                      | trial and error; being allowed to ‘fail safely’, solving       |
| (M) Stopping, Suspending judgement, ‘seeing’ and paying        | problems, technical and practical tasks                         |
| attention, listening, observing                                | (M) Hovering, ruminating, contemplating, savouring, questioning,|
| (TI) Experiential ways of knowing                              | hypothesising, predicting; initial feelings of confusion, ‘darkness’, lostness, not knowing and ‘unknowing’ |
| (U) Learning to do                                              | (TI) Spiritual ways of knowing                                 |
| (V) The Warrior                                                | (U) Learning to live together                                  |


To focus on one model, for example, Julia Atkin (2001, based on the research of Herrmann, 1988; coded in the chart as H/A) has argued that the cycle of integrated or holistic knowing typically commences in Quadrant C – the affective, experiential or emotive quadrant, located in the lower, right-hand section of Table One. She argues for a model of integrated learning and knowing in which the student moves beyond his/her established learning style and travels cyclically and anti-clockwise through the other quadrants beginning with Quadrant C, and then through D, A and B, repeated as often as necessary.

Once again, similar to part one, the ways of knowing employed in the typical religious education classroom would tend to be those represented on the left hand side of the chart. Those ways of knowing less used
and least understood tend to appear on the right hand side of the chart. This chart is guided by the findings and assumptions of recent brain-based research, which include principles such as those articulated by Pritchard – the brain is a social organ; the search for meaning is innate; this search for meaning occurs through patterning; emotions are critical to patterning; every brain simultaneously perceives and creates parts and wholes; learning involves both focused attention and peripheral attention; learning always involves conscious and unconscious processes; learning is developmental; complex learning is enhanced by challenge and inhibited by threat; the person learns best when content is embedded in experience; and, every brain is uniquely organised (2006, pp.80-86).

Such principles are supported by Atkin (citing John Holt), where she argues convincingly that learners don’t require a reinforcement of what they already know and the learning styles they customarily employ successfully. Rather, they need to be ‘stretched’ into new ways of perceiving and knowing. She asserts that effective teaching and learning:

...intervenes where necessary to help the learner use strategies and processes which take them beyond their style to enhance and maximise their learning’ (1997, p.3).

and that:

Simplistic notions of learning and thinking style have tended to say ‘find out someone’s style and teach them in their style’. In my mind that is exactly what not to do. Teaching someone in their style limits them to their style. The challenge is to move beyond preference to capacity. Powerful learning, transformative learning, described through John Holt’s model of the worlds we live in [refer to Table One in Part One of this article], requires the stimulation and integration of all four modes of thinking. WHY? Each mode of thinking leads to a particular way of knowing the world (2007, p.22; my emphasis).

Strengths and limitations of the two-fold and four-fold models of knowing

'I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else’ (G. K. Chesterton, cited in Thinkexist, 2007, p.2)

I hope it is becoming increasingly evident that the two-fold models analysed in part one, and the left-hemisphere four-fold models cited above, only address a very limited range of ways of knowing within the context of religious education – namely those based on what can be known empirically, by observation, by doing, systematising, analysing, relating, conversing and problem solving. This, in part, is due not to the models themselves but the way in which they are under-utilised and misunderstood in religious education and other classrooms. Generally speaking, teachers tend to employ relatively ‘safe’ and controllable ways of knowing (typically but not always, left hemisphere). They tend not to employ those ways of knowing that will involve risk, uncertainty, and a multiplicity of answers or possibilities – not to mention “not knowing”, not fully understanding, or not being able to verbalise a response (typically but not always, right hemisphere). Nevertheless, it can also be argued in a similar vein that the two- and four-fold models discussed in Table One (in part one of this article) do not contain the broad ways of knowing embraced throughout Table Two in the same article.

In order to extend these ideas further, I have compiled a different but complementary list of these safer and more controllable ways of knowing in Table Two below, in the white, unshaded area (once again, typically left hemisphere). The second, more flexible and fluid ways of knowing have been placed within the shaded area, labelled as ‘Missing Territory’. These ways of knowing could also be referred to as ‘fuzzy’ or ‘liminal’. Some of these ways include: not knowing, guessing, hypothesising, questioning, projecting and proposing (all typically right hemisphere). The two-fold and four-fold models certainly do not address other ways of knowing that are even more difficult to classify – namely non-knowing, darkness, non-responsiveness, intuition, wordless knowing, listening, silence, and many similar ways of knowing.
Table Two – Typical Classroom Ways of Knowing; and the ‘Missing Territory’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Typical Classroom</th>
<th>‘Missing Territory’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current ways of knowing &amp; spirituality</strong></td>
<td><strong>Absent ways of knowing &amp; spirituality</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majority of Bloom’s (revised) taxonomy – remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating (Pohl, 2000; Griggs, 2006).</td>
<td>Some higher-order aspects of PEEL (Project for Enhancing Effective Learning) – questioning, guessing, hypothesising, projecting, predicting, proposing (PEEL, 2007).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Most standard classroom strategies</strong> – listing, naming, describing, outlining, graphing, drawing, illustrating, reporting, classifying, investigating, researching, debating, surveying, ranking, mind mapping.</td>
<td>De Bono’s ‘Boundaries of Reasonableness’ – making mistakes, accidents, madness, lateral thinking, experiments, chance encounters, provocations (de Bono, 1990b, p.72; 1993, p.49).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ways of knowing linked to Prayer and Spirituality</strong> – use of stimulus via literature, religious imagery, poetry, hymnody, sacraments, scripture reading, Liturgy of the Hours, ritual chant (Taizé, Gregorian chant), praying with icons, litanies, Stations of the Cross, the Rosary, reflection/word-based retreats; predominantly visual-stimulus types of knowing.</td>
<td>Fuzzy Logic as ‘multivalence’ (Kosko, 1993, pp.18-19, 288).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other ways of knowing that are more difficult to classify – what remains concealed, hidden from view, ineffable, mysterious; also includes silence, contemplation, meditation, listening/auditory, wordless intuition, art, poetry, music, song, mime, drama, dance/ kinaesthetic (cf. McClymont, 1987, p.50; Bossy, 1987, pp.153-171), mantras, centering prayer, Christian Zen techniques, symbolic knowing, mindfulness, meditative walking, tears, sitting silently and reflectively in a rainforest or other natural environment, adult sexual knowing; Lorca’s duende, John of the Cross’s nada.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the right-hand section of Table Two, I have included the term duende, greatly cherished by the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca. Lorca claims: “Whatever has black sounds, has duende”…“These ‘black sounds’ are the mystery”. Elsewhere he uses it as a way of finding “a logic of metaphor” beyond the boundaries of “so-called pure logic”. Lorca uses duende ‘in a special Andalusian sense as a term for the obscure power and penetrating inspiration of art…[it is] “a mysterious power which everyone senses and no philosopher explains”’ (Lorca, cited in Hirsch, 2003, p.xi, 6, 10). In the same section of Table Two is another term nada, much loved by John of the Cross, and a word with a formidable biblical pedigree. The term means ‘nothing, nothingness, emptiness, non-existence’; also referred to elsewhere as the apophatic way of knowing (refer to Mudge, 2009a, pp.611-629). It has strong biblical connections with the experiences of Moses, David, the Psalmist, Job and Jeremiah, and more particularly with Paul’s description of Jesus as ‘God in kenosis’ (self-emptying; cf. Phil 2:6-8ff) (Kurian, 2000, pp.34, 37-49).
The same argument also holds for another powerful representation of ways of knowing, operating or questioning – namely the Question Matrix or Bloom’s Cube. Table Three above is constructed using a horizontal axis referring to the ‘context’ for questioning or knowing. This ranges from the simplicity of an event to the complexity of the ‘means’ by which something occurs. Table Three also includes a vertical axis outlining the various timeframes or ‘tenses’ for operations or questions. This ranges from the ‘present’ realm to the ‘future’ realms of predictability and imagination. Once again, I employ the white area to represent those questions and operations that generally are well utilised by teachers in the typical religious education classroom. This incorporates the entire spectrum of contexts ranging from ‘event’ to ‘means’ and two aspects of the ‘timeframe’, these being the ‘present’ and ‘past’ realms (typically left hemisphere). I then use the grey area to represent those events, means or operations that are less common or under-utilised if not ignored in the religious education classroom. Based on my work in designing school programs and in completing compliance audits (school reviews), I would argue that the typical classroom – in its coverage of outcomes, assessment, reporting, evaluation and other areas – would habitually minimise or ignore four entire realms of understanding – possibility, probability, predictability, and imagination – totalling an amazing twenty-four out of thirty-six possible operations or questions! – representing the neglect of veritable mini-universes of knowing and not knowing (typically right hemisphere). This Question Matrix taxonomy, by the way, is an excellent diagnostic tool that can be used by any teacher to assess the range of questions they employ or do not employ during classroom questioning and in assessment tasks, as it is for students to assess what range of issues and operations they would and would not typically cover in any one lesson or syllabus topic, or review of their learning.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Practical strategies for cultivating a balanced approach towards ways of knowing

“We have reached the mid-point of the journey. The still, dark point of the turning world. We have long known we would have to face it: the heart of darkness coiled at the core of our being”

(Cooper, 2002, p.107)
The research explored in this paper raises a number of challenges and possibilities for multiple pedagogical contexts. Some of these include the need to expand understanding and practice of ways of knowing in the areas listed below. For each area I have attempted to specify examples of religious education approaches or strategies that could help cultivate those ways of knowing that are often neglected in the classroom. This paper challenges religious educators to:

1. **commit to ways of ‘stretching’ student ways of knowing beyond any one individual style of knowing in order to enhance and maximise students’ learning.** In particular, this entails moving beyond preference to capacity to potential. Teachers and students also need to commit to a powerful, transformative style of learning which requires the stimulation and integration of all four ‘Worlds’ in Holt, or the four quadrants of Atkin’s model or equivalent models.

2. **affirm and expand ways of knowing based on Pritchard and other commentators by focusing with students on the innate human search for meaning, discerning patterns in experience, allowing for emotional or affective knowing, and continually challenging their learning, pre-conceptions and assumptions.**

3. **avoid simplistic notions of learning and thinking which simply teach or reinforce a student’s style, preference or strength.** This only limits them to their style and cauterises their potential. The real challenge is to move beyond preference to capacity, and to stimulate and integrate four modes of thinking for a more ‘complete knowing’ of the world and existence (Atkin, 2007, p.22 cited above). This also implies the need to employ strategies or learning pathways that integrate all four styles of logical/analytical; controlled/organisational; creative/synthesiser; and interpersonal/emotional.

4. **promote ways of knowing that are ‘out of the comfort zone’ yet at the same time stretch both the teacher’s and students’ ways of knowing.** These include topics and activities where outcomes and ‘answers’ are uncertain, and where multiple and multivalent answers, along with hypotheses and questions are encouraged (e.g. PEEL (2007) strategies). The teacher should also encourage topics and activities considered uncertain, controversial or risky, as well as those that take the students into pedagogical territories of ‘not knowing’, not fully understanding, or not being able to verbalise a response.

5. **experiment with diverse ways of knowing using the Question Matrix or Bloom’s Cube in the classroom.** In particular, design activities and resources that target questions related to the matrix/cube’s invisible or neglected areas – namely those of possibility, probability, prediction, and imagination. Apply these insights and questions to oral questions, written questions, tests, review, and other formal and informal assessment tasks.

6. **incorporate understandings from these styles of knowing to all other areas of educational measurement – data collection, planning, scope and sequencing, programming, design of assessment tasks and marking criteria, evaluation, reporting, school reviews or compliance audits, and professional development of teachers.**

Similar to part one of this article, we are left to conclude that perhaps the greatest challenge for teachers and students alike is to acknowledge that these different styles and models of knowing actually exist in the first place, to incorporate the more neglected ways of knowing from two-fold and four-fold models into the classroom (especially the ‘Missing Territory’ strategies in Table Four), and to apply them meaningfully and systematically in the context of religious education and spirituality. It is perhaps equally challenging to teach religious education in such a way that demonstrates that teachers and students alike do not know everything and can never ‘know it all’.

Thus we have come full circle and return to John Holt’s contention (in part one) that we are linked to all four worlds rather than just his first two. In other words, each of us is inextricably connected to every one
of Holt’s four worlds – my inner psychological world; the world of my direct experience; the world I know, have read about or heard about; and, finally and most confrontingly, that world of infinite possibilities that I haven’t heard about or imagined – that world of my ignorance; that paradoxical world that ‘I don’t know that I don’t know!’ (Holt, 1971, p.20).

In this context, perhaps one can feel some genuine sympathy for the apostle Thomas who required definitive, empirical proof for an event that lay beyond his most extreme imaginings. Jesus as the archetypal teacher and wisdom figure invites him into the equivalent of Holt’s Worlds Three and Four, and yet at the same time implies that we can never ‘know’ or have concrete ‘evidence’ for every aspect of reality: “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe”’ (John 20:29). Or as Woody Allen once sardonically quipped in his celebrated, acerbic style: ‘I’m astounded by people who want to “know” the universe when it’s hard enough to find your way around Chinatown’ (Hunter, 2006, p.60).

References


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A selection of his copyright-free art images can be found at www.flickr.com/photos/ceoreals/sets

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THE EVOLVING ROLE OF THE FAMILY IN THE FAITH DEVELOPMENT OF CHILDREN: 
A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE (PART ONE).

Abstract

Throughout its history the Church has assumed a diversity of positions regarding the role of parents as the prime educators of the faith of their children. This article will be published in two parts: the first part will present a historical context of the shift in understandings of the role of parents in the faith education of their children from the early Church to the most recent documents written by Pope John Paul II. Part two, which will be published in the next issue, will discuss the historical context of the Australian Church from its establishment as a British colony to the renewal of the Second Vatican Council.

Throughout its history the Church has assumed a diversity of positions regarding the role of parents as the prime educators of the faith of their children. From time to time the emphasis changed from assigning a significant role to parents and the family, to other times such a responsibility rested on lay persons, such as godparents and then with the Catholic school.

The discussion in this paper concentrates on issues pertinent to the historical development of the role of the family in its task of nurturing of faith within the home. It examines the influence of the Judaeo–Christian tradition in the understanding of the home as the place for nurturing faith; the influence of the reformation on the view of the role of the family in the Catholic Church, and the response from the Council of Trent; and the influence of the introduction of compulsory education within Europe. Finally the renewal of the Second Vatican Council is discussed and an examination of subsequent documents relating to the role of the family are explored.

The Role of the Family within the Early Church

Throughout history, the Catholic Church has regarded the family as the most influential factor in shaping and nurturing the faith of each generation. The Christian understanding of the role of the family emerges from the Jewish tradition in which the family is seen as the first teacher of the faith. It is the home and not the synagogue that is the centre of religious life. In the Jewish tradition the home is the place for nurturing the faith and the parents are considered to be the primary catechists (Proctor 1996, Finley 1993; Gallagher 1982). “The primary teaching method is the observance of the rituals for the Sabbath and for special holidays or feast days” (Proctor 1996, p.43).

For the early Christians too, parents were the primary educators of their children. The home was the primary place where the early Christians met to pray and celebrate the Eucharist before they moved into Churches (Finely 1993, p.36).

For the first 1500 years of the Church’s history, most Christians lived their faith primarily in the everyday-ness of family life. They took it for granted that the family was the most basic form of faith community. (Finley 1993, p.37)

There are no clear guidelines in the New Testament that address the role of parents in teaching faith to their children (Proctor 1996, p.45). St Paul gives some instructions to the early Church of the role of parents in his writings to Timothy (1Tim 3:4 and12). Paul outlines one traditional model of how most
children learn their faith when he describes Timothy as possessing “a faith that lived first in your grandmother, Lois, and your mother, Eunice, and now, I am sure, lives in you” (cited in Proctor 1996, p.45). Proctor claims that “by this remark Paul implies that parents and grandparents play a significant role in the spiritual development of their children” (1996, p.45).

The First Centuries

As the Church established itself in the first centuries there were still no specific guidelines addressing how parents were to instruct their children in the faith. What had been established was that “the Christian nurture of children was the parents’ fundamental duty, a duty which could not be delegated” (Westerhoff 1980, p.85). So, “during the first five centuries of the Church there were three major educational influences on children; the family, the liturgy and the community” Gallagher (1982, p.166). These influences were consistent with the model being attributed to the Jewish tradition which had a well established system for teaching scriptures, moral behaviours, rituals, and values (Proctor 1996, p.44).

A movement is noted in the sixth century when St Augustine specifies a broadening of the parental role as the primary educators of the faith to include the godparents. The role of the godparent was significant in preparing and presenting the child for baptism. They were allocated the task of teaching children, who were old enough to answer for themselves, the foundational prayers such as the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer. If a child was not old enough to answer for themselves then the godparents would speak on their behalf. The instruction given by the sponsor or godparent took place in the home and it was assumed that it was not part of an organised program for religious instruction (Proctor 1996, p.46).

By the twelfth century, the responsibility of passing on the faith traditions of the Church was given to the godparents, as parents were seen to have neglected their God–given responsibility of preserving the faith (Westerhoff and Edwards 1981). The godparents had the responsibility for teaching children the basic formularies of the faith and “had the duty of inculcating the young with essential moral teachings of the Church” (Gatch 1981, p.88). This continued in a variety of ways within different communities until the sixteenth century. It is interesting to note that at the same time there was an emerging movement within the Church that saw “raising children and teaching them … as a less important than [vocation] the spiritual disciplines of the celibate religious orders” (Proctor 1996, p.47).

The Reformation

A major concern during the period of the Reformation was the perception that parents had continued to neglect their primary responsibility of educating their children in the faith. The sixteenth century reformers, such as Martin Luther [1483–1546], founder of the German reformation, “looked to the family as the basic building block of human society” (Haugaard 1981, p.131). Reformers recognised once again that the parents were the primary educators of the faith and acknowledged that the best place for ‘religious instruction’ was within the context of the home. Luther went so far as to proclaim that “no one should become a father unless he is able to instruct his children … so that he may bring up true Christians” (Westerhoff 1980, p.86). The translation of the scriptures and liturgies into the vernacular enabled people in the reformed Churches to access the scriptures that became the tool for religious instruction within the home. Luther developed his own catechism as the standard text for religious instruction, which all who were true to the faith were required to learn by rote; hence the role of the parents became more of a teaching role.

The reformers, in general, held believing parents responsible for their children’s catechesis. … Christian faith was to be nurtured in the home, not only by parental love and example, but also by explicit and systematic examination and exposition. (Haugaard 1981, p.135)

However, disillusioned with the efforts of parents in carrying out their responsibility effectively, Luther then
established schools in which children would learn the foundations of faith by studying the catechism (Hauggaard 1981, p.137). In establishing his case for Christian nurture in the schools Luther remarks:

Even if parents had the ability and the desire to do it [religious instruction] themselves, they have neither the time nor the opportunity for it, what with their other duties and the care of the household. (Hauggaard 1981, p.137)

The Council of Trent [1545–1563]
The Catholic Church also had concerns about the neglect of families in passing on the faith traditions. At the Council of Trent [1545–1563] the Church saw the need to fight the rise of protestant popularity and to ensure the preservation of the Catholic faith. In an effort to address these problems, the Catholic Church took the opposite approach to that of the Protestant Churches. The rise of professional religious educators led to a situation where “in the mid sixteenth century, the parish was at the centre of religious life ... not the home. The Parish Priest replaced parents as the one ultimately responsible for teaching children about their faith” (Finely 1993, pp.36–37). “Since the Council of Trent [1545–1563] the Church has lost a family dimension in its understanding of religious life ... we have now relegated most of our religious life to the parish to the detriment of the family” (Finely and Finely 1995, p.13). In light of this movement, the family was no longer regarded as the place in which faith was nurtured. The prime responsibility for the religious development of children was now the responsibility of the emerging Catholic schools.

The Introduction of Compulsory Education

After the Council of Trent [1545-1563] until the late 1800s, life in Europe was changing rapidly. Universal schooling and compulsory education were introduced for children between the ages of seven and approximately twelve years in many European countries, such as Germany (1606), Denmark (1721), England (1802), France (1882) and some parts of America (1882) (Hall in Bryce 1981, p.206). With the emergence of schools the poor were becoming more educated and were able to be socially mobile, thus the middle class was growing (Bryce 1981, p.206).

With the event of compulsory education becoming more the norm, Church authorities became more persistent in preserving the faith. As the threat of State–run schools began to emerge, papal encyclicals concentrated on the importance of setting up Catholic schools with the purposes of preservation of the faith and the moral education of Catholic children. The catechism became the main text for formal religious instruction. Learning the catechism by rote became the main method of instruction in the faith. This method continued until the 1960s in the Catholic Church.

Pius IX, in his Instruction of the Holy Office to the Bishops of the United States, November 24, 1875 clearly stated that those who were responsible for teaching the faith were to preserve the Catholic teachings.

[Parish Priests and missionaries will teach the catechism with great attention and will take special care to explain the truths of the faith and of morals that are opposed by the incredulous and heterodox (#63).

In the same document parents who did not send their children to Catholic schools were addressed. This group of parents was told that they could not celebrate the Sacrament of Penance and thus, as was the requirement of the time, were excluded from receiving the Eucharist.

This instruction and this necessary Christian education of their children is often neglected by those parents who allow their children to frequent schools where it is impossible to avoid the loss of souls or who, notwithstanding the existence of a well-organised neighbouring Catholic school or the possibility of having children educated elsewhere in a Catholic school, entrust them to publics without sufficient reason and without having taken the necessary precautions to avoid danger of perversion; it is a well-known fact that, according to Catholic moral teaching, such parents, should
they persist in their attitude, cannot receive absolution in the Sacrament of Penance (#63).

This statement clearly shows a shift in the responsibility for the nurturing of faith from the home to the Catholic school, further emphasising the movement from home to Church.

Leo XIII in his encyclical *Officio Sanctissimo* (Common Duties and Interests) December 22, 1887 to the bishops of Bavaria, addressed the duties and rights of parents. The document “urges education of children under the auspices of Church warns against freemasonry” (Carlen 1990, p.49). It recognised parents as the educators of their children in faith, however, it also states that if they are unable to carry out this duty effectively then they were obliged to send their children to teachers authorised by the Church.

Hence, let parents reflect that, while they are under the grave obligation to support their children, they have also the other much important duty of bringing them up in the nobler life that concerns the soul. If they themselves cannot ensure this, they must allow themselves to be substituted, but in such a manner that the children receive and learn the necessary religious doctrine from approved teachers (Officio Sanctissimo 1887, #112).

In a later encyclical (Christian as Citizens) January 10, 1890, Leo XIII sums up the rights and duties of the parents. The encyclical acknowledges again that parents are the primary educators of the faith of their children. It calls parents to preserve the faith by instructing parents to protect their children from secular influences. The call of previous encyclicals to send children to a Catholic school is also reiterated.

By nature parents have a right to training of their children, but with this added duty that the education and instruction of the child be in accord with the end of which, by, God’s blessing, it was begotten. Therefore it is the duty of parents to make every effort to prevent any invasion of their rights in this matter, and to make absolutely sure that the education of the children remain under their own control keeping with their Christian duty, and above all to refuse to send them to those schools in which there is danger of imbibing the deadly poison of impiety. (Sapientiae Christiana 1890, #42)

Parents, within this period of Church history, were instructed by the Church to have their children educated by religious within Catholic schools. Parents were no longer regarded as the first and foremost nurturers of the faith. The understanding of the early Church of the role of parents had been hijacked in this period by the Church’s commitment to preserve the faith.

The Early Twentieth Century

Entering the twentieth century, the theory of Horace Bushnell, an American religious educator in the Protestant Church, was drawing attention within Protestant circles. “For Bushnell, the true function of parenting was to nurture the faith that is already at work within children” (Proctor 1996, p.50). This new perspective claimed that children develop faith through the nurture of the family and the community of faith. Bushnell “tended to emphasise the catechesis of the individual in the context of the family, assisted by the insights of psychology and the general understanding of human nature and human development” (Booty 1981, p.280). “It is through our parental example that our children’s faith is determined” (Bushnell in Westerhoff 1980, p.87). He opened the door to discovering how faith was actually passed on to children.

Meanwhile the Catholic Church also made an attempt to re-establish the understanding that the first educators of the faith are the parents. The Church maintained that the three influential societies necessary for the transmission of the faith were the family, the Church, and the State. Here family takes precedence over the State. In 1929 Pope Pius XI released what is considered to be one of the most significant pre–Vatican II documents of the 20th century on the discussion of the role of parents in the Christian education of their children. The encyclical, *Divini Illius Magistrii* (Education of the Redeemed Man) December 1929

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“strongly stated the family’s responsibility for the religious education of children” (Westerhoff 1980, p.88).

In addressing ‘those who educate’ the encyclical states:

In the first place the Church’s mission of education is in wonderful agreement with that of the family, for both proceed from God, and in a remarkably similar manner. God directly, in the natural order, fecundity, which is the principle of education of life, hence also the principle of education for life, together with authority, the principle order (Divini Illius Magistri 1929, #257).

This encyclical was published in English under the title The Christian Education of Youth and became the authoritative statement on Catholic education (Fogarty 1959, p.385). Many scholars suggest that this encyclical was timely as it re−established within Catholicism the true Christian basis of education. With the event of State−run education systems which were thoroughly secular in many countries, the Christian way of being was seen to be under threat. Pius XI gave the world his new encyclical letter to “point out the dangers and to re−establish the true Christian basis of education” (Fogarty 1959, p.385). He also reminded parents that they were the first teachers and education would be efficacious in proportion to their teaching and example. “According to the divine plan, the parents are the first educators of their children ... parents should, therefore, give the best time they have at their disposal” (Divini Illius Magistri 1929, #379). This encyclical was to be the foundation of the Second Vatican Council’s document on Christian education, Gravissium Educationis (1965).

However, even as late as 1951, many Church documents still echoed the fear that parents were neglecting their God−given responsibility of passing on the faith traditions of the Church to their children. Proctor remarks that at this time “the locus of religious education had almost totally shifted away from the family to the Church school with its formal and organised programs” (1996, p.50). In addressing the role of the educator at the Inter American Congress of Catholic Education August 15, 1951, educators were instructed “here is the first and very serious task incumbent on the Catholic educator of today: to make up for the deficiencies of home training” (The Image of God 1951, #547). In relation to parents, most documents at this point reflected mainly the role of parents as the ones to provide children with a healthy environment that will safeguard the children’s faith, religious and moral development so that the child would be able to take his or her place in society.

Until the Second Vatican Council, Catholic schools tended to assume dominant roles in the education of faith in such places as Australia and the United States. Parents were not fully trusted by the Church to adequately educate their children in the truths of the faith and consequentially parents were becoming less involved in the faith development of their children.


The Catholic Church was to experience a renewal through the efforts of the Second Vatican Council. The Second Vatican Council is seen by most Catholics as “the most important event in the life of the Catholic Church during the twentieth century. The Council has ... had a powerful impact on the human family throughout the world” (Joseph Cardinal Bernardin in Flannery 1996, p.xxii). Pope John XXIII “had observed the need to provide an update of Church practice and language to more adequately address the modern world” (Huebsch 1997, p.53).

In the renewal demanded by the Second Vatican Council the Church reclaimed the right of parents as the first and primary educators of the faith. The first document of the Second Vatican Council that referred to the family was Lumen Gentium (1964). Here the family is referred to as the “domestic Church” a concept which derived from the Jewish tradition in which the family is the central place for nurturing faith.

The family is, so to speak, the domestic Church. In it parents should, by their word and example, be the first preachers of the faith to their children (Lumen Gentium 1964, #11).
The call for the family to be recognised as the domestic Church gave a renewed insight to the purpose of the role of the parents. The Catholic school had played the major role so far in educating the children in the faith. The Council wanted to emphasise that the nurturing of faith is more than the learning of religious facts in isolation from the experiences of life. The Council recognised the value of the traditions of the early Church in which the family together with the worshipping community were the main instruments for nurturing the faith.

It is particularly significant that the Second Vatican Council discussed the family not in a separate document but in the context of all its Church documents. It’s as if the Council said that if we are going to talk about the Church we must talk about family life too. Also, we can’t talk about family life without talking about the Church (Finely and Finely 1995, p.13).

Other early documents of the Second Vatican Council referred to the family as “the principal school of social virtues which is necessary to every society” (Gravissimum Educationis 1965, #3) and “the primary [basic] cell of society given by God himself (Apostolicam Actuositatem 1965, #11). The Council claimed that:

The family is the place where different generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonise the right of the individuals with other demands of social life; as such it constitutes the basis of society (Gaudium et Spes 1965, #52).

In re-establishing the understanding of the family as the ‘domestic Church’, the Council was strong in recognising that it is within the family that children come to understand their faith. The Second Vatican Council recalled that since parents have given life to their children God has entrusted them with the responsibility for the education of their children in faith. The Council proclaimed this role is of such importance that it cannot be adequately substituted as it is connected with the transmission of life.

The role of the parents in education is of such importance that it is almost impossible to provide an adequate substitute (Gravissimum Educationis 1965, #3).

The Church called the family the ideal place in which the faith of children is to be nurtured and nourished and a place conducive to promoting Christian values. The documents refer to the home as the first educational environment of children, and urge parents to set good Christian example to their children through living their own lives in a true Christian spirit. As these Christian values permeate through the life of the home they will become the norm for daily living.

It is therefore the duty of the parent to create a family atmosphere inspired by love and devotion to God and their fellow-men which will promote an integral, personal and social education of their children (Gravissimum Educationis 1965, #3).

This understanding of the role of the family in the life of the Church was reiterated in subsequent documents of Paul VI and John Paul II.

The Christian Family, as the ‘domestic Church’, also makes up a natural and fundamental school for formation in the faith: father and mother receive from the sacrament of matrimony the grace and the ministry of Christian education of their children, before whom they bear witness and to whom they transmit both human and religious values (Christifideles Laici, 1989, #62).

In the writings and speeches of John Paul II, the family emerges as a strong theme within the concerns of the Church. In an effort to raise the consciousness of parents of their privileged role in the Church he brings to mind the renewal of the Second Vatican Council in regard to the family. In Familiaris Consortio (1981), John Paul II considers the role of the Christian family in the modern world. “He sees the family’s apostolate as being exercised in the first place within each individual family” (Gregory 1988, p.39). He emphasises that the parents have a God–given duty to educate their children in the faith because they are
the bearers of life. He sees the family home as the first community children experience. It is within this community that they learn the meaning of love and in turn how to love others. *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) states clearly the Church’s view about the family and society. On the family it states:

> The family, like the Church, ought to be a place where the Gospel is transmitted and from which the Gospel radiates (*Familiaris Consortio* 1981, #42)

John Paul II reminds parents that they are the ones entrusted with the raising and education of their children. One of the key ways parents nurture faith is through their witness of living the Gospel values.

> Through this witness families become tools for evangelisation. As family members accept the Gospel challenges and faith is nurtured and matures … the family becomes ‘an evangelising community’ (*Familiaris Consortio* 1981, #52)

In *Christifideles Laici* (1989), John Paul II reminds parents once again that their role in educating their children is irreplaceable and thus should be taken seriously and with care.

> The lay faithful’s duty to society primarily begins in marriage and in the family. This duty can only be fulfilled adequately with the conviction of the unique and irreplaceable value that the family has in the development of society and the Church herself (*Christifideles Laici* 1989, #40).

*The Christian Family*, in *The Teaching of John Paul II* (1990), contains many dialogues delivered by the Pope on the role of parents as prime educators of their children in the faith. Most of the dialogues are taken from John Paul II’s most important document on this issue, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981). One of the dialogues was given at the visit of John Paul II to Australia in 1986. At his homily at Belmont Park Racecourse, Perth, in Western Australia (22–23 November 1986), the Pope restated the role in the family in the life of the Church by quoting extensively from *Familiaris Consortio* (1981) and early Vatican II documents already discussed in this section.

*The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994, #2223–2226), while making no new contributions, reaffirms and restates what had been presented in earlier documents on the role and mission of the family in the contemporary Church. The *General Directory for Catechesis* (1997), the most recent document addressing the role of the family as the source of nurture of the faith in the life of the Church, refers to the family as “an environment or means of growth in faith” (#255). It again reminds the Church that parents are the primary educators in the faith and that the community, which the family forms, is a domestic Church where “the Gospel is transmitted and from which it extends” (#255). This document calls the family to catechesis rather than religious education as mandated in *Catechesi Tradendae* (1979).

**Conclusion**

In summary, throughout its history the Church has assumed a diversity of positions regarding the role of parents as the prime educators of the faith of their children. From time to time the emphasis changed from assigning a significant role to parents and the family to other times when teaching responsibility rested on lay persons, such as godparents and then the Catholic school. The early Church based its understanding of the role of the family on the Hebrew heritage that faith is taught first within the context of the home. By the Middle Ages the Church authority was becoming disillusioned by the neglect of parents in their duty of passing on the faith tradition to their children and therefore gave godparents responsibility for teaching children the basic rules of the faith. For the Churches of the Reformation the focus shifted to the instruction of adults. At the same time the Catholic Church was consumed with the notion of preserving the faith and this gave rise to religious orders to educate children in the faith outside the home. The Catholic school continued to be the main educator of children in the faith. This practice continued until the renewal of the Second Vatican Council which urged the Church to reclaim the role of parents as the primary educators of the faith of their children.
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MODERATION: MAKING LEARNING A PRIORITY IN PRIMARY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Introduction

In 2005 the *Curriculum Framework for the Religious Education of Students in the Archdiocese of Hobart, Good News for Living* (Catholic Education Office, Hobart (CEOH), 2005) was launched for Catholic schools and colleges in Tasmania. Significant progress has been made in the development of religious education curriculum for Tasmania in the light of the implementation of *Good News for Living* (CEOH, 2005). A comprehensive school and system based professional learning program assisted the initial implementation of the curriculum framework however it was vital to introduce a strategy in order to improve the quality of the learning outcomes for students in a targeted and focussed way. The goal was to enhance the professional capacity of primary religious educators to make judgements about student learning in religious education and to clearly articulate these on-balance judgements within a professional learning community. To address this goal, a process of Moderation was introduced.

Introducing new elements into a learning culture involves change that is complex, non-linear and always emerging (Fullan, 1999). Collaboration is a condition of shared creation “as tacit knowledge becomes explicit knowledge” (p.16). Moderation is a formal process involving collaboration as a central element.

The Moderation process provided a forum for teachers to consider what is quality learning in religious education through focussed teacher professional dialogue around the evaluation of Common Assessment Tasks. In the course of 2008, 2009 the deep capacity of critical reflection on teaching and learning and teacher dialogue to build quality learning and teaching in religious education has come to the fore. This paper presents some of the experiences, perceptions and learnings as school and system based staff entered into the process of Moderation. Within the paper the approach for religious education in *Good News for Living* (CEOH, 2005) will be outlined, the educational value of Moderation within the learning and teaching cycle will be discussed, and the initial outcomes of introducing Moderation in RE within the primary school sector will be identified.

The Approach to Religious Education in *Good News for Living*

A major curriculum change in religious education occurred in the Archdiocese of Hobart from the use of the *Guidelines for the Religious Education of Students in the Archdiocese of Melbourne* (Catholic Education Office, Melbourne, 1995) to the locally adapted *Curriculum Framework for the Religious Education of Students in the Archdiocese of Hobart, Good News for Living* (CEOH, 2005).

*Good News for Living* (CEOH, 2005) emphasised the need for a balance between the ecclesial and educational expectations of the religious education program. The content of the framework was based on the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994). The learning and teaching process was seen as a vital means of building knowledge of the Catholic Tradition and supporting the faith of students. This was articulated as a “Four-Dimensional Approach” (CEOH, 2005, Section Four) to religious education, incorporating doctrinal, catechetical, pedagogical and curriculum elements within the religious education program.

The comprehensive professional learning offered to teachers assisted them to move towards the new approach to religious education. A collaborative professional learning strategy between schools and
system-based staff assisted teachers to focus on the use of the new Framework for classroom planning and learning. This strategy will be outlined further below.

In an educational approach to religious education, the learning process has the capacity to become the channel through which spiritual development occurs and students can become conscious participants in the life of the community (Buchanan & Engebretson, 2009). *Good News for Living* (CEOH, 2005) provided a more educational approach to religious education in contrast to the previous approach used by the teachers. In turn, this initiated a complex change in the way religious educators were to understand the nature and purpose of religious education. The knowledge, understanding and critical inquiry of the students became the guiding principles of planning for learning. Clearly articulated learning goals and the use of an approach to planning that enabled teachers to plan for understanding (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998) and to provide more focussed assessment tasks to identify student learning.

**Assessment and Religious Education**

Improvement in student learning depends on quality teaching and that quality teaching depends on knowing precisely what the learning needs of students are in order to take them on to new learning (Fullan, Hill and Crévola, 2006). Teacher development and practice of quality models of assessment for learning are essential within a quality program. However the practice of assessment within the planning and teaching of religious education remains an area where teachers need more professional development and practice (White & Borg, 2000).

In the field of religious education, current research is indicating that for religious education to be effective, teachers need to assess student learning in order to engage students in the learning process. Religious educators are still confused about the purpose of assessment in religious education and need assistance in determining specific learning goals for their students (Healy, 2008). In the Archdiocese of Hobart, it was believed that knowledge about student level of understanding about the Catholic tradition was inconsistent and that comprehensive data about student learning in religious education was low. The new curriculum framework demanded that teachers planned for assessment in religious education as “an integral part of the learning and teaching process” (CEOH, 2005, p.73) and an important means of monitoring student progress and planning the necessary scaffolding for learning. However it was also believed that concepts of what is quality religious education remained as unarticulated tacit knowledge (Sadler, 1989). This knowledge was held by religious educators as individuals but needed to be shared. This raised a challenge of how to build the collaborative structures that would enable dialogue between practitioners. The process of Moderation was introduced to strengthen the whole learning and teaching process within religious education through the focussed evaluation of assessment within a collaborative culture.

**The Educational Value of Moderation within the Learning and Teaching Cycle**

Within current thinking about what makes for effective teacher learning and therefore enhanced student learning, a number of key factors have been identified. It is argued that there is a need to enhance teacher content focus increasing pedagogical content knowledge (Schulman, 1987). Effective professional learning strategies for teachers include certain key characteristics: a focus on building teacher understanding of the content to be taught, opportunity to explore how students learn and collaborative analysis of student work (Ingvarson, L., Meiers, M. & Beavis, A., 2003).

Moderation is a valuable part of the learning and teaching cycle. It has the potential to improve practices by building collaborative professional communities of inquiry within schools. Within the process there is enhanced support for teacher learning and development through the focus on identifying student learning and making judgements about the quality of that learning.
Collaborative Professional Communities

Professional learning communities have become a central function of schools. These collaborative communities constantly seek to improve practices through collective inquiry. They result in more effective use of teacher learning time and in more meaningful content taught in greater depth (Eaker, DuFour and DuFour, 2002).

Collaborative practices promote the sharing of professional knowledge through reading and dialogue. Professional reading on a regular basis presents teachers with new perspectives, new ways of working and new teaching techniques. It is argued that “just one hour for one article a week gives access to at least four ideas and insights a month” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1998, p.7).

Collaborative professional communities that involve teachers in active learning and utilise ongoing feedback, mentoring, modelling and coaching within real work settings are most effective professional learning opportunities. Collaboration ideally should occur within the school and within the wider educational community of the system (Day, 1999; 2004). Collaborative examination of student work, results in de-privatisation of teachers’ work, deeper understanding of student learning outcomes and greater capacity in teachers to determine effective indicators of student learning towards those outcomes.

An extension of the concept of collaborative communities is found in the creation of optimal teacher learning environments through teams and networks. This concept promotes and facilitates the flow of knowledge and ideas. It is argued that networks have the potential to raise educational standards and build capacity through the creation and sharing of new knowledge horizontally and vertically throughout an organisation or system (Chapman & Aspin, 2003).

Teacher Learning and Collaborative Partnerships

The implementation of Good News for Living (CEOH, 2005) has been an ongoing collaborative partnership involving schools and system-based staff. An extensive, multi-site program of professional learning has been provided to enable teachers to build skills and at the same time, be involved in curriculum development. The collaborative partnership has resulted in reciprocal learning between teachers and system-based staff.

At the heart of the professional learning program is a school-based program. This involves: i) collaborative planning where religious educators are released to work in collaborative teams led by the education officer or where possible the Assistant Principal, Religious Education (AP:RE), ii) program implementation and iii) follow-up evaluation.

This program runs over approximately six weeks. In addition to this in-school program religious educators are able to participate in professional learning opportunities organised on a regional or state-wide basis. The process of Moderation was an additional collaborative process between practitioners. It sits within the strategy of targeted, collaborative, school-focussed professional learning opportunities. The purpose of Moderation is the reciprocal relationship between professional learning of teachers and quality practice against standards through collaborative cultures at the school site and within the system. Anticipated outcomes of the process included building teacher capacity for on-balanced judgements about student learning in religious education and empowering AP:REs to actively engage in curriculum leadership and professional support of religious educators.

The Place Of Moderation in Teaching, Learning and Professional Development

The benefits of a Moderation process within a school and wider education community are manifold. Moderation is widely used in a range of key learning areas within education as a means of developing
Developing consistent teacher judgements

Unless collaborative systems are established, teaching is a profession that may be undertaken in isolation, with teachers working independently of others in their individual classrooms. The existing move towards standards based assessment however, makes it particularly vital that teachers have a consistent interpretation of a standard and are subsequently consistent in how they match student work to a given standard. Standards and teachers’ familiarity with them therefore create a context in which the likelihood of arbitrary assessment decisions is significantly reduced (Pitman, 1999). A Moderation process in which small groups of teachers work together in a guided discussion to view student work may achieve greater consistency between educators and schools when assigning a standard to student work, by assisting teachers to consider the following questions.

- What should the student know and understand at this point of their schooling?
- What does the student know and understand?
- From work samples, what evidence am I seeing that shows this?
- What standard is this work an example of? What evidence supports this judgement?

Through Moderation, educators have the opportunity to consider such questions with the support of colleagues with the outcome being that professional judgements are either confirmed or challenged. Rich discussions established in an atmosphere of collegial respect and learning, enable educators to develop skills in making on-balance, evidence-based judgements of student work against corresponding standards. Further, they can be assured that these judgements are fair, reasonable and consistent with the judgements of fellow educators.

Informing teaching and learning

Effective teaching and learning programs are based on sound educator knowledge of students’ current knowledge and understanding, strong pedagogical content knowledge to know where to focus student learning next in order to move them forward and effective methods and approaches to achieve this. Moderation creates an opportunity for educators to have focused, guided discussions with teaching and learning at the centre. This process directly informs future teaching and learning both in the general sense of content or curriculum and more importantly, by considering appropriate teaching and learning for individual students. This process enables teachers to collaboratively consider the following questions.

- What has been taught prior to this work being completed?
- What has the student had opportunities to learn and understand?
- What is evident in the work to demonstrate this understanding?
- What standard is the work an example of?
- What evidence supports this?
- What would need to be seen in the work for it to achieve a higher standard?
- What teaching and learning needs to occur to achieve this?

Evaluating assessment that will inform the next stage of learning encourages educators to identify students’ current knowledge and understanding based on evidence within student work and with the input of colleagues. It assists them to consider how and what to address in order to build on the existing student knowledge. A focus on assessment is “central to enhancing pupil learning.” Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003, p. 68). Moderation therefore, may play a crucial role in the teaching, learning and assessment cycle. Assessing student work and having this assessment verified by colleagues provides critical information for educators on future planning. This can result in improved teaching as educators use the insights and knowledge gained about students through the Moderation process to focus content and pedagogy at the specific
learning needs of students. The resulting goal is improved outcomes for students resulting from explicit teaching through appropriate learning opportunities.

**Professional dialogue**

The importance of professional dialogue among educators cannot be over stated. Such dialogue enables views to be discussed, practice to be shared and collective wisdom to be used to the benefit of others. When moderating student work, an appropriate protocol provides a framework and guide for discussion that allows an equitable sharing of views and for discussion to remain focussed and time efficient. This enables all educators regardless of experience to both have a voice in the process and hear and learn from the views and perspectives of others. This form of guided discussion provides both a collegial and safe environment in which different views can be openly shared and respected. The result is a discussion that remains focused on students and their learning and through the process participants are able to gain new knowledge about teaching, curriculum, assessment, interpretation of standards and effectively and validly analysing and judging student work. This style of discussion again serves to eliminate the isolated approach to teaching and assessment and instead brings colleagues together in a collegial process resulting in gain in a professional learning context and gain for students as a result of the learning and insights acquired by the educators involved. Such a process that invites genuine dialogue with a focus on both student learning and learning for educators has been found to provide teachers with a level of support needed to assist them in changing the instructional and assessment practices (Roberts, Wilson & Draney, 1997).

**Introducing Moderation for Primary Religious Education**

The need to develop a comprehensive program of assessment in religious education was identified as a strategic priority of the Faith Education Team at Catholic Education Office Hobart during 2008-2009. Progressively through 2007, the issue of assessment was addressed in professional development sessions with RE teachers in various workshops in systemic schools and colleges across the state. Concurrent with this work in religious education, a broader strategy of assessment and Moderation against standards was being developed in Mathematics. It was envisaged that the Assessment for Learning in RE initiative would

- Encourage teachers to engage teachers in professional dialogue around the content and pedagogy of religious education.
- Give ongoing follow-up and “at the elbow” (Ingvarson et al., 2003, p. 31) support through the leadership of the AP:RE and education officers.
- Provide opportunity for teachers to critique their current practice against what we know about quality practice in RE.
- Provide opportunity for professional growth through feedback, mentoring and coaching opportunities between AP:REs and other peer religious educators.
- De-privatise practice in religious education through objective and collaborative analysis of student work in RE.

**Vision for the Process**

The vision for the process is shown in Figure 1, a diagram of the initial model of external and internal Moderation. The long-term goal was to enable teachers to participate in Moderation in across school clusters however two challenges to this vision were presented: the first was practical and financial, schools would need time to build the process of Moderation into their school budgets and timetables. The second was that the process needed to move from an externally driven initiative to one where schools would see the value in the process and enter more fully into the process. A modified process was therefore proposed for the first trial years.
The initial model aimed to engage teachers in a cycle of planning, assessment and critical evaluation internally within the school with AP:REs being involved in an external state-wide Moderation process. Feedback from the process would then be used in the further redevelopment and calibration of standards for religious education within the *Curriculum Framework for Religious Education of Students in the Archdiocese of Hobart: Good News for Living* (CEOH, 2005).

Figure 1

*Initial model of internal and external Moderation*

The area chosen for the common unit of work and assessment task in 2008 was Scripture. Learning goals and indicators of learning were chosen from the curriculum framework and common assessment tasks were prepared for each level. Guiding criteria were also prepared to assist teacher to assign an assessment grading to the tasks. These were distributed to AP:REs at a state-wide gathering in June 2008 with the intention that teachers would plan their units of work and implement them then engage in internal
Moderation. AP:REs were to gather again in October with samples from their schools. AP:REs were given a Moderation protocol and practice in facilitating the procedure with their staff.

Outcomes of the Trial

One of the major outcomes of Moderation during 2008 was that in spite of a number of difficulties within the process as it was envisaged, the overall experience of moderating student work samples was extremely positive for religious educators, AP:REs and CEOH staff. Principals' perceived that a good foundation had been laid for further development and that it was a positive professional learning experience for their staff. They reported that professional discussions were now taking place between teachers regarding religious education. It highlighted the need for explicit and precise learning goals and standards for students in religious education based on the Good News for Living (CEOH, 2005) framework. It gave a focus to the work of education officers in the schools. It assisted teachers to be able to make critical judgements about student work in religious education. AP:REs reported that the process has raised the overall status and credibility of religious education as a curriculum area and has contributed towards a greater emphasis on precision in planning and accountability towards colleagues. The principals perceived that it built professional capacity within religious educators and leadership teams within schools and especially enhanced the curriculum leadership of the AP:RE.

Learnings from the Process

There were significant learnings for the CEOH team from the first year of this pilot program for Moderation in religious education. These were around the preparation of materials for Moderation and the process.

Religious educators expressed that there was lack of opportunity for extensive collaboration or co-construction with classroom based personnel. There needed to be more teacher involvement in the preparation of the tasks and the learning and teaching suggestions. More involvement by teachers would have clarified the language of the tasks and they would have needed less explanation because the teacher voice would have been more evident. Through the implementation of Good News for Living (CEOH, 2005) religious educators had been involved in critical reflection and they wanted to engage in that kind of process with the Moderation tasks and to add their ideas.

For some religious educators the process lacked authenticity as they were only moderating one task. Teachers wanted to dialogue with other teachers and it was reported that they wanted more opportunity work collaboratively within their school and to network across schools with religious educators at the same grade level. Large state-wide gatherings were judged to be positive but less effective in promoting real professional dialogue.

AP:REs reported more purposeful teaching, one participant commenting that she felt more responsible to her colleagues for the teaching of religious education because she was expected to produce the results from her students for Moderation. The pilot process showed clearly that the standards framework of Good News for Living (CEOH, 2005) although helpful, needed to be even more explicit to help teachers plan learning goals for their students as there were difficulties of consistency in implementing units of work and tasks.

It was a new experience that demanded teacher time and therefore needed to be built into the school calendar for the year. Practical aspects of budgeting for student-free days and other professional learning commitments also had to be considered.

Moderation in Religious Education in the Second Year of the Pilot

In the second year of piloting Moderation in religious education in primary schools, the process of Moderation has been consolidated through a multi-site approach incorporating a collaborative partnership
between system-based, regionally based and school site personnel. The content strand chosen is Sacraments. Religious educators have been involved in regionally based professional learning to build their content knowledge through a series of seminars offered. This has been supported by education officers working at the school site on request. Practitioners have also been involved in a series of consultations to co-construct Moderation tasks and learning and teaching suggestions drawn from Good News for Living (CEOH, 2005).

For Moderation, at the local level both internal and regional clustering opportunities were offered. In October 2009 Assistant Principals both of Religious Education and Learning and Teaching gathered to moderate some work samples for state-wide consistency. Feedback from the 2009 process indicated that the process of Moderation has built collaborative cultures, provided opportunity for increased teacher professionalism and contributed towards greater accountability. This accountability is evidenced in more focussed and precise planning and teaching by teachers. It is also evidenced in the attention to assessment. Religious educators report being more critical of assessment tasks ensuring they actually will provide the data needed to make further judgements about student learning. It has contributed towards the credibility of religious education as a subject increasing the teachers’ capacity for precision through critiquing, designing and constructing assessment tasks. There is strong support for the collaborative co-construction of the Common Assessment Tasks. Requests were made for support with planning and sharing of active pedagogy across schools to encourage higher order thinking in the learning process. There was also overwhelming support for the participation of classroom teachers in the state-wide Moderation process. These responses indicate that religious educators are finding value in the collaborative networking opportunities that Moderation provides. They indicate support for the long-term view that the process of Moderation will become embedded within the culture of schools and become part of an array of opportunities for teacher dialogue and critical reflection on student learning in religious education.

Conclusion

It has been argued that one of the most powerful, high leverage strategies for improving student learning is collaboration on high quality assessments (Dufour, Dufour, eaker & Many (2006). Moderation has contributed positively towards the embedding of collaborative cultures for professional learning of teachers. The process has initiated purposeful professional dialogue between teachers using the formal protocol and this is flowing into less formal professional discussions. This collaborative culture in experienced within schools, extends between schools and is also experienced between school and office-based staff.

The introduction of the process of Moderation in religious education has made a difference to the teaching of religious education in Tasmanian Catholic Primary schools. The principle purpose of engaging in a process of Moderation is teacher learning that will improve student learning. This is achieved through assessment of a body of work that is directly related to learning goals and the opportunity for teachers to articulate their understanding of quality learning in religious education.

Moderation in religious education has contributed positively to the building of a collaborative community of learning within Catholic Education Tasmania. The initial model for Moderation continues to be evaluated and refined in response to teacher needs and capacities. Religious educators have indicated that they not only wanted opportunity for professional dialogue and making professional judgements about student learning, they also wanted to be involved in the co-construction of the units of work and common assessment tasks. They have also articulated an ongoing need to be supported with ideas for creative and active pedagogy within the learning and teaching process. The collaborative culture that is evolving through this process is providing a vehicle for religious educators to work together towards a common goal: a more precise articulation of standards and indicators of learning in religious education and the identification of quality in this important field of learning.
References


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1 Evaluations of the process were invited at the principals’ meeting in November 2008.

*Helen Healy and Heidi Bush work in the Catholic Education Office, Hobart.*
THE ROLE OF EXPERIENTIAL CONTENT KNOWLEDGE IN THE FORMATION OF BEGINNING RE TEACHERS

Abstract

This article discusses the role of experiential content knowledge as an essential component to the formation of beginning RE teachers. The article initially outlines the meaning and parameters of experiential content knowledge and its relationship to the teaching of Religious Education in Catholic schools. An exploration of how this experiential content knowledge may be recognised is described with reference to the perceptions of a purposive sample of beginning RE teachers in Catholic secondary schools in Western Australia. The article then discusses the links between experiential content knowledge and developing a sense of vocation towards teaching Religious Education.

Introduction

The formation of Religious Education teachers is a crucial component of the quality of Religious Education taught in the classroom (Congregation for Catholic Education, 1982). RE teachers in Western Australia are expected to possess mandatory professional qualifications and a manner of life to convey Catholic Church teaching to school students (Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia, 2004b). Such a requirement means that RE teachers are able to relate the curriculum content in appropriate ways to the needs of students which includes teachers offering their own example or lived experience (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2009, #6; Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1983, Can. 804.2). Such a combination of developing professional competence and personal faith witness could be construed as teacher formation. This article discusses the role of experiential content knowledge in the context of the formation of beginning secondary RE teachers. The article firstly reviews the nature of experiential content knowledge in the context of teaching and its importance to Religious Education. Secondly, the article describes the experiences of beginning RE teachers with teaching RE in Catholic secondary schools, especially about their perceptions of a faithful Catholic model to students. Thirdly, the article considers the links between experiential content knowledge and commitment towards RE teaching. Lastly, suggestions are made about recognising how experiential content knowledge may be developed.

Literature Review

The literature review outlines the types of teacher knowledge beginning teachers need to possess and how such knowledge is required in Religious Education. Next, the review discusses how one of these knowledge types called ‘experiential content knowledge’ may be developed as part of the formation of teachers. From there, the review turns its attention to the relationship between experiential content knowledge and personal integrity.

There are at least three key understandings that teachers are required to possess: content knowledge (to know their subject matter), general pedagogical knowledge (know how to teach) and pedagogical content knowledge (know how to integrate these two domains) (Shulman 1986). There are four components to pedagogical content knowledge: an understanding and appreciation for the purpose of the learning area, an understanding and appreciation for the perceptions students have about the learning area, an understanding of curriculum principles, and knowledge of a wide range of teaching strategies (Grossman 1990). The role of content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge in Religious Education has been
explored by religious educators previously (Engebretson, 1997; Malone, 1997; Rymarz, 1999). The Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia (CECWA, 2004a) requires that RE teachers in Catholic schools complete an accreditation program to teach RE that consists of tertiary study and pedagogical inserviceing. It is assumed these teachers are practising Catholics. This accreditation is considered to be the minimal requirement for RE teaching. RE teachers are expected to continue their involvement in professional development over five years to renew their accreditation.

In the case of beginning teachers, professional development is focused on ensuring effective instruction and classroom management. These teachers begin with a “limited repertoire of instructional strategies” (Freiberg 2002, p. 56). However, given time, a positive teaching culture and support by more experienced teachers (Feiman-Nemser 2003), beginning teachers turn their attention to the needs of their students and the quality of their teaching (Anderson, 1997; Fuller, 1969; Kallery, 2004). Increasingly, these teachers focus on the ways in which they engage their students by the positive rapport they establish and maintain in their classrooms. Jacobs (1996) suggests that:

For the most part, the greater majority of [beginning] teachers need to develop competence in at least three skills: classroom management, human relations, as well as the pedagogical skills associated with good curriculum and effective instruction. Throughout the course of their first five years on the job, neophyte teachers spend much of their time and energy focusing upon and developing competence in these important skills as they struggle through their successes and failures to become good teachers (p. 5).

The experience of teaching plays a significant part in the professional formation of the teacher (Littleton and Littleton, 2005). The day-to-day experience of teaching is a challenging one and, if teachers approach the challenges in the right perspective, can lead to professional growth. On the other hand, experiences may lead to frustration and resentment causing stress and disenchantment in the teacher. Prolonged disenchantment may cause the teacher to leave the profession or become bitter or cynical about teaching. Flores (2003) found that most teachers experienced a loss of idealism within two years of teaching. However, she also found that while these teachers had become compliant and negative, other teachers were dedicated and keen. These differences seemed to be focused upon personal dispositions towards teaching, the support the teachers received both personally and professionally and the nature of the teaching experience (Flores, 2003, pp. 23-24).

Jacobs (1996) proposed that teachers progressed from being competent (to become good classroom teachers) to excellent (to become authentic, purpose-minded teachers) when they moved from asking the question ‘What do we need to do?’ to ‘Why do what we do?’ (Figure 1).

**Figure 1** Five Forces of Catholic Educational Excellence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forces towards Excellence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>“What do we need to do?”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Manage the school and its classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Develop warm, interpersonal relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide good curriculum and instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>“Why do what we do?”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communicate moral and intellectual values.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Mediate Catholic culture.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Jacobs (1996, p. 15)
The latter question suggests a sense of calling or vocation as part of the necessary inspiration for teaching. Such a calling resonates with the Congregation for Catholic Education (CCE, 1982, para. 24) that RE teachers should aspire to possess a vocation with an “apostolic intention inspired by faith”. RE teachers are expected to follow:

Everything that has to do with their own theological and pedagogical formation, and also in the course syllabi; and they should remember that, in this area above all, life witness and an intensely lived spirituality have an especially great importance (CCE, 1982, para. 59).

The implication here is that RE teachers should present an example of a faithful Catholic person, a “total commitment of one’s whole being to the Person of Christ” (CCE, 1977, para. 50). That is, the teacher possesses knowledge about what it means to be a practising Catholic because they demonstrate this commitment in their daily lives. From a Catholic Church’s perspective, an RE teacher is a person who affirms a devotion towards “both personal sanctification and apostolic mission, for these are two inseparable elements in a Christian vocation” (CCE, 1982, para. 65). This affirmation constitutes another form of teaching knowledge along with content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, called ‘experiential content knowledge’. Table 1 illustrates the relationships between content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and experiential content knowledge.

### Table 1: Three Forms of Teacher Knowledge in Religious Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Knowledge (Knowledge of the Faith Tradition)</th>
<th>Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Competence in teaching about the Faith Tradition)</th>
<th>Experiential Content Knowledge (Personal experience of living the Faith Tradition)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Revelation</td>
<td>• How people find God</td>
<td>• To experience God’s presence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Christology (Jesus)</td>
<td>• How people know Jesus</td>
<td>• To be a Christian person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scripture (Word)</td>
<td>• How people interpret Scripture</td>
<td>• To reflect on the Word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social Teachings</td>
<td>• How people work for justice</td>
<td>• To live justly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sacraments</td>
<td>• How people worship God</td>
<td>• To worship God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Morality</td>
<td>• How people live moral lives</td>
<td>• To live a moral life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Christian Prayer</td>
<td>• How people pray</td>
<td>• To pray</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiential content knowledge is intrinsically related to the teacher’s identity and personal integrity (Palmer, 1998). What is taught; how it is taught; and why it is taught is connected to the teacher’s persona. For RE teachers working in Catholic schools, teaching:

depends not so much on subject matter or methodology as on the people who work there. The extent to which the Christian message is transmitted through education depends to a very great extent on the teachers. The integration of culture and faith is mediated by the other integration of faith and life in the person of the teacher. The nobility of the task to which teachers are called demands that, in imitation of Christ, the only Teacher, they reveal the Christian message not only by word but also by every gesture of their behaviour. This is what makes the difference between a school whose education is permeated by the Christian spirit and one in which religion is only regarded as an academic subject like any other (CCE, 1977, para. 43).

As Palmer (1998, p. 10) puts it: “good teaching cannot be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher.” Experiential content knowledge, however, is not meant to be used to proselytise students, that is, for teachers to enforce their beliefs upon students (CCE, 2009, para. 16; Crawford & Rossiter 1985). Rather, they are to use a stance of “committed impartiality” (Hill, 1982, pp.
29-30), to respect the religious freedom of the students (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, para. 1738) by proposing the content, but at the same time posing as an example of an expression of that content lived out daily (Benedict XVI, 2009, para. 7). Pope Paul VI (1975, para. 41) expressed this approach in this way: “Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers, and if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses.”

Almost all RE teachers in WA are lay Catholics (CECW A, 2008) so the example these teachers offer to students reflects a faithful lay response to living out the Gospels in complex and sometimes difficult socio-cultural circumstances (CCE, 1982, para. 9, 57). For an RE teacher to be confident in reflecting a faithful response to living out the Gospels, the Congregation for Catholic Education (1982, para. 65) believes that:

> religious formation does not come to an end with the completion of basic education; it must be a part of and a complement to one’s professional formation, and so be proportionate to adult faith, human culture, and the specific lay vocation.

While such an expectation being placed on RE teachers may be desired, for beginning RE teachers the situation can be distressing (Bezzina, Stanyer & Bezzina 2005, pp. 19-20), especially if experiential content knowledge is lacking. Beginning RE teachers from ‘Generation Y’ do not generally value religious institutional involvement (Mason, Singleton & Webber, 2007). Just as Ryan, Brennan and Wilmott (1997, p. 11) found that parish membership did not suffice to teach the content knowledge in RE, it is possible that a lack of adult religious practice can also pose problems for beginning RE teachers in demonstrating an adequate experiential content knowledge. Quillinan (2001, p. 4) argues there is a need for teachers to develop a “practical and relevant spirituality” to complement their content knowledge. There is also the danger of creating “religious relativism or indifferentism” in students (CCE, 2009, para. 12). One of the aspects to emerge in the research study described in the next section was how beginning secondary RE teachers felt about the personal example they presented to students in Religious Education.

**Research Study**

The research study focused on beginning RE teachers in Catholic secondary schools in WA who had recently been assigned to teaching the learning area. In earlier articles in the *Journal of Religious Education* (Hackett, 2008; 2009), the research was described regarding the perceptions of beginning RE teachers about implementing RE Units of Work as well as their outlook towards teaching Religious Education. Initially, a survey was completed by 122 teachers with a focus on their perceptions about the curriculum materials, teaching approach and understanding of RE curriculum principles. From this survey, a purposive sample of 28 beginning RE teachers was selected. These teachers were interviewed twice over two school years. The interviews indicated changes in teacher concerns about how the RE Units were taught to students and a deepening sense of calling to teach Religious Education.

**Findings**

Over the two years of research, beginning RE teachers were being informed and formed by the experience of teaching Religious Education. Their enthusiasm to become good RE teachers developed into a search for authenticity, integrity and motivation. There were changes in the ways these teachers used the curriculum materials, in their teaching approach and in their beliefs about their role as an RE teacher (Fullan, 2007). Beginning RE teachers reached a point of asking themselves, “Why am I doing this?” Table 2 summarises the changes in concerns and dispositions which occurred based on conceptual frameworks by Fuller (1969), Palmer (1998) and Korthagen & Vasalos (2005). The possible changes in concern and disposition reflect deepening layers of efficacy and commitment. These layers need not be sequential or completely developed; the layers are interrelated and dynamic. They reflect an increasing interaction between the professional persona (identity) and the core of the person (integrity).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Layer</th>
<th>Key Concerns</th>
<th>Formative Experiences</th>
<th>Key Dispositions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Instruction</td>
<td>initial content</td>
<td>Surety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns for self (survival): due to demands of getting ready, finding resources and meeting expectations.</td>
<td>with prior training and background developing knowledge</td>
<td>Changes in perceptions about the use of curriculum materials to cope with these demands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Prowess</td>
<td>ongoing content &amp; developing pedagogical knowledge</td>
<td>Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns for the tasks: due to demands of organising lessons, covering the content and developing repertoire of strategies.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in perceptions about the use of teaching strategies to cope with these demands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>ongoing content &amp; developing experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Insight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns for impact of teaching on students: due to demands of evaluating outcomes, rapport with students and growing awareness of students’ learning needs.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in beliefs or understandings about the nature and purpose of the curriculum to cope with these demands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Modelling</td>
<td>ongoing content &amp; developing experiential knowledge</td>
<td>Vocation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns for efficacy: due to demands for authenticity, commitment, example, and integrity.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Changes in professional character and deepening reflection of personal beliefs, values, and spirituality to cope with these demands.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each layer a brief summary is given of the key findings. The quotations which follow represent a common response from the participants. The name of the participants is a pseudonym and further information about particular participants can be found in Hackett (2009).

**Instruction and Surety:** In the beginning, the teachers were very concerned about their preparation for RE teaching. They planned what they were going to teach by becoming familiar with the content, strategies and resources available in the Teacher’s Manuals. The focus was on familiarity with as much of the content as possible and to ensure there were enough activities and materials to keep the students occupied. In large measure, this involved the frequent use of Mastersheets (photocopied class worksheets) and Student Resource Books.
I think teachers use the Mastersheets and the Student Book because they often save time that I know I do not get to do lesson research and preparation (Darla).

After a year of teaching the Units, teachers felt more secure about the structure and sequence of the RE program. As a sense of surety developed, they began to re-assess the quality of the curriculum materials that were offered to them by the Catholic Education Office. This reassessment was based on how teachers perceived the reactions of their students to the language and relevance of these materials.

**Prowess and Confidence:** The sense of frustration with the shortcomings of the Mastersheets and Student Books forced beginning RE teachers to rethink what they were doing. They felt they had to accommodate the learning needs of their students more closely with a wider variety of relevant resources and strategies.

I believe that mostly teachers or teachers teaching a particular year group for the first time would be more reliant on Mastersheets and the Student Books—I was! Mainly because they are concentrating on content and effective delivery. After about a term, confidence with the content grows and I tended to rely on my own resources (Clare).

Most teachers grew in confidence when they chose to follow this path. The more familiar teachers felt they became with the content and strategies, the more assured they were in dealing with diverse backgrounds of their students. Some beginning RE teachers continued to be challenged by their students and felt frustrated in not being able to teach the way they believed RE should be taught.

From my own personal experience I used the Student Book because I was confident the material covered was in accordance with Catholic teaching. ... I liked using the Student Book because often it would explain things in a way I couldn’t (Amber).

**Empathy and Insight:** A significant development for beginning RE teachers was the realisation that a direct pastoral rapport with their students was a key ingredient in successfully teaching the RE Units. Teachers became more engaged in dialogue with their students. This approach helped them to gain further insights into the learning needs of their students.

I have found so far that there is a different relationship with students I have taught RE than with students from other subjects. I have been able to get to know them better than students from other subjects. RE lends itself to that closer relationship and I value that. I believe students see me in a softer more available way (Anne).

Teachers became more concerned about the personal spiritual and religious formation of their students. For some, there was a growing turmoil about their personal integrity in relation to the beliefs and values presented.

Like I believe in the Catholic religion and I believe in a lot of the principles but there are a lot of things, flaws I feel I’m very critical. And when the kids ask me and tackle me about some of these things, it’s hard for me to stand back and give them the proper view, the Catholic view when I’ve got my own view (Kate).

**Modelling and Vocation:** By the second round of interviews, beginning RE teachers related their belief that it was important to be a model person to their students. This modelling was not only in terms of the human qualities they possessed but also in the faith witness they presented.

I think if you’ve got a teacher who’s been thrown into teaching religion when really they haven’t thought deeply about how do you integrate it into your own life then for them it’s still textbook material and it’s still a series of questions and answers in a penny catechism. And to try and integrate
Church teaching into somebody else’s life is impossible if you aren’t actively seeking that in your own (Diana).

For most of these teachers, it was this strong faith commitment that was significant to continuing their RE teaching. For some teachers, their perceptions of the nature of faith commitment portrayed by the curriculum materials proved too challenging to their sense of identity and integrity.

With teaching experience and direct pastoral rapport with their students, beginning RE teachers were able to develop their pedagogical content knowledge. They were able to recognise and develop the links between the concepts and values of the RE Units and the personal and spiritual values of their students. In doing so, the teachers drew upon a wider range of curriculum materials (content knowledge) that conveyed a sense of what it was to be human (like Jesus) and how to live a meaningful and responsible life. At the same time, the teachers saw that their own example was significant in the lives of their students (experiential content knowledge). These three aspects were integrated together in a balanced way. As one participant commented about her RE teaching:

Needs balance, you need information, facts and traditions and you need personal witness and you need the warm fuzzy you know – self esteem type things and making them feel they’re unique and special. It’s all together you can’t put it into compartments I don’t think (Anne).

Increasingly, they evaluated their own identity and sense of spiritual balance. The teachers understood that good RE teachers were the ones who were able to broaden their skills and understandings and who lived as authentic and balanced adults with a strong faith commitment.

It’s the personal qualities and the commitment and believing in what you’re doing. I think they’re the people who probably end up staying in RE because if you didn’t like it or weren’t committed to it, it’d be hard work and it’d be very frustrating I think. You need to believe in what you’re doing. It’s not just a job, otherwise it would be awful (Gwen).

A change in teaching practices focused on ascertaining and accommodating the academic and spiritual learning needs of their students. It was not just enough to provide a warm, friendly learning environment but also to be a sincere and balanced model to students. Beginning RE teachers believed that a direct pastoral rapport with their students was paramount in assisting the spiritual and religious development of their students. As the teacher interacted with the class and took a keen interest in individual students, the students were influenced by the example of the teacher as a person with admirable human qualities. In the process of acting as a mentor or role model to their students, the teachers were confronted by the worth of their own sense of identity as a person of faith.

Discussion

The curriculum and personal demands placed on beginning RE teachers to teach RE meant that they had to consider seriously whether they wished to continue to teach RE after a few years. The teachers had approached a crossroad about their commitment to teaching RE, asking themselves, “Am I a good enough person of faith to deal with the ongoing demands of instructing and reaching out to my students?” Their focus shifted from “How and what do I teach in RE?” to “Why should I teach RE?” and a personal search intensified for an integrated rationale for wanting to continue to teach Religious Education.

This change in focus seemed to have begun for many beginning RE teachers over the duration of the study. This moment of insight about their own experiential content knowledge sustained their enthusiasm to teach RE and defined them personally as passionate, committed RE teachers. As Edward reflected about his RE teaching and his faith commitment:

A calling? It’s more a deliberate action to make, to give evidence that I’m living a Christian life on
earth. Having all the faith in the world is good but also you’ve got to make use of it. So that’s what my RE teaching is, making use of my faith for God’s service (Edward).

In this study, many RE teachers were in agreement with Edward. They too believed they were making use of their ‘faith for God’s service’. It was the development towards such a disposition that energised and sustained them through the rigours of the personal and professional demands placed on them. They were able to share their personal experiences of living the faith (experiential content knowledge). In this respect, this research indicates that beginning RE teachers saw their witness more significantly than their teaching. The significance of such a disposition is affirmed in the study by Cook (2001) on the factors that help retain teachers in RE teaching.

The teachers who had made the decision that their RE teaching was a vocation reflected the exhortation of an “apostolic intention inspired by faith” (CCE, 1982, para. 24). As one participant reflected:

I think God has called me to love and to bring other people to an awareness of [God’s] reality and [God’s] love for them. At the moment, my life has led me to be teaching RE and I have to say that I think that I’d find few positions more fulfilling. That’s not to say I won’t in time move on but for now I couldn’t imagine anything I’d rather be doing (Diana).

This disposition toward teaching RE as a vocation helped these teachers, as faith witnesses, to articulate a deeper understanding of Catholic beliefs and practices (experiential content knowledge), to relate the RE Units to the personal, spiritual and religious development of their students (pedagogical content knowledge) and to impart the content of the RE Units (content knowledge). While the faith witness or experiential content knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge of teachers were identified, the comments from the beginning RE teachers suggested that these aspects were interrelated and operated concurrently with each other.

The concurrence of these knowledge forms may be deemed as the formation of RE teachers with a vision towards excellence in RE teaching. An excellent RE teacher requires personal authenticity, spiritual integrity with an apostolic zeal to teach the ‘Good News’ and a commitment to ongoing professional development and faith formation in teaching Religious Education as a vocation (Figure 2, Page 46).

These ‘forces’ of assimilation and integration are a part of the formation of beginning RE teachers, as initially competent RE teachers, to later becoming excellent RE teachers. The process is ongoing and these teachers need an ongoing or “permanent formation” (CCE, 1982, para. 68) in content, pedagogy and witness to teach Religious Education (CCE, 1988, para. 96; 2007, para. 26). It is the latter which Palmer (2008, IV A Concluding Scientific Postscript, para. 1) believes is the key to quality teaching:

If you educate teachers’ hearts and souls, they deepen their relations with students, restore community with colleagues, embrace new leadership roles on behalf of authentic educational reform, and renew their sense of vocation instead of dropping out.

Without a focus on experiential content knowledge there is also a danger that students will receive a religious education in a Catholic school based on abstraction rather than an invitation to commitment (CCE, 1977, para. 50).
Figure 2 Forces of Excellence in Religious Education

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Formations towards Excellence in Religious Education

“What do we need to do?”
An assimilation of:
• Managing the RE classroom.
• Providing the designated curriculum (RE Units of work) and instruction in personal, religious and spiritual formation.
• Developing warm, interpersonal relations in the RE classroom for human formation.

“Why do we what we do?”
An integration of:
• Communicating the Catholic religious culture and tradition.
• Mediating the Catholic religious dimension of moral and intellectual values with the students’ lived experience.
• Becoming an authentic person with spiritual integrity and an ‘apostolic intention inspired by faith’*

* (Congregation for Catholic Education 1982, para. 24)
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Conclusion

Beginning RE teachers face a difficult time in teaching Religious Education. Like the students they teach, they have come from diverse personal backgrounds with regard to Church affiliation and practice. Such a situation does not necessarily mean an abdication by beginning RE teachers to teach RE because they are ‘not good enough’. On the contrary, beginning RE teachers have much to offer their students as pilgrims in faith. They may still be on a journey towards adult maturation in faith that cannot be rushed but they can rely on the work of the Holy Spirit to operate in their lives (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 142). The Holy Spirit works:

in accordance with each one’s spiritual capacity. And sets their hearts aflame with greater desire according as each one progresses in the charity that makes him [or her] love what he [or she] already knows and desire what he [or she] has yet to know (John Paul II, 1979, para. 72).

This formation acknowledges the role of the divine other, the “Teacher within” or Holy Spirit (John Paul II, 1979, para. 72). Appreciating the significance of the Holy Spirit in their RE teaching could be a fundamental cornerstone in the formation of beginning RE teachers. The RE teacher has the potential to be like St Paul, a “humble and faithful disciple, the courageous herald, the gifted mediator of Revelation” (Benedict XVI, 2009, para. 5). Such qualities may be drawn from experience (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 152c) and critical reflection (Quillinan, 2001, p. 5). Perhaps the presence of suitable consecrated persons and priests within the school community would be invaluable to beginning RE teachers as models of living witness (CCE, 2007). The personal example of the principal and other experienced staff members would also be important to these teachers (Flynn & Mok, 2002).

The experience of teaching itself has a profound effect upon beginning RE teachers both professionally and personally. By its very nature, teaching opens a person to the emotional stress (Hargreaves, 1997) created by the tension between identity and integrity. Teachers need time to adjust cognitively and emotionally to
the new tasks set upon them. Their pre-conceived ideas about how to teach need to be married with the new curriculum principles presented to them (Evans 1996, p. 60). This adjustment period is crucial because:

When we seek genuine commitment and changes in belief, the people doing the changing...are in control of the transformation. This is particularly true when the ultimate goal...is to affect not just teachers’ behaviour but the very ways they think (Evans, 1996, p. 61).

Experiential content knowledge takes time to develop. Such development operates with a particular set of assumptions when considering the religious formation of beginning RE teachers, many of whom are young adults. They may need to rediscover a sense of the sacred through the approach of New Evangelisation (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, para. 25). The Church community has an obligation to assist beginning RE teachers in their formation and expand their experiential content knowledge (CCE, 1982, para. 71). Catholic schools, universities and Catholic Education Offices (CEO) may need to consider further how to provide a range of formative experiences to assist beginning RE teachers (CCE, 1977, para. 52). There are positive initiatives taking place such as the CEO support given to these teachers to attend last year’s World Youth Day in Sydney (and hopefully, to Madrid in 2011). Another initiative could be to provide Christian service-learning opportunities to pre-service teachers (Lavery, 2007). Such initiatives provide the sort of profound experiences teachers can draw upon to share with their students. Developing systematic, planned initiatives is important because quality RE teachers are integral to quality RE teaching.

References


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Abstract

This paper will outline the features and general outcomes of a year long, post school, adult religious education program for women that has been conducted by the Australian and New Zealand Province of the Society of the Sacred Heart for the past ten years. The women are mostly young adults, between 25 and 30 years of age, with a few as old as 50, from a Christian, predominately Catholic, background, and well educated. The majority have completed tertiary education.

The adult education model blends regular meetings with elements of mentoring, social awareness and action, prayer and spirituality, theology, Scripture and liturgy, experiences of community living, and the creative arts. There is an emphasis throughout the program of education for women by women.

In reporting on the Madeleine Sophie Program, this paper draws on the evaluative comments of the participants and the reflective feedback from the women who lead and administer the program. The success of this model in providing a substantial, holistic option for adult education offers a direction for religious education in the post-school environment.

Brief history of the Program

The Madeleine Sophie Barat program (MSBP), a year long, post school, adult religious education program for young women was inaugurated in 2001 to mark the Bicentenary of the Society of the Sacred Heart, an international Catholic order of women religious.

The program is named for St Madeleine Sophie Barat, a woman of courage and vision, with a passion for God and for justice, who founded the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1800 in France. She was born into a working class family in a wine growing town in Burgundy in 1779. In the midst of the turmoil and violence of the French Revolution she received a rigorous education, remarkable for a woman of her time, from her scholar/priest brother.

Sophie was a woman:
  • of deep faith which helped her endure great suffering;
  • whose spirituality broke through the Jansenism of her time, and its narrow, oppressive image of God to a sense of God’s love and compassion;
  • of fidelity to her original vision of religious life and the education of women in the face of opposition from the Church and the State;
  • with a remarkable capacity for fostering relationships and a collaborative style of leadership;
  • who believed in the transforming power of women through education.

There are strong parallels between post revolutionary France and our own world: endemic violence and conflict in many places; a gulf between rich and poor nations; unstable governments in many parts of the world; and change and conflict with the Catholic Church.

Sophie responded to the great need in her time for the education of women. In 2000, 200 years after the founding of the Society of the Sacred Heart, a group of Australian women gathered together to develop and
convene a program inspired by Sophie’s spirituality and vision. Their intention was to develop women in faith, leadership and service through a rich and holistic educational experience (Kilroy, 2000).

The resulting Madeleine Sophie Barat program has been offered every year since 2001. There is a group of seven Program convenors responsible for the organisation of the Program. The group includes members of the Society of the Sacred Heart, experienced religious educators and teachers, and graduates of the Sophie Program.

The Year-Long Program

The program includes:
1. Three residential weekends at the Kerever Park Spirituality Centre in the southern highlands of NSW;
2. Monthly evening meetings in Sydney for prayer and input from women involved in different areas of social service;
3. Sixty hours of community service; and
4. Regular meetings with mentors.

Residential Weekends

The spirituality of the members of The Society of the Sacred Heart “to discover, live and announce God’s love” informs the whole program, and themes drawn from this ‘spirituality of the heart’ tie the common practices of each weekend together. The weekend themes are:

1. An Open Heart: encountering the compassionate Heart of God

The focus of the first weekend is the gift of God’s love and grace discovered in the heart of each one. We share aspects of our story and our personal journey in faith. The key symbol is water, expressing the generous, available love of God.

2. A Wounded Heart: aware of our pain and a world in need

The focus of the weekend is the pain and loss that we all carry, our capacity for sin and God’s gift of compassion, conversion and healing forgiveness. The key symbol is fire, expressing the power of God’s transforming grace.

3. A Generous Heart: promoting human development, reconciliation and hope

The focus of the weekend is our giftedness for others, God’s call and the challenge to respond to need in ways that lead to empowerment and development. The key symbol is bread, expressing our capacity to nurture and give life, as God does.

Some common practices in each weekend are:

a) Group reflection on Scripture (O’Connell Killen and de Beer, 1994).
b) Poetry
c) Music and song
d) Small group sharing
e) Creative activities
f) Contemporary theology
g) Leadership development (Palmer, 2000).
h) Circle prayer and ritual
i) Silence and personal prayer and reflection
j) Insights into the life of Madeleine Sophie Barat
k) Common meals.
There is a distinctive style to the way weekends operate. All aspects of the program affirm the presence of God within each person and God’s extravagant love revealed in the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

The process of residential weekends also seeks to honour key ideas about successful adult learning. The stories, experience and knowledge of the participants is always the starting point, and presentations and activities cater for a wide variety of learning styles.

Participants almost always sit in a circle around the key symbol chosen to reflect the theme for the weekend. The convenors participate fully in sessions with participants and no person dominates. Formal leadership of the program is shared amongst the group and decision making is collaborative. All members in the circle are supported equally and all contribute to the creation of the community. The flexibility of the circle enlarges to include visitors. The openness at the centre reflects the receptivity of the group to the thoughts and issues raised but does not insist on contributions from members (Palmer, 2004).

**Monthly evening meetings**

Monthly evening meetings, which run for about two and a half hours, are in two parts. Each meeting begins with a time of prayer. Different modes of prayer are modelled e.g. praying with icons, silent contemplative prayer, Gospel reflection, the examen. This time is followed by a presentation.

The women who speak at the monthly meetings are selected on the basis of their vibrant religious faith and social involvement. Early in the program the participants indicate social issues they would like to know more about. Examples include women whose life and work is focused on advocacy for refugees, youth, aboriginal welfare, education and development in Timor, inter-religious dialogue, children’s medicine, spiritual direction and psycho-spiritual development.

**Community service**

Each participant in the MSBP is required to undertake sixty hours of community service, in a block of time or regularly throughout the year. This dimension of the program is an invitation to move out of our usual comfort and safety zones. It is also the aspect of the program that is most challenging and stressful as busy women make time for yet another commitment.

Although the program participants are in full-time employment, most do find the time to become involved in a wide-range of activities, locally and internationally. Often this one year involvement leads to a long-term commitment to service and learning.

**Meetings with mentors**

Mentoring is a relationship of support and encouragement. Each participant in the MSBP is offered a woman mentor, known to and chosen by the program conveners. The convenors encourage an informal style of mentoring, which is fairly unstructured, and initiated by the program participants. The number and length of meetings with the mentor is decided by the participant.

An ongoing challenge for convenors of the MSBP is to find ways to involve mentors in other aspects of the program so they have opportunities to share more common experiences with their mentees.

**Six Strengths of the Program**

At the conclusion of the program each year the participants are invited to submit an evaluation. The following themes have emerged from a review of fifty of these evaluations.

“You made us feel so cherished”
MSBP participants appreciate the warm, positive and personal attitude of those involved in organising the program, the mentors and the community at Kerever Park Spirituality Centre. They feel “loved” by these women, appreciated, accepted and affirmed. They value the openness of those responsible for the program and what the convenors and mentors shared of their own faith, spirituality and wisdom.

“Encounters with women of like-mind”

One of the strengths of the program is the friendships that develop and are maintained among the participants, sometimes women from diverse backgrounds. The emphasis in the program on reflection in small groups encourages and enables a depth of sharing, awareness and knowledge of the other participants in a short time. “...Sitting at any table at any meal with anyone and that being OK...”

“...the sky framed by big, beautiful, strong, deeply-rooted trees...”

The silence, physical beauty, the abundance of home-cooked food and the atmosphere of hospitality at Kerever Park Spirituality Centre is a strength of the program, appreciated and valued by the participants during the residential weekends.

“I am growing to love this understanding that God is within”

One reason for beginning the MSBP was to nurture the spiritual life of young women in a local Church culture that doesn’t provide many of these opportunities at the moment. In contrast to the religious education they may have experienced at school, these women choose to come to the MSBP after a good deal of life experience. Personal spiritual growth is a key focus of the program.

... the program has provided me with “Space, time, compassion, peace, silence and much-needed rest...”

“the program has provided an environment where I can challenge myself and be challenged in a safe environment, not necessarily one that is comfortable and easy, but one where I am free to push the boundaries of my ideas and faith”.

“...strengthening of beliefs, values and the realisation of the importance of faith and spirituality...”

“Relationship is at the core of leadership”

The work of Parker Palmer (2000) and Margaret Wheatley underpins the understanding of leadership promoted by the program. Leadership is a relational capacity that each one has, to be exercised collaboratively and as service. We invite participants to explore, in particular, how the exercise of leadership must be nurtured by a deep spirituality and knowledge of self.

“I learned that leadership has different faces, that it can happen differently, that if one form of leadership is not my nature, there are others kinds and that these too are valuable.”

“This program has helped me to redefine myself and to be more confident of my role as both a woman on my own personal journey and as a woman in leadership. It has given me the confidence to really get to know myself. I feel so much stronger and greatly empowered”.

Discernment and decisions

For a number of participants the MSBP has become a catalyst for change and created a community in which personal and professional issues can be faced.

“I really didn’t want to face up to or deal with the fact that my marriage was falling apart”. ...

...I have made many decisions this year and I believe that I have been able to make them because I have been provided with a forum where discernment is important”.

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“It has allowed me to make what I believe are profound life changing decisions”. “Wow this program should come with a warning”.

A year long, post school, adult religious education Program for women

The MSBP is a particular style of adult religious education program for women between 25 and 50 years of age.

In her important work on mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose and faith, Sharon Daloz Parks (2000) emphasises how critical the twenty-something years are for making formative life choices. She urges the creation of mentoring environments and the availability of mentoring adults to recognise, support and challenge younger adults at this time. The MSBP attempts to be one such environment.

Recent Australian research into youth spirituality (Mason et al. 2008; Crawford and Rossiter 2006) has highlighted the religious education needs of younger people. The MSBP attempts to honour these needs.

Young people:
- believe it is their responsibility to construct their own belief system and nurture a personal spirituality;
- are aware of the many sources available to construct beliefs;
- construct their own unique belief framework rather than accept already formulated and cohesive religious positions;
- find it impossible to accept some Church teachings;
- need an environment that allows them to question, disagree, discuss and work through values and beliefs for themselves;
- enjoy listening to the experiences, beliefs and values of people they respect and admire;
- value religious education activities that emphasise the affective and the experiential as well as the cognitive.

I believe the MSBP is successful as an adult religious education Program because it respects and has responded to some of the characteristic needs of some adult members of the Church and younger people today, in their search for an authentic spirituality and religious commitment.

Reference List


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The author, William Shepard, a retired Associate Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand, seeks, through this publication, to show a sympathetic approach to a religion that has inspired and guided people to live fulfilling lives over fourteen centuries. He has drawn on years of research and teaching in this area and has consulted with members of the Islamic faith before publishing the final text.

Shepard’s book is essentially aimed at University students who would be labelled as Western in their ideology. However, while this is its stated purpose, it would be useful for any person seeking a greater understanding of the Islamic faith and its influence on those who follow its beliefs. This is because it not only provides an analysis of the beliefs of Islam but how they are reflected in the politics and culture of those societies that have adopted it as their overwhelming faith.

An essential strength of the text is in the structure of the book. It is separated into three main areas that deal with the history of Islam, its beliefs and practices and modern developments in the way the faith is followed. This format allows readers greater flexibility in the way they can approach the text. Particularly useful is the section that deals with the effect of Islam on the politics of countries, initially through a general study and then through four case studies. The countries of Turkey, Iran, Indonesia and Egypt are scrutinised and this provides the reader with an understanding of how important the faith of Islam can be in the development of a country’s political structure.

The Glossary, Chronology and other appendices provided are user friendly and add to the value of the resource. The text also offers useful discussion questions and summary points at the end of each chapter and its website provides useful resources for those using the book as a teaching text e.g. PowerPoint slides for each chapter.

Shepard’s writing style enables the reader with only basic literacy skills to reach a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. Particularly useful is the way in which Shepard indicates the difficulties in trying to reach an understanding of many Islamic beliefs and practices because of the inadequacies of the English language in conveying their meanings. For example he states that any English translation of the Quran is going to be inadequate and that it cannot be read in the same way as the Bible. Due to this we reach an understanding that any English text, even Shepard’s, will provide a limited understanding of the Islamic religion and that our perception of this faith will be limited by the influence of our own ideologies.

The book is well researched and shows a depth of knowledge of the Islamic faith but needs to be read with the understanding that it written by a non-Muslim for a reading audience familiar with traditional western ideology, particularly of Christian beliefs and practices.
Introducing Islam is both a very useful teaching resource for those seeking a text for use in relevant undergraduate University courses and for those who seeking to reach a greater understanding of the Islamic faith and how it influences those who follow it. It is a particularly useful resource to have in these turbulent times when we tend to judge and label others based on the actions of a few and make sweeping judgements based on ignorance of other beliefs and practices. Such a book enables the majority of its readers to reach a greater understanding and respect for the beliefs and practices of Islam, which can only been beneficial in the continual globalisation of our world.

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Religious educators in Australia will gain much from this collection of papers which examine the broad issue of religious diversity from a Nordic educational perspective. Although it is difficult to generalize, the Nordic countries share an advanced industrialized economy, a strong interest and support of public education along with a weakening religious hegemony of state Churches. Skeie also describes the Nordic countries as sharing the features of a common Lutheran welfare and interventionist state. In these countries there is a long history of governmental involvement and support of curriculum development and religious education is no different here. The Nordic countries, especially Denmark and Sweden, have long been seen as the exemplars of highly secularized societies where religion is confined to the personal domain except for occasions of civic significance. Churches have a large nominal membership which is reflected in the wealth of congregations that are often the recipients of tax revenue. At the same time the Churches do not have a large active membership. This polarity between growing nominal association and dwindling strong commitment is, of course, a feature of the contemporary Australian religious landscape.

In a useful opening chapter Jackson gives a framework for the resurgence of religious education across Europe but especially in the Nordic countries. This arises out of a desire to actualize two of the European Union’s Toledo Principles, namely, that it is positive to emphasizing freedom of religious belief and expression and that teaching about religion can reduce harmful misunderstandings and stereotypes. The book is divided into three sections, the first deals with theoretical and methodological issues. Two of the chapters stand out here. The first by Fuglseth uses the Husserlian concept of the lifeworld to examine how religions can be taught in contemporary classrooms. This approach shows some promise as it allows for a recognition of the uniqueness of individual circumstances along with an examination of a variety of perspectives each formed by a different lifeworld. Heimbrock’s chapter takes a different approach to dealing with the issue of diversity in the classroom and the wider culture by proposing a more dialogical religious education. An exemplar of this approach for him is the wider use of play, especially Godly play, in religious education.

The second section is made up of chapters that explore the world of students. This is a fascinating and eclectic series which, amongst other things, highlight some of the complexities and differences evident in Nordic countries. Gunnarson explores the values of Icelandic teenagers and argues that certain moral positions such as being truthful and honest are of central importance. This is in keeping with other findings which show that for many adolescents today religion is seen primarily as a generic moral code that does not make severe demands on the individual. Holm and her colleagues examines the intercultural and religious sensitivity of Finnish Lutheran junior high school students and propose some interesting gender related differences in how other cultures are seen. Lied compares students from Norwegian state schools with those who attend the small number of private Christian schools. They provide a fascinating methodology but I think their conclusion, that there is a danger of students in Christian schools being sheltered from the plurality of Norwegian society, does not take into account the limited impact schools
have on children’s formation.

The final section looks at teachers with an additional chapter on the use of textbooks in religious education. Lyhykainen examines the aims of Orthodox religion teachers in Finland. Using a factor analysis she concludes that one of the key aims of teachers is to emphasize the affective and functional aspects of religion over cognitive goals. This is in keeping with both the National Core Curriculum in Finland and the tradition of Orthodox religious education. The goal here is to maintain and strengthen pupils’ Orthodox identity and not to create it. Olsson’s chapter on how religious education texts examine the “other” – largely how Islam is portrayed in the West but also importantly how Christianity is represented in textbooks from the Middle East – raises some fundamental issues. It would be of special interest to any scholar who has been associated with writing religious education texts. Her perspective, or what she calls her “ideological platform”, is that of a conventional Swedish scholar who, very much in keeping with the Tolleko Principles, is used to presenting religion through a historical, critical lens with a view to promoting tolerance between groups with differing religious orientations. Is this approach sustainable in a world where the conventions of the affluent and secularized West are being challenged by the rise of the global South? One notes in Olsson’s analysis a hint of exasperation as to how it can be possible to harmonize what she sees as conflicting ideologies. This is perhaps one of the unlikely benefits of producing and then discussing religious education textbooks. This process can bring into the open latent, unresolved and conflicting assumptions.

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This is the twelfth volume in the Religious Diversity and Education in Europe series. It contains thirteen chapters each of which examines an aspect of religious education with an emphasis on diversity in practice and cultural contexts. In this review a number of chapters will be noted but the book will reward those who are interested in learning more about the issues facing religious education in situations as diverse as Japan, Turkey, and the Ontario public schools. There are also chapters by well known scholars such as Gabriel Moran and Marian de Souza. Her contribution explores the idea of spiritual intelligence and its relevance for religious education leadership.

Kozyrev proposes a new paradigm for religious education in Eastern Europe which has arisen as a result of the formation of the Association of Religion and Theology Educators in Eastern and Central Europe (ARTE) in 2005. In seeking to justify such a broad categorization he calls on the common experience of a range of countries emerging from Soviet domination and communist dictatorship. Kozyrev notes a number of challenges facing educators in Eastern Europe such as the lack of exposure to non confessional dialogical interpretive and child centred approaches to RE as well as severe social problems. He advocates a postmodern approach to RE that is adogmatic, where learning takes place from religion and where religion is seen not as fact or law but as gift. This thinking is encapsulated in the idea of the “humanitarian paradigm” in religious education. Kozyrev perhaps betraying his Orthodox theological roots, looks forward to a religious education that has the potential to be mystic and charismatic both of which he sees as being imperiled by the ascendant “scholastic rational absolutism”, which is a observation that is not at the forefront of conventional religious education commentary.

Roux and her colleges argue that a useful way of conceiving of religious education in a South African context is to see it as education in human rights values (HRV). In this view HRV is a powerful way of facilitating an understanding of religious diversity. The National Department of Education in South Africa has acknowledged the key role that human rights education has in the formation of responsible citizens in
local, national and global communities. This prompted an empirical investigation, discussed in the chapter, of how HRV could be incorporated into the religious education curriculum. Using qualitative surveys that explored students’ conceptions of human rights in a society that is ethnically, culturally and religiously diverse Roux and her colleagues concluded that while there were differences in how different religious groups understood human rights there was a certain degree of commonality. This commonality could be used as a basis for exploring the differences between religious traditions with a view to promoting human rights across religious and cultural divides. A key tool in promoting this awareness was the use of reflective journals by students as both a pedagogical tool and as a way of promoting affective learning goals. They conclude that a promotion of HRV can assist in the development of religious literacy in a diverse nation such as South Africa.

Pirner presents a chapter with a broader focus looking at how media culture can be used as a tool for interreligious learning in religious education. This arises from the salient observation that children and young people today often lack basic knowledge of religious traditions but have been thoroughly media socialized. He gives a number of examples of how media culture can be used in the classroom including one which made me chuckle, likening the suffering of Job with the travails of Fr Ralph de Bricassart the main protagonist of the TV series The Thornbirds! He then presents some empirical findings which address the issue of whether media culture can serve as a *lingua franca* for intercultural learning. This argument is grounded in socialization theory drawing on the notion that popular culture is best understood as the web of meaning that individuals create for themselves in different situations. In this view media is a pivotal shaper of popular culture and as such has a decisive influence on how young people see themselves and how they assign meaning to their lives. Pirner also notes some of the dangers inherent in relying too much on popular media as a vehicle for religious education. Often the images, symbols and message used tend to homogenize culture with a strong propensity for lionizing American culture as normative. Media culture then needs to be seen as a potential agent of globalization and as such should be critically evaluated along the lines of a triangle of interreligious learning proposed by the author.

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Articles on the following are welcomed:
- religious education in various contexts;
- the religious needs of young adults in the immediate post-school period;
- various models of faith communities in which evangelisation and catechesis may take place besides the Catholic school;
- religious education of children and adolescents;
- continuing religious education for adults;
- family ministry and youth ministry.

All articles submitted should be between 3500-5000 words in length and prefaced, on a separate page by an abstract of no more than 150 words. Please submit your article electronically as a Word attachment to EditorJRE@acu.edu.au. A COVER sheet should contain the title of the paper, author’s name, brief biographical details, institutional affiliation, postal address, phone, fax, email address, where available. Authors will receive a copy of the issue of the journal in which their contribution appears.

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