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An element that has been attracting some attention for the past few years and which has some relevance for religious education is the notion of ‘identity’. Most recently, this interest has been evidenced by the Enhancing Catholic School Identity Project which was a joint initiative of the four Victorian Catholic Education Offices and the Catholic Education Commission Victoria in Australia and the Catholic University in Leuven, Belgium. The aim of the project was to assist schools to ‘realize their preferred Catholic identity’ (see the CEO Sale website: http://www2.ceosale.catholic.edu.au/who-we-are/Catholic_Identity_Project.aspx). Given the flurry of activity around this research project in the Victorian dioceses in Australia and the involvement of those who offer leadership in religious education programs for Catholic schools, it would seem an appropriate time for religious educators to ponder the concept of identity – for instance, Why identity? Whose identity? What identity?

Bauman (2004) discusses why the ‘problem of identity’ has become the ‘loudest talk in town’ (p. 17). He reasons that the creation of a ‘national’ identity became a feature of the twentieth century when wars began to change the boundaries of countries and led to the displacement of people. In past eras, people usually knew that they belonged to their village community or some other kind of settlement. Moving too far from one’s birthplace was not the usual practice and the question of identity never arose. After all, asking ‘who you are’ only makes sense to you if you believe that you can be someone other than you are and then, only if you have a choice (p. 19). Bauman claims that from the start, ‘national identity’ was an agonistic notion and a battle cry (p. 21) and, arguably, citizenship education is one avenue through which political authorities can promote the particular identity they desire in their citizens. Bauman continues his thesis to identify a ‘liquid’ identity, one that shifts and shapes in response to the plural contexts within which individuals live today. In other words, the pluralistic nature of contemporary societies is germane to the birth of plural identities.

Erricker (2008) also discusses the plural identities of young people from ethnic backgrounds in Britain and North America and identifies the tensions that emerge as a result of migration when religious groups attempt to preserve their religious identity rather than be assimilated into the norms of the host culture. In his presentation at the 7th International Conference on Children’s Spirituality at the University of Winchester, he referred to three identities associated with second-generation British Muslims - the cultural identity of their parents, their religious identity and the their national identity which was determined by the country of their birth. Significant questions that may arise here are, possibly: What could happen in a time of crisis, emotional or otherwise? Which of these identities will be the most influential in determining behaviour, that is, which one does the individual most identify with?

One aspect of identity that Erricker did not allude to is one that Crawford & Rossiter (2006) clearly link to young people’s search for meaning and spirituality, that is, a personal identity. They claimed that ‘young people’s self understanding and self expression are worked out through complex interactions between their identity needs and the identity resources they find in culture’ and therefore, ‘for educational purposes, personal identity can be conceptualized as a process in which individuals draw on both internal and cultural resources for their self-understanding and self-expression’. p. 124.
While a full and comprehensive discussion of religious education and identity is beyond the pages of this editorial, it has been useful to raise it as a topic for future discussion amongst religious educators in terms of its implications for the selection of content, resources and teaching activities. As well, some of the articles in this issue reflect the awareness that identity has some part to play in religious education. Charism is a distinguishing element in the identity of Christian religious groups and O’Brien & Hack’s article (Part two) offers further insights into how charism can be fundamental in creating authentic educational communities which live by Christian values. Also speaking about the values that underlie a religious tradition, Salai in his article on teaching the Catholic view of justice, asserts that the Catholic tradition understands justice as a habituated virtue by which — through God’s grace offered in the theological virtues of faith, hope and love — human beings give what is due to God, our neighbours, and our environment. He argues that the principles of Catholic social thought are not intended by the Church as mere suggestions, but as foundational principles designed to guide human action.

The next article is the second part to Chamber’s carefully argued view that memory and rote learning are under-utilized in the religious education classroom. He suggests that engagement with memory may offer ways to improve students’ foundational knowledge of religious education. He illustrates how memory may be used in music to enhance performance and he offers it as a source of inspiration to religious educators for embracing memory. A report on the first stage of a research project which investigated the influences on the spiritual development of children within a Catholic parish context provides the basis of the following article by Stoyles et al. At the end of their presentation, the authors refer to the second and third stages of the project which return to the notion of identity. In this case, it will concern the amalgamation of two separate parishes and one community that belonged to yet another parish so that they will be ‘entering a new history of identity as a parish community’.

Moving to a different yet related perspective is the article offered by de Souza that proposes an interspiritual approach to religious education that acknowledges the exoteric and esoteric faces of religion. Whilst the former is linked to the religious identity of a community and provides the content of most religion study programs, the inclusion of the latter may lead to a change in consciousness where knowledge of the underlying unity that links self with the Other may promote respect for and inclusion of the Other and, therefore, be more appropriate for a 21st century education system. Mudge’s article is the second part to his work in Transformative Catholic Pedagogy (TCP). He introduces the Six Circles mapping model which he has designed to assist teachers in tracking and calibrating key concepts across the entire involvement of those in a Catholic school. Through this Mudge has, in fact, identified various elements that comprise the identity of a Catholic school. Finally, Abu Rukon writes about research into the Druze community in Israel. He clearly indicates how a small community has attempted to develop a religious identity amongst their young people through different educational programs. His conclusions suggest that despite their best efforts, the external influences on young people through technology and the media appear to be more influential so that the identity of their young people is based on secular values rather than their religious ones. These findings should be of interest to religious educators in other parts of the world who are also attempting to nurture a religious identity in their young who, instead, are being influenced by the secular contexts in which they live.

Marian de Souza
Editor

References
**ABSTRACT**

Catholic education in Australia has been enriched by the charisms on which Catholic schools are founded. Charisms are God’s way of letting educators know that there are many ways of seeing, understanding and coming to know God who gifts us with both graced promise and endless possibilities. Charism invites educational leaders to address the many demands confronting them. The paper explores why charism in the context of twenty-first century Catholic education allows those responsible for leadership to build on the tradition of the Church and develop enduring understandings for the future. Part I of this paper (2010) established the theoretical underpinnings charism can draw upon in the Catholic educational setting.

This is Part II of this paper and this section explores some of the practical concerns of Catholic education in practice. It explores how the area of charism can be fundamental in creating authentic educational communities which enable members to embrace the Church in the twenty-first century. It is our position that practical concerns can be most appropriately addressed by deepening our understanding of the vision of God that charism invites and demands.

**INTRODUCTION: PEDAGOGY OF FREEDOM IN PRACTICE**

Part one of this article examined the philosophical and educational underpinnings of charism in the school context. As indicated in Part I charism provides ways for each community to find its own identity and be an agent for learning and change in its own context. This section of the paper initially focuses on two examples demonstrating how charism might be used as a focus for Catholic schools. It leads into a more specific discussion taking each of Maréchal’s dimensions and exploring it in a specific school context.

The two tables at the end of this paper present a brief overview of different styles of charism in Catholic schools. They are presented as examples in their simplest forms. In each instance the last section of the table suggests possible questions which might open up a deeper discussion of a particular charism. In practice school communities would create their own questions as a way of searching for answers relevant in their specific context.

Table 1 looks at the different foundations for particular school charisms. The diagram presents various styles of charism. They are broad based categories but every Catholic school would find its own foundation in one of the categories outlined. To look at some examples in greater detail will provide some opportunity for clarification.

Corpus Christi Catholic High School is one of the newest Catholic Schools in New South Wales. The name announces its connection to the Eucharist which is core to the Catholic faith. The Church names Eucharist in a multitude of ways; meal, sacrifice, celebration, sacrament and the list goes on. It refers to Eucharist as the “source and summit” (Sacrosanctum Concilium # 10) of Christian life. The motto of Corpus Christi College is “Abide in Christ”.

“"The overarching purpose for learning and teaching at Corpus Christi Catholic High School is: To develop in all learners a Eucharistic imagination with which to transform their world” (Corpus Christi Catholic High School, 2006.). The school is exploring new and innovative pedagogies to deliver the academic curriculum. Their statement of overarching purpose gives rise to some imaginative questions about how a school community might explore its charism:
In this community what does it mean to gather for a celebration of Eucharist?
How might a Eucharistic imagination transform the community?
How might a Eucharistic imagination foster dreams about Gospel values?
What aspects of a Eucharistic imagination invite service of others?
How can this community make manifest the Body of Christ?

These are complex theological questions which go to the heart of the Catholic faith. Beginning to address questions like these in the context of an educational community would allow opportunities for the development of enduring understandings for both students and staff. Realistically, searching out the answers would also have practical applications in the choices this community chooses to make about living out its mission.

Table Two examines school based charisms which are grounded in religious orders. Once again these are only some of the many examples that are evident across the system of Catholic schools in Australia. To look at one example from table 2 in more detail will add to an understanding of how a charism grounded in a founder might be explored in the school context. The Dominican Order, the Order of Preachers, was founded by Dominic de Guzman, an itinerant preacher in thirteenth century Europe. Amongst his first converts were a group of nine women in need of refuge, disowned by their families. Dominic provided a home for them at what is now the mother house for the Order in Prouilhe, France. It is said that Dominic gave his days to converting heretics and his nights to prayer; that when he wasn’t talking about God he was talking to God. The order has a number of mottos but among the most familiar is “Veritas” - Truth. Over eight hundred years later the Dominicans can be found in over one hundred countries in communities of friars, sisters and nuns (Brien, 2007; Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands, 2010).

Of course the founder’s story and the history of the Order is far more complex and richer than this short summary. But even in these few brief sentences one can make some observations. It would be easy and comfortable to leave Dominic in his cultural and historic context. Instead the original story could be a springboard to the now. In the twenty-first century one can safely presume that the members of the Dominican order are not traipsing Europe on foot searching out heretics. While the charismatic founder may have been able to live his life working all day and praying all night most people would achieve little if they adopted this life style. The story of Dominic does however present those enchanted by the charism or responsible for schools grounded in the charism with a number of significant questions which are relevant in the current circumstances. Exploring these questions might give a new perspective on what the Dominicans refer to as the “holy preaching” (Dominican Leadership Conference, 2007):

What does it mean to preach in the twenty-first century?
How can we preach?
What role do women have in preaching?
What responsibilities do we have to others?
How can we respond to refugees in the Australian context?
What energy do we give to God?
How might we allow God to consume our lives?
How might we discover the truth?
How might my life continue the tradition of the ‘holy preaching’?

Each Dominican school would provide a different set of answers to these questions based on the context of their city, the economic and cultural background of their students and their interpretation of the Gospel and the life of the founder.

School leaders and community members could frame other questions in order to uncover the enduring understandings for their own communities. None of the questions listed in the two examples outlined or in
the table elicit an easy response. Most of them would lead to rigorous discussion, varied positions and in some cases disagreement. All of the questions provide potential for individual and community growth. All allow for creative interpretation so that a community could plan an approach for the future. All of them would promote ways to address Maréchal’s major elements of charism.

Maréchal’s dimensions invite educators to frame the bigger issues. It narrows the vision of the charism if it is locked in the past simply because present day leaders do not have the courage to re-imagine the charism for the present. There are ways to both maintain and remain faithful to the tradition and embrace the many possibilities for change.

**A STORY TO ENTER**

All stories are interpreted stories, whether they are family stories, conversations, great narratives or scriptural stories. Those who listen to stories connect with aspects of the story and explore how these intersect with their own experiences. This requires deep and honest reflection. The foundational stories of the charisms are dishonoured if they are accepted at face value without hermeneutics and without honest questions as to how these stories connect with what is happening now.

Self narration, therefore, is not simply an individual activity. Story telling and story living is also a community activity. They build bonds, make identification possible, break down barriers, and enable us to recognise the commonalities of our experience. In that sense, storytelling is dangerous. Through story we become aware that our lives are often more vulnerable than mighty. Narrating and discovering the common themes in our individual stories enables us to build community and shared vulnerability. When they are honest stories express and create community (Anderson & Foley, 1998, p.18).

The Loreto schools throughout Australia commissioned statues to mark the centenary of Mary Ward. The artist talked to each community and engaged with them as to how the statue might interconnect with community stories. The statues were positioned in the Loreto schools where the students would “meet” Mary Ward as they went about their ordinary school experiences. Mary Ward became visibly part of the community and the fabric of daily life (Diamond, 2007). Meeting Mary Ward, how could community members fail to ignore the less pleasant aspects of her story; walking across the Alps and carrying rosary beads at a time in England when to do so was to break the law (Loreto Normanhurst, n.d.). Her presence in artistic form serves as reminder to community members that lives are vulnerable, that faith can be a dangerous undertaking and that these ideas remain relevant today. When communities recognise truths such as these they have opportunities to reclaim the parts of the story that speak to the world they live in now.

**A LANGUAGE TO SPEAK**

Language is our basis for communication with one another. It is crucial that the language we use to explore complex questions and ideas is a shared language which is readily understood by all. Language categorises events, experiences and relationships in ways, which denote form, function, structure and purpose. This allows communities to clarify their thinking, to explain what they understand and know and consequently to form connections, relationships and name common beliefs. Language is integral to the formation of perception, culture, understanding and reality. Ross refers to language as “the house of being” (Ross, 1998, p.13). When communities share and express common understandings of crucial aspects of their charism they open up new ways to be community.

We need to provide opportunities for youngsters and adolescents to engage in challenging kinds of conversations, and we need to help them to learn how to do so. Such conversation is all too rare in schools. I use “conversation” seriously, for challenging conversation is an intellectual affair. It has to
do with thinking about what people have said and responding reflectively, analytically, and imaginatively to that process” (Eisner, 2004, pp. 299-300).

The Ursuline motto is *Serviam* translated as “I will serve” (St Ursula’s College Toowoomba, n.d.). Service is in some ways a term that has been hijacked. There are service industries, community service, service learning and it seems that all schools call their students to either mandatory or compulsory service of some sort. How then does a charism grounded in service reclaim its origins in such a context? We would suggest that the language used could transform the idea of service from an activity shared by all Christian communities to a space to inhabit and a way of being. In this context language can allow Ursuline communities to explore the complexities of service in a life-long and enduring sense and in a way that gives them foundational values for the future. Through honest conversations these communities might find ways to reclaim the sense that service flows out of a relationship with God and fundamental beliefs about the dignity of human beings created in the image of God. The idea needs to be continually re-examined so the community can understand it not as a task, a burden or at worst a punishment; but rather as a privilege and a gift of the Spirit for the one who serves.

**A GROUP TO WHICH TO BELONG**

Human beings are not isolated individuals but social beings who need communities in order to celebrate their shared humanity. The Church has always been good at building community; parish communities, base Christian communities, religious communities and all manner of special interest communities within these communities. Communities give individuals a place to belong.

In many ways this is the easiest of Maréchal’s elements of charism to address in the school context. Groups create opportunities to explore charism. Internally schools have evident house, year, class, tutor, peer support, sporting and other communities. In any secondary school there would be countless groups arranged either for convenience or through shared purpose and interests. Beyond the internal communities there are larger networks of Marist, Mercy and Good Samaritan Schools (Association of Marist Schools of Australia, 2010; Australasian Mercy Secondary Schools Association [AMSSA], n.d.; Sisters of the Good Samaritan, 2008).

These school networks sharing a common charism have much to offer the wider Catholic education system. They remind the system of schools that there are other communities approaching charism in the same way, seeing the world with a shared vision and the same life-giving common lens through which to understand the Gospel.

Mercy schools grounded in the charism of Catherine McAuley are one example of a network of schools which share resources, common insights, perspectives on justice and research both locally and internationally. The Mercy International Association in Dublin provides a focal point from which schools can draw information, resources and insights. Common symbols and approaches give Mercy Schools a way to identify themselves and each other (Mercy International Association, n.d.). The Australasian Mercy Secondary Schools Association (AMSSA, n.d.) provides networking and opportunities for students and staff; conferences, leadership programs, ICT material and regularly updated information. Mercy justice initiatives including the *Mercy Refugee Service, Mercy Works, Mercy Global Concern* and the *Mercy International Justice Network* provide opportunities for practical involvement which have all grown from the charism of Catherine McAuley.

The Mercy charism models a possible way to be in the world for communities. Beyond this, it provides a means for Mercy students to access a possible way to understand and participate in the world in their post school years and an approach to action both now and in the future. It demonstrates how advocacy, a passion for justice and embracing the gospel vision can be lived out successfully in the modern world.
A WAY TO PRAY

Part of the essence of Catholic school communities is their regular celebration of school events through the prayer and liturgical life of the school. This aspect of school life enables a community to find a particular way to centre the life of that community on God. Feast Days, Commencement and Graduation Masses, Holy Week Liturgies and other celebrations form part of the fabric of school life. Yet for all the similarities in this area of community life different schools have very different ways of celebrating their realities and vastly different approaches to the liturgical life embraced by their communities.

Jesuit Schools are well known for their Kairos Program (Trinity College, 2008). Explicitly in its very name this program creates an opportunity for God time – or time for the students and staff to focus their lives on God. While it is a voluntary program it proves to be popular with senior students who willingly give up their time to explore opportunities this program offers for authentic personal connection with God. The Kairos program offers four days spent immersed in an environment where prayer can be “genuine, personal and real” (Trinity College, 2008). The program allows students the absolute freedom to name God and their relationship with God. An integral part of the experience is the leadership of other young people who have themselves completed the Kairos program as participants at some stage in the past.

It is difficult if not impossible to evaluate a program such as the Kairos program. The experience of prayer and connection with God cannot be evaluated in any commonly accepted manner. Anecdotally students in Jesuits schools who participate in the program name the experience as a highpoint of their secondary education. Jesuit principals name the experience as being integral to the formation of their senior students.

There are of course other experiences in Catholic schools which provide students with opportunities to deepen their relationship with God. As part of the total educational experience providing students with opportunities to pray and ways to pray, hopefully enables a relationship with God in their present context which will carry students into the future and sustain them throughout their lives.

In every case the school provides students with opportunities to feel that; union with God is possible, but only if we allow God to be God, calling us to a kind of union we never expected with a deity we never imagined (Anderson & Foley, 1998, p. 52).

Experiences such as the Kairos Program challenge students to recognise the benefits of a relationship with God and to learn the reflective practices necessary to maintain this life-giving relationship.

A WORK TO UNDERTAKE

Schools are concerned with the process of learning and education. Within that total experience Catholic schools understand that to be people of faith demands that Christians live out the Gospel message and promote Gospel values as central to the Christian identity. In recent years the Christian Brothers have developed a structured approach to living out these values in practical terms through activities organised by the Edmund Rice Centre

The Edmund Rice Centre is involved in a range of projects and activities across the four areas of its operation in research, community education, advocacy and networking. The Centre’s objectives are to:

- Conduct and encourage research into the causes of poverty and inequity in society, especially with regard to youth and Indigenous Australians.
- Promote teaching that supports awareness, understanding and action in the areas of justice and community issues.
- Promote experiential learning activities through organised and reflective immersion programs in Australia and internationally.
Encourage the development of skills in advocacy and social action.

Facilitate liaison and networking opportunities amongst agencies involved in social justice and community education activities (Edmund Rice Centre, n.d.).

The Edmund Rice Centre is involved in activities with a number of partner organisations. In the school context the Centre is involved in social justice initiatives, immersion programs, discussions, and access to projects which will encourage the meaningful involvement of young people in the work of the Gospel.

The belief that students have a work to undertake that can make a difference and change the world is a valuable way for young people to embrace the message of the Gospel in a tangible and practical manner. This aspect of charism gives students a safe way to explore issues, ask questions and embrace possibilities for growth as a way of beginning a life long commitment to issues of justice and concern for humanity.

In some ways this practical work makes the academic study which takes place in classrooms more relevant and purposeful and connects it to real life experiences. Theology is the foundation for the work of the Church and in the context of practical application theological study becomes relevant and a worthwhile study to undertake. It helps students build theoretical frameworks and intellectual foundations for practical work which gives their lives meaning and purpose.

A FACE OF GOD TO SEE

The face of God is revealed in countless ways in the modern world. This happens in ways that are frequently unplanned, unstructured and unanticipated. Revelation happens when people least expect it as unconsciously as breathing in and breathing out. When school communities plan and enable other dimensions of Maréchal’s indicators of charism the communities reveal the face of God.

The answer is that religious sensibility is passed on by story-tellers, most of whom are not aware that they are telling stories because their narratives reside more in who they are and what they do rather than what they say. Religious heritages are transmitted, not necessarily by religious teachers and preachers, but more likely by intimates, those who are closest to us in our lives. The stories are told by the way in which they react to the ordinary and especially the extraordinary events of life – failure, disappointment, suffering, injustice, death, success, joy, love, intense pleasure, marriage and birth (Greeley, 2000, p. 175).

The face of God is revealed when least expected in the way school communities go about their day to day activities. All the experiences of school life provide insights and ways to see the face of God. All the processes of school life hopefully serve to remind the members of the community that they are children of God imaged in God. Revelation cannot be controlled with strategic plans, lists of outcomes or a series of dot points to be addressed. God is revealed or hidden in the best and worst moments of the lived experiences of a community. Sometimes it is enough to know that and to ask what revelation of God is to be found in a particular experience. At times the answer may lead the community to truths they do not necessarily want to engage with. Growth with and to God only comes from openness to this possibility. ‘A community of faith … must be reconciled to living in the ordinary, engaging everyday life as the saving parable and reconciling myth’ (Anderson & Foley, 1998, p. 160).

The saving parable and reconciling myth of our daily lives gives countless opportunities to engage with the gifts of the Spirit and recognise the face of God in those we meet and who we are.

CHARISM NOW

In our 2005 paper we added the following markers to Maréchal’s elements of charism. It is our belief that when charism is embraced by a school community it also provides communities with:
• ‘a way into decision making and action at all levels of the community
• a foundation to address the question “how shall we live?”
• ways to answer the “why” questions rather than the “what” questions
• the courage to take up our vocations as baptised members of the Church
• countless opportunities for our faith to be known, celebrated, lived and translated into prayer (GDC, #84)’ (Brien & Hack, 2005, p. 71).

In an often uncertain age these elements allow school communities to engage with the heart of the Catholic worldview and address issues of meaning-making, values and spiritual capital from a specifically Catholic perspective.

The markers outlined above can be approached from a theological, intellectual or purely human standpoint. Hopefully a community’s responses reflect the motivations and underlying belief systems about that community. All go to the heart of the Catholic reality and engage community members with enduring understandings about what it means to be directed by the Spirit, to have a vocation, to live as a baptised member of the Church, to make life choices, to wonder about the nature of God and the relationship between God and humanity, to learn to live with one another and to celebrate what matters in peoples lives and the world.

Catholic school communities share a rich tradition of beliefs which can inform and give direction to decisions at every level of school life. When these communities embrace the possibilities for discussion about their shared motivations the core business and key purposes of Catholic education become clearer and more focused.

The final marker we list goes to the heart of the personal call extended to each person at his or her baptism. The baptised are continually invited to live out this call, to explore the richness of the tradition and to embrace a life or ongoing conversion and faith. Catholic education is uniquely positioned to continually invite community members to know the rich tradition, to celebrate the reality of the journey with and to God, to embrace the fullness of life and to respond to these moments of conversion by connecting with God and one another in prayer.

With this in mind Catholic education is a rich resource for young people to assist them in constructing a personal worldview and meaning-making system. This happens through the spiritual journey which is the journey within and through their journey in the world towards citizenship which is the journey without. Meaning-making occurs at the intersection of these two journeys (Delors in Hack, 2008, p.137). Charism as experienced in the school context can be a valuable resource for young people as they make both these journeys. Embedded within the school community charism builds constructs for young people which can be called habits of mind. These habits of mind are activities that encourage students to practice, refine and develop certain modes of thought (Costa & Kallick, 2000, Eisner, 2004, p. 301).

Schools are concerned with the process of education to meet parent, community and government requirements (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, n.d.). The academic processes however they may be reported upon assist the processes of human growth in an organised, structured, rational manner. Charism allows a different entry point for students. It can answer that innate human yearning which seeks answers to life questions. Government bodies have recognised this human element and in recent years have been promoting the deliberate integration of values into curriculum processes and school experiences. Additional funding has been provided to schools and school bodies which introduce values programs (Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, n.d.).

Catholic schools have always unashamedly promoted particular values that flow naturally out of charisms experienced in particular contexts. School mottos focusing on truth, service, love, charity and community explicitly put these values at the forefront for Catholic schools. Catholic educators have always understood the weightiness of these values and the possibilities they provide to focus on purpose and
promote the growth of community members. With regard to values, Catholic educators need to claim the ground which they have always occupied. There is a need to acknowledge that while Catholic schools may share the values promoted and sponsored by government bodies, the motivations for embracing these values are grounded in the Gospel which has always given Catholic communities their purpose and direction.

Maréchal’s dimensions of charism and the additional elements we proposed in our 2005 article are part of a larger groundswell in Catholic education to encourage communities to refocus on their charismatic identity. Congregational Catholic schools in Australia invest heavily in extensive leadership and pedagogical professional development for school leaders and classroom practitioners that draws on the insights of their charism (Dominican Sisters of Eastern Australia and the Solomon Islands, n.d; Loreto Sisters (IBVM) Australia, n.d; Duncan, & Scroope, 2010).

The Catholic Diocese of Townsville in 2009 took the courageous step of having every teacher in their Diocese participate in a three day conference titled “Light for the Journey”. This conference focused on charism, its origins, and its capacity to shape and deepen the religious, pedagogical and administrative life of the school (Diocese of Townsville Catholic Education, 2009). One of the keynote speakers reminded every teacher in this Diocese that “a school’s practices and its organisational culture have to match its charism rhetoric”. (Green, 2009, p.21).

Internationally Timothy Cook (2010) is examining the value of the exploration of charism in sharpening a school’s religious identity. “What makes a great Catholic school? I propose that charism is a way to provide the necessary focused religious identity for Catholic schools (p.1)”.

This return to drawing on the rich charisms of the Church by Catholic schools is having an effect on the spirituality of young people. The seminal research undertaken by Smith and Lundquist Denton (2005) on the spiritual lives of young Americans notes

The greater the supply of religiously grounded relationships, activities, programs, opportunities and challenges available to teenagers, other things being equal, the more likely teenagers will be religiously engaged and invested (p.261).

In an Australian context Engebretson (2008) claims that “…Australian Catholic young people positively endorse the spiritual formation that is offered to them through their Catholic schools and claim belief in core Catholic teachings” (p158).

Phillip Hughes (2007) in his research with Catholic school students found 60% of students affirmed that their school had helped them believe in God, follow Jesus and believe in the Catholic faith (p.187). While some may claim this figure to be low or disappointing when taken in the context of an increasingly secularised Australian society where the participation of young people in formal religious and church activities is low for all Christian denominations (Mason et al, 2006) this in fact is a positive statistic for the efficacy of the Catholic school.

The exploration of charism and reconnection with the charismatic foundations of Catholic schools encourages these educational communities to focus on the values which are core to their stories and which give the communities life. A possible result is an increase in spiritual capital which can be defined as “the strength of moral purpose and the degree of coherence between values, beliefs and attitudes about life and learning” (Caldwell, 2007, p. 55). Caldwell gives indicators by which schools can assess the extent to which they have built spiritual capital into the culture of the school and developed spiritual capital in individual students. These indicators focus on the alignment of the stated values of the school in the policy and curriculum base of the school and the behaviour and actions of students and staff (Hack, 2008, pp.166-167). Catholic schools play a significant role in the creation of social capital and spiritual capital in communities in which they are situated. Spiritual capital focuses on the establishment of positive
dispositions in students and the value of exemplars or role models of positive behaviours provided by both staff and students. Spiritual capital gives school communities a tangible way of measuring how the charism is made manifest in school life (Hack, 2008, p. 121).

CONCLUSION

Charism provides the motivations behind who we are, what we do and how we structure and live together as communities. It is the deep philosophical underpinning of the identity of a community. While it can never be broken down to a list of checkpoints, strategies and tasks, addressing charism can be approached purposefully in the hope that possibilities for growth might be discovered so that communities might better live out the promise offered by the rich charisms of the Church. The spirit of charism is ultimately what will remain with individuals beyond the school experience. It is this Spirit which students carry with them on their life journeys which will enable students to lead purposeful, productive lives post school.

The founders of Catholic schools were heroic figures who took risks yet at times those who follow them, have wrapped themselves in the safety of the known. Charisms have sustained school communities and at times there have been groundbreaking new initiatives which have propelled charisms into the unchartered future. The Kairos program and the Edmund Rice Centre are examples of these visionary attempts to make charisms relevant to the experience of present realities. The story is never finished. The charism is never exhausted. Charisms cannot be limited because to do so would be to limit God and the possibilities of the future God might have planned. Charism continues in all times. It is up to each successive generation to author the chapters of the story for their own and future generations.

At the beginning of the third millennium, the Church, above all, will need to be a community which enables peoples to experience a deeply authentic Christian spirituality. Doctrines alone do not satisfy the hunger in the heart of contemporary Australians though they remain vitally important. Discourse about God is not the only thing people are seeking. Experience of God is also what they are longing for. Clarity about God without the possibility of experiencing a relationship with God will never be enough.

This has real implications for Catholic schools which are privileged locations for introducing young people to the great Tradition. Religious education and catechesis serve this larger goal. Not all will enter into a life-giving relationship with this Tradition but they have a right to be introduced to it in a Catholic school (Putney, 2008, pp. 27-28).

While it is possible to draw out aspects of charism to focus on, the various ways in which charism is embedded and lived out in a community is in the end a holistic reality, a totality which is transmitted through every aspect of school and community life, every relationship and every decision. It is made manifest in how community members treat the least significant members of the community, how hospitality is offered to the stranger and who finds themselves in the privileged position with reserved seating. It is discovered in the ways the community welcomes new members and invites their contributions to the community. It is evident in what is honoured and acclaimed and what is ignored and overlooked. It encompasses the spiritual, pastoral, academic, administrative and co-curricular dimensions of school life and is made manifest in the lived experience of the members of the community. It is never as simple as just telling the story. When the charism is truly embedded in the culture of the community it impacts on decisions and choices at all levels of schools life. The gift of the charism is drawn on with every decision so that ultimately it becomes an understanding that is simply what we do because in the end it is who we are.
**Table 1. Charism Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARISM</th>
<th>Grounded in a Founder</th>
<th>Grounded in a Gospel story.</th>
<th>Grounded in a significant person from the Tradition</th>
<th>Grounded in the amalgamation of several charisms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SCHOOL EXAMPLE</td>
<td>Christian Brothers Schools</td>
<td>Good Samaritan Catholic College, Hinchinbrook</td>
<td>John XXIII Primary School Stanhope Gardens (Catholic Education Parramatta, n.d.)</td>
<td>Corpus Christi Catholic High School Oak Flats (Corpus Christi Catholic College, n.d.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Edmund Rice Australia, n.d.)</td>
<td>(Good Samaritan Catholic College, n.d.)</td>
<td>(Corpus Christi Catholic College, n.d.)</td>
<td>(Casmir Catholic College, Marrickville)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Providence is our inheritance”</td>
<td>“Journey with Compassion”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Good Samaritan Sisters, De La Salle Brothers with Passionist parish influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MOTTO*</td>
<td>“Abide in Christ”</td>
<td>“Nurturing hope for the future”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unite and Grow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSSIBILITIES FOR ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS</td>
<td>What does a twenty-first century Christian look like? How does belonging to a community of schools enrich our lives? How might our outreach activities change how we live on a daily basis at school? communitie s/at the margins</td>
<td>How do we recognise Good Samaritans in our world? How can we journey with compassion? When do we ‘walk on the other side’?</td>
<td>How do we embrace change? What windows do we need to ‘throw open’? How are we the Church in the modern world?</td>
<td>In this community what does it mean to gather for a celebration of Eucharist? How might a Eucharistic imagination transform the community? How might a Eucharistic imagination foster dreams about Gospel values? What aspects of a Eucharistic imagination invite the service of others? How can this community make manifest the Body of Christ?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 2. Charism Grounded in a Founder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MOTTO</td>
<td>Truth - Veritas</td>
<td>Finding God in all things</td>
<td>Never see a need without doing something about it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>A Faith that does justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISTORICAL FOUNDATION</td>
<td>805 Years (1206) 142 in Australia</td>
<td>1540 152 in Australia</td>
<td>144 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ORIGINS</td>
<td>13th Century Spain</td>
<td>16th Century France</td>
<td>20th Century Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESENT DAY REALITY</td>
<td>International Order in over 100 countries</td>
<td>International Order in over 100 countries</td>
<td>Australian Order First Australian Saint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POSSIBILITIES FOR ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS</td>
<td>What does it mean to preach in the twenty-first century? How can we preach? What role do women have in preaching? What responsibilities do we have to others? How can we respond to refugees in the Australian context? What energy do we give to God? How might we allow God to consume our lives? How might we discover the truth? How does my life continue the tradition of the 'holy preaching'?</td>
<td>What does it mean to be people of competence, conscience and compassion? How can we best be of service in the world? How can you discover the more you have to give? How can we reveal a world charged with the “grandeur of God”? Where do we find the revelation of God?</td>
<td>How do we actively seek out the needs of others which warrant our attention and intervention? What is our commitment to indigenous communities? How do we form inclusive communities? How do we critique the Church and maintain our own integrity?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
References


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*Joanne Hack is the Director of Mission at St Mary’s Star of the Sea College Wollongong
Abstract

For the purpose of teaching Catholic social thought in the context of religious education, the Catholic understanding of justice forms a central idea that must be explicated before all others. But what is justice? This essay synthesizes the traditional catechetical view of justice as the cardinal virtue by which human beings are able to give God and neighbor what is due to them. Insofar as justice is a virtue, the Catholic catechetical tradition implies that it must be habituated to be effective, following the example of Jesus. The author contends that justice should be the central idea that contextualizes the presentation of other key concepts of Catholic social thought like the common good and human solidarity. In this view, the Catholic understanding of justice implies that Christian efforts at social justice will by their nature strive toward right relationship with God and neighbor as their proper end.

Introduction

How does the Catholic understanding of justice inform religious education? In this essay, I present a fresh synthesis of the traditional catechetical view of justice as the cardinal virtue by which we are able (with grace) to give God and our neighbors what is due to them. Insofar as justice is a virtue, the Catholic tradition implies that it must be habituated to be effective, following the example of Christ. My goal in this paper is not to propose a new educational theory for teaching justice, nor to critique the expansive religious education theories of Thomas Groome and others from a catechetical standpoint. In the context of religious education, I am simply arguing that justice should be the central idea that contextualizes the presentation of other key concepts of Catholic social thought like the common good and human solidarity. In my view, the Catholic teaching ultimately defines justice as right relationship with God and neighbor, implying that Catholic efforts at social justice will by their nature strive toward that end.

Catholic teaching suggests that the right relationships implied by this definition can only come about through the grace of God. Human beings cannot force them. So a just person is one who (consciously or not) cooperates with God’s grace in cultivating the theological virtues of faith, hope and love. The idea that right relationships are not ultimately in our power, but dependent on God, is the first point I want to make in this paper. To argue it and others, I will now turn to the Catholic theological tradition for support, presenting a brief synthesis of Catholic social teachings. Here I will rely on social encyclicals, magisterial documents, and various writings from the Catholic theological tradition. At the end of this paper, I will return to my basic definition of justice and suggest some implications for the practice of religious education.

Justice and Conscience

The Catholic view of justice as right relationship contains commutative and distributive legal implications. However, Catholic social thought begins with the more fundamental understanding of justice as a virtue (good habit) that each individual believer is obliged to cultivate. The Catholic tradition approaches justice not as a question of “who is entitled to what,” but as a matter of the love we humans owe to each other in virtue of God’s foundational love for creation. To put it simply, justice in the Catholic tradition does not begin with our human love for God and others, but with God’s divine love for us. Therefore, the social doctrine of the Catholic Church is directed primarily at facilitating virtuous lives, with people seeking to become more like God by treating each other with self-giving love. The *Catechism of the
Catholic Church (1997) identifies justice as one of four cardinal virtues alongside prudence, fortitude and temperance (#1803-1805). In this context, Catholics are obliged to seek an authentic understanding of justice by forming their consciences to know what is right and wrong in accordance with scripture, tradition and the magisterium or teaching authority of the Pope and bishops.

In the Catholic tradition, justice is the habit of doing the right thing in relation to God and others. The Catechism understands justice primarily as the virtue or habit of a well-formed conscience, a virtue that disposes us to worship God and respect the rights of our neighbors. Justice presumes a harmony and order in social relationships rooted in the habit of acting and thinking correctly. The Catechism (1997) states:

Justice is the moral virtue that consists in the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor. Justice toward God is called the ‘virtue of religion.’ Justice toward men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationships the harmony that promotes equity with regard to persons and to the common good. The just man, often mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures, is distinguished by habitual right thinking and the uprightness of his conduct toward his neighbor (#1807).

As the object of a well-formed conscience, the common good is oriented toward the establishment of a just social order rooted first in the “virtue of religion,” which is the habit of worship that human beings owe to God. The common good is one of several principles of a just social order articulated in the papal encyclicals and other magisterial documents which comprise modern Catholic social teaching. Another one is human solidarity. In the pages which follow, I will explicate both of these concepts as they relate to justice.

Justice and the Common Good

Historically, Catholic social teaching arose in response to the spiritual crisis occasioned by the Industrial Revolution, which forced Catholics out of agrarian environments and into industrial jobs. In his foundational social encyclical “Rerum Novarum” on the social dimensions of justice, Pope Leo XIII (1891) emphasized the responsibility of secular rulers to guarantee the rights of human beings to remunerative labor and property as the fruits of capital, and the responsibility of workers to do their duty. He insists that the justness of this social order is ultimately dependent on our ability “to reestablish Christian morals, apart from which all the plans and devices of the wisest will prove of little avail” (Leo, 62). Equality consists in our shared divine end and shared human nature. Our rights to a share of human productivity in things like a living or family wage must always be tempered by our duties to God and one another to act justly by respecting things like private property.

Without a habituated sense of right and wrong, and a habituated ability to act on our consciences in proclaiming justice, Leo suggests that the members of post-industrial societies will fall prey to injustice committed in the name of progress by certain political systems. Contemporary readers may be tempted to interpret Leo’s view of justice as advocating a “third way” between the political extremes of his day, but the pontiff does not endorse any particular economic model. In their compendium of dogmatic theology, “The Christian Faith” (2001), Jesuit theologians Jacques Dupuis and Josef Neuner offer the following insight on interpreting the great social encyclicals of Leo and other popes:

The Church has also had to correct periodically a misperception about her social doctrine. The Church does not advocate a “third way” between collectivist socialism and individualist, liberal capitalism, as if the “common good” were to be found at some neutral mid-point between the political left and right and the economic systems associated with them. More than other official documents of the Church, those concerning her social doctrine must be read with an awareness of their historical context. The vast and rich material of these documents should be studied by reading the complete texts themselves, each of which is a response to changing particular concrete circumstances.... (pp. 900-901).
Neuner and Dupuis make the important point that Catholic social doctrine appeals to natural law principles, but speaks primarily to non-Christians of good will in the hopes of forming their consciences. Catholic social doctrine, although it appeals to natural reason and is part of the Church’s moral theology, is not a teaching that is theological in nature. The common good of humanity is God, but Catholic social doctrine calls upon Catholics to share the Church’s vision of justice and injustice with those who do not believe in God.

Catholic social doctrine contrasts justice as right relationship with the injustice of sinful relationships, a distinction that invites all of us — teachers as well as students — to constant conversion. Injustice is the habituated vice of worldly lusts that is directly opposed to the virtue of justice, and Catholics are as obliged to denounce injustice as to proclaim justice. “What do worldly lusts mean but the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, which are not from God, but from the world or this age?” asks St. Robert Bellarmine (1989) in The Art of Dying Well, adding: “Just as justice cannot be unjust, so worldly lusts can in no way be joined to true justice” (p. 259). As a Doctor of the Church, Bellarmine’s thoughts on justice express a fundamental truth about the nature of Catholic social teaching on justice. When we become lost in our own selfish desires for more material pleasure than we need, Bellarmine warns that we perpetuate injustices against both God and our neighbor, bringing about unjust social relations and structures of sin.iii

Of all Catholic social principles, the concept of the common good remains central for the Catholic understanding of justice today, but it can easily be misappropriated for utilitarian purposes if religious educators do not teach it in the proper context. Teachers may find it helpful in religious education classrooms to note that St. Thomas Aquinas saw the common good as part of the natural law written in human hearts, by which justice demands that we temper our freedom with a sense of responsibility to the goodness of God himself and of his divine plan for human relations. Aquinas (1948) writes:

Just as the good of the multitude is greater than the good of one who belongs to the multitude, so it is less than the extrinsic good to which the multitude is ordered: just as the good of order of an army is less than the good of the leader (Summa Theologica I-II, q. 92, a. 1 ad 3.).

Students should know that the common good is not merely a pious ideal — i.e. one way of looking at the way we want the world to be — nor a way of dividing up material goods to that the greatest number of people derive the greatest possible benefit. Rather, the common good is a foundational way of reflecting on the world as we find it in the light of God’s plan for human relations. Every Catholic is obliged in conscience to reflect on the demands of the common good, engaging in objective moral reasoning about how to best shape our lives in accordance with virtue, using material goods for the greater good of God and the sake of a just social order in the contemporary world.iii Both the Second Vatican Council in “Gaudium et Spes” and Pope John XXIII envision justice as one of four pillars of the Church’s message in the modern world — alongside truth, freedom and love. The Council exhorts us to form our consciences in accordance with the exercise of right reason, which is objective in seeking a single answer and transcendent in seeking it in God. In his encyclical “Pacem in Terris,” Pope John XXIII (1963) describes the pillar of justice as referring to the incorporeal social order that Catholics are obliged in conscience to bring into effect out of what currently exists (#35-38). Being incorporeal, the justice of human relations is always a spiritual reflection of the truths of God’s existence and goodness.

John XXIII insists in “Pacem in Terris” that a just social order must be freely accepted rather than imposed (#61). He adds that the principle of the common good helps safeguard us from the moral despotism (#139-141) that often results from utilitarianism. The pope was aware that our ways of relating to each other have grown increasingly more complex in the post-industrialized world, presenting new spiritual challenges to property rights and the freedom of Christian believers. John XXIII (1961) had emphasized this point in his encyclical “Mater et Magistra” two years earlier:
One of the principal characteristics of our time is the multiplication of social relationships, that is, a daily more complex interdependence of citizens, introducing into their lives and activities many and varied forms of association, recognized for the most part in private and even in public law (#59).

John XXIII’s view of justice as an invisible and spiritual reality rooted in social relationships invokes fundamental Catholic teachings on human nature. Catholicism is rooted essentially in the hylomorphic assumption that the justice of our human relations is rooted in the justice of our relations with God, just as human beings are embodied spirits. The inviolability and fundamental dignity of human life, and the reality of human equality, depend on God’s love. On a political level, the pope insists here that (“public law”) as well as individuals (“private law”) have a responsibility to ensure a just social order.

The Catholic understanding of human nature is an inseparable part of the Catholic understanding of justice as habituated right relations. Cardinal John Henry Newman (1997) discusses in poetic imagery the connection between justice and the worldly goodness in his “Parochial and Plain Sermons,” particularly the fourth sermon. He writes:

What have we to do with the gifts and honours of this attractive but deceitful world, who, having been already baptized into the world to come, are no longer citizens of this? Why should we be anxious for a long life, or wealth, or credit, or comfort, who know that the next world will be everything which our hearts can wish, and that not in appearance only, but truly and everlastingly? Why should we rest in this world, when it is the token and promise of another? Why should we be content with its surface, instead of appropriating what is stored beneath it? To those who live by faith, everything they see speaks of that future world; the very glories of nature, the sun, moon, and stars, and the richness and the beauty of the earth, are as types and figures witnessing and teaching the invisible things of God. All that we see is destined one day to burst forth into a heavenly bloom, and to be transfigured into immortal glory (pp. 298-299).

Newman describes the Catholic understanding of justice as depending on a fundamental link between the divine and material worlds: What is just on earth must reflect and point toward what is just in heaven. What the world considers good is also good in God’s eyes, provided it does not distract us from heavenly things, as in the medieval distinction between an ordered desire and a disordered desire for material things. Newman’s prose offers a serene and lyrical image of justice as a spiritual reality that orders the material world, but does not negate it. Jacques Maritain, the great Thomist and natural law scholar of the early 20th century, also makes this point in his little work The Person and the Common Good. Although the spiritual aspects of personhood and the common good take precedence over the material for Aquinas, Maritain (1946) emphasizes in this book that our material understanding of the common good as the end for which society exists is rooted in and flows naturally from the spiritual. Society is comprised of persons who tend by nature to communion with God and with one another through the development of reason and virtue.‘ The common good, as the end of the social whole, depends on the person as its primary social unit (pp. 1-51).

Maritain insists that the political common good or “good human life of the multitude” is not merely a collection of disconnected individual goods (i.e. roads, ports, schools) presupposed by society, but that it is expressive of something more fundamentally human (p. 52). The common good includes “the sum or sociological integration of all the civic conscience, political virtues and sense of right and liberty, of all the activity, material prosperity and spiritual riches, of unconsciously operative hereditary wisdom, of moral rectitude, justice, friendship, happiness, virtue and heroism in the individual lives of its members” (p. 52). For Maritain, justice is not the pure subordination of the individual to society, but the relation of two wholes (person and society) to one another for the sake of the common good.

The common good is not the only idea that is central to the Catholic understanding of justice. The principle of subsidiarity is also a key principle of justice. Years before John XXIII’s encyclicals, Pope Pius XI
(1931) introduced the concept of subsidiarity in his encyclical “Quadragesimo Anno” on reconstructing the social order after the First World War. He defines it thus:

As history abundantly proves, it is true that on account of changed conditions many things which were done by small associations in former times cannot be done now save by large associations. Still, that most weighty principle, which cannot be set aside or changed, remains fixed and unshaken in social philosophy: Just as it is gravely wrong to take from individuals what they can accomplish by their own initiative and industry and give it to the community, so also it is an injustice and at the same time a grave evil and disturbance of right order to assign to a greater and higher association what lesser and subordinate organizations can do. For every social activity ought of its very nature to furnish help to members of the body social, and never destroy and absorb them (#79).

In political terms, Pius XI is making the point here that small government is better than big government. What is being done well by a smaller organization should not be co-opted by a larger organization. This principle safeguards society from the injustice of state-sponsored tyranny and despotism against the weak.

Justice and Human Solidarity

Taking up the modern papal concern for a just social order, Pope Paul VI recognized what he called the new “moral fact” of global interdependence as a cause of unequal economic distribution. “The complete development of the individual must be joined with that of the human race and must be accomplished by mutual effort,” Paul VI (1967) wrote in his encyclical “Populorum Progressio” on economic development (#43). It is no coincidence that Paul VI addressed the United Nations, which the papacy has seen from the beginning as a hopeful sign of “mutual effort” on behalf of justice in the Catholic sense. Yet the pope was careful to distinguish between social action and ideology. In his apostolic letter “Octogesima Adveniens,” Paul VI’s (1971) advocacy of political action is tempered by a critique of “the possible ambiguity of every social ideology” (#27). Paul is making the point here that although Catholic social teaching proposes a vision of a just social order, it does not offer an ideology as such, in the sense of systems like communism and fascism which proffer an artificial utopia.

Building on Pope Paul’s contrasting of justice as a habit of action with justice understood as an ideology, Pope John Paul II moves away from the Marxist understanding of the human person as a mere subject of work. In his encyclical “Laborem Exercens,” John Paul II (1981) sketches a spirituality of worker solidarity based on enumerated rights such as “suitable employment for all who are capable of it” and unemployment benefits when possible (#18). As Catholic social thought develops under John Paul II, it identifies particularly modern injustices like age or gender discrimination as obstacles to a just social order in the workplace, paying special attention to the excesses of communism. In his encyclical “Sollicitudo Rei Socialis” on the social concerns of the church, John Paul II (1987) contrasts Pope Paul’s hope for development with the growing gap between rich and poor, noting that the failure to attend to our global interdependence “triggers negative effects even in the rich countries” (#17) and elevating solidarity to a “moral and social attitude” or virtue (#38).

Finally, in “Centisimus Annus,” his encyclical marking the 100th anniversary of Leo XIII’s “Rerum Novarum,” John Paul II (1991) elaborates on several of Leo’s key ideas: worker rights, private property, the common good, the evils of socialism, and the role of the state. Citing the war in the Persian Gulf, the pope decries the use of war as an attempt to ensure a just social order, noting that war “leaves behind a trail of resentment and hatred, thus making it all the more difficult to find a just solution of the very problems which provoked the war” (#52). Markets must be free but fair, he insists. Reading these social encyclicals in light of the Catholic teaching on justice, we may note their concern that human persons treat each other with the same dignity and love God gives us.
Conclusion

Having briefly explicated the Catholic understanding of justice as the right relationships of human persons to God and to each other, I would like to conclude by noting that the Catholic Church does not propose its teaching on justice as merely one among many equally valid positions or models, but as an objective truth that describes the nature and purpose of human relations. Some readers may hear in this point an unnecessarily “dogmatic” emphasis on my part, and I would not recommend belaboring it in a religious education classroom. But for religious educators, there is no getting around the fact that the principles of Catholic social thought are not intended by the Church as mere suggestions, but as foundational principles designed to guide human action. If religious educators take them seriously as guideposts for social teaching and action, then there shouldn’t be any question

In the religious education classroom, I believe students have the right to know that the Catholic Church does not purport to offer one potentially helpful way of thinking about justice, but the objective constitutive truth about human relationships. It is certainly good that some non-Catholics value the Catholic perspective on justice for offering “one way of looking at things,” and it is likewise good that Catholics cooperate in non-Catholic efforts at building a just human society. Nevertheless, there are fundamental differences in our human understandings of justice which cannot be reconciled. While justice for a person steeped in the principles of Catholic thought could imply the legal abolition of abortion, the death penalty, and euthanasia, justice for someone ignorant of these principles may imply something entirely different. For every shared political goal related to justice, there are other areas where the Gospel vision of human relations differs radically from the materialism of today’s globalized society.

In this context, I contend that Catholic religious educators must believe on a fundamental level that the Gospel offers the truest account of human relations. Without a vision of human existence rooted deeply in Gospel values, I do not think Catholic religious educators can teach justice effectively, as justice for the Catholic must ultimately be rooted in God’s love for humanity in the person of Jesus. By offering a view of justice that makes human relations relative only to God’s love, Catholic social principles offer the world a unique way of recovering the use of human reason in building the future of our planet. Without the saving role of Jesus, the Catholic view of justice would perhaps be indistinguishable from the mission statement of any social service agency.

I have noted that Catholic tradition understands justice as a habituated virtue by which — through God’s grace offered in the theological virtues of faith, hope and love — human beings give what is due to God, our neighbors, and our environment. I believe this view of justice suggests that religious educators should form their consciences according to principles like solidarity and the common good before attempting to form their students. This formation of conscience invites religious educators to use human reason in persuading others of the Catholic vision of justice, speaking in a language that persuades non-religious people without losing its religious motivation. For the human person who seeks justice, Catholic social thought insists fundamentally on a conversion to the saving message of Jesus Christ, who is present implicitly in all right relations. For in the final analysis, justice is nothing more than right relationships, and nothing less than a gift of God.

References


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1 A leading proponent of “total catechetical education,” Groome is Director of the Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry, Boston College.

2 Commutative justice concerns fairness in agreements and exchanges between individuals and groups; distributive justice concerns the allocation of income, wealth and power in society and its effect on the poor.

3 Some examples of “social sins” or “structures of sin” are the socialism, communism and the consumerism of unbridled capitalism critiqued in the social encyclicals of modern popes like Leo XIII.

4 See “Gaudium Et Spes” 26. The phrase “common good” occurs frequently in the social documents of the Catholic Church, but is understood as individual freedom tempered by moral responsibility, rather than with a utilitarian view (“the greatest possible good for the greatest possible number of individuals”) or in the sense of John Rawls who distinguishes between the good and the just. Catholic social doctrine does not neatly separate what is good from what is just after the manner of Rawls.

5 Maritain distinguishes persons from individuals, who are autonomous by nature and unrelated to society.

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Michael Chambers*

MEMORY IN THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASSROOM
(PART 2: THE ARTS AND THE TESTING EFFECT)

Abstract

This is the second part (of a two-part paper) about memory, its place in the religious education classroom and the way it might inform the practice of religious education. The argument is put forward that memory and rote learning are under-utilised in the religious education classroom. Engagement with memory may offer ways to improve student knowledge of foundational content in religious education. Part two offers the arts, namely music performance, as a source of inspiration to religious educators for embracing memory. In piano performance and in other disciplines that utilise motor skills, memory is applauded and approved. Memory should be similarly approved in the religious education classroom. Finally, drawing on cognitive and educational psychology, consideration is given to the testing effect as evidence that memorisation may be under-utilised in the religious education classroom.

Great is the power of memory, an awe-inspiring mystery, my God, a power of profound and infinite multiplicity. And this is mind, this is myself. (Augustine of Hippo, 1991, Book X, xvii (26), originally written circa 400CE)

This is the second of two papers about memory, its place in the religious education classroom and the way it might inform the practice of religious education. The first paper (Chambers, 2010, pp. 58-64) considered the historical context of memory and rote learning in religious education and their application in constructivist educational models. It argued that engagement with memory may offer ways to improve student knowledge of foundational content in religious education. This second paper offers the arts, namely music performance, as a source of inspiration to religious educators for embracing memory. In piano performance and in other disciplines that utilise motor skills, memory is applauded and approved. Memory should be met with similar approval in the religious education classroom. Finally, consideration is given to the testing effect as evidence that memorisation may be under-utilised in the religious education classroom. The testing effect is a phenomenon well known in psychology but it has not yet been embraced in classroom religious education. Regular testing not only improves student memory, it also improves student learning.

Memory and Motor Skills

The prompt for this article was a developing awareness of the importance and value of memory in the performing arts, namely piano performance. In piano performance and other musical arts memory is an esteemed skill. Admittedly, it has not always been so. In Europe it became a prized skill particularly after Liszt and Clara Schumann began performing concerts from memory in the second half of the nineteenth century (Chaffin & Imreh, 1997, p. 315; Williamon, 2002, p. 113). It is now an expected part of the concert performer’s skill-set (Williamon, 2004, p. 123). Daniel Barenboim plays all 32 of Beethoven’s piano sonatas (over 11 hours of performance) from memory and Angela Hewitt plays Bach’s The Well-Tempered Clavier (over 4 hours) without printed music (Prendergast, 2009, p. 22). Memory is an aspect of music that impacts performance. It can personalise performance (Blanchard, 2007, p. 170) and there is evidence to suggest that memorised performance is preferred to that of non-memorised performance (Aiello & Williamon, 2002, p. 169).
The use of memory and motor skills is evident in stories of legend and inspiration as well. Most Australians are familiar with the story of the young Don Bradman repeatedly hitting a golf ball with a cricket stump against the curved brick base of the family water tank. This solitary game is often cited as formational to the Bradman legend. The smaller ball, the thinner ‘bat’, the quick and variable bounce all contributed to a hand-eye coordination to this day not seen again on a cricket field (Bradman Foundation Australia, n.d., "Sir Donald Bradman" link).

In Mao’s Last Dancer, Li Cunxin (2003) tells the story of his rise from impoverished childhood to acclaimed ballet dancer; from training in China, to defection and eventual settlement in Australia. His autobiography was re-written as a children’s book in 2008 and adapted for film in 2009. Li was named Australian Father of the Year in 2009. After a number of years at the Beijing Dance Academy, he saw for the first time, a vision of Mikhail Baryshnikov dancing the Nutcracker Suite. This was to become his inspiration to achieve greater heights in ballet. Desperate to improve his turns, Li says:

One night I had an idea. When everybody was asleep I went to the studio, with a candle and a box of matches. I put the lighted candle at one end of the studio and started to practise my turns. The candle threw only a faint light in front of me. It was hard, but I thought if I could turn in the dark, then turning in the light would be easy. I couldn’t take the risk of turning the light on, of my teachers catching me staying up late, but I continued, night after night, relentlessly. By the end of the term I had left shallow indentations in the studio floor where I had endlessly, repeatedly, turned. (Li, 2003, p. 242)

Memory and rote learning clearly have a place in the arts and sport. In these disciplines they are regarded as valuable and important for the development of skills. Their use in these domains can serve as an encouragement and reminder that they may have a place in religious education as well. To that end, Squire and Kandel (2000) suggest that the use of memory is not limited to the development of motor skills. It also has application in the development of perceptual and cognitive skills:

There are also examples of skilful behaviour that are not based on learned movements but that nevertheless involve acquiring skilful ways of interacting with the world. When we learn to read our native language, for example, we initially move haltingly from word to word, but after practice we read quickly, moving the eyes to a new location about four times a second and taking meaning from more than 300 words in one minute...These skills are the result of gradual improvement in the perceptual and cognitive procedures that we all use when we perceive, think, and solve problems. (p. 181)

The relationship between the use of motor skills in arts and sport and cognitive skills in the religious education classroom can be easily dismissed citing irreconcilable processes: repetitive practise on the piano or in sport is nothing like the daily tasks in the classroom. However, such an argument ignores three claims of relevance and application.

The first claim is that memory development and repetition are absorbing and engaging processes. Ironically, the popular argument against rote learning seems to be that it is tedious and boring. But who is to say that this is the case? To the contrary, it is feasible that Barenboim, Hewitt, Bradman and Li all found their repetitive skill development activities engaging and absorbing. Li suggests as much when he describes the feeling of finally mastering the double cabriole:

A few days before the exam I made the breakthrough. I had to dramatically change my weight distribution in the air and bend my body backwards as far as my flexibility allowed. When I finally got it right the feeling was sensational. (Li, 2003, p. 252)
It is possible, if not highly likely, that rote learning of important and relevant content could be equally absorbing and engaging for students in religious education classrooms. This is supported by Joyce, Weil and Calhoun (2009) who argue “mnemonics can be used to help people master interesting concepts, and in addition, they are a great deal of fun” (p. 27). Roediger and Karpicke (2006a) also believe that testing need not be seen as “inimical to creative uses of knowledge” (p. 205). Teaching activities that require students to utilise their memories may be well-received and interesting.

Secondly, these stories of repetitive skill development all hint at a sense of delayed gratification. Hard work now and an ability to wait can lead to greater, desirous results later on. This idea is easily translated to the religious education classroom. School children are all too aware of upcoming reports, graduation certificates, formative and summative assessment and the like. Most children at least know that if they work hard they will be rewarded in some way in the future. Shoda, Mischel and Peake (1990) argue that a sense of delayed gratification is “an essential achievement of human development” (p. 978). Rote learning and memory development in the religious education classroom can play a role in this essential development.

Thirdly, rote learning and engagement with memory are not ends in themselves. They are processes that can lead to mastery, power and dominion. It is impressive to see school students demonstrate their religious literacy with efficiency, accuracy and precision. Traditionally and all too often, mastery has been and continues to be equated with some kind of inherent ability or innate talent (Ericsson & Charness, 1994, pp. 726-728). This traditional stereotype, however, has been challenged by the idea that mastery has more to do with practice and discipline. Terry (2000) suggests that:

the difference between most participants in some activity and those who attain expert status is the amount of deliberate training and instruction. Individuals on their way to expert status maintain schedules of intense and prolonged deliberate practice...Expertise can be acquired through training by otherwise unremarkable individuals. (p. 359)

Also, Hart (2002) argues that a mastery of knowledge has benefits for the self-esteem of children: “The heart of self-esteem is a combination of self-efficacy born of mastery and a sense of communion and community; both involve making deep contact with the world” (p. 78).

Memory, Testing and Enhanced Knowledge

There is significant evidence to suggest that regular testing enhances memory (Butler & Roediger III, 2007, pp. 514-517; Karpicke & Roediger III, 2010, p. 123; Pyc & Rawson, 2009, p. 437; Roediger III & Karpicke, 2006a, p. 181; Squire & Kandel, 2000, pp. 130-131). This phenomenon is known as the testing effect. Evidence of the testing effect dates back to the seminal studies of Gates (1917, pp. 99-104) and Jones (1923, pp. 67-69) in the first quarter of the twentieth century and continues to be revealed in contemporary times (see references above). This evidence, though, has greater cognisance amongst psychologists than it does amongst educators. Roediger and Karpicke (2006a) note that “this phenomenon of improved performance from taking a test is known as the testing effect, and though it has been the subject of many studies by experimental psychologists, it is not widely known or appreciated in education” (p. 181). McDaniel, Anderson, Derbish and Morrisette (2007) agree, saying “the implications of the testing effect literature for educational practice have been virtually ignored by the educational community and educational research” (p. 495). Specifically, it seems too that the testing effect has had little impact in the contemporary religious education classroom. The degree to which it is appreciated in that environment can be questioned. It may be that in religious education testing is seen as antiquated with no place in education’s current order of “rich tasks”, “constructed meaning” and “facilitated learning”.

The testing effect is a phenomenon that recognises that one way to improve one’s memory of material is to be tested on that material. It also contends that regular testing is more effective than regular study for longer-term recall of that material. Further, the construction of test questions and the quality of feedback further enhances the phenomenon of the testing effect. Difficult but successfully answered
questions tend to lead to better long term retention of information. Elaborate and detailed feedback about student work (that includes ways that students can improve their work) also lends itself to the testing effect phenomenon, albeit in a mediated way. Finally, practicing the same skills during learning that are required during retrieval will also enhance student recall and learning (Roediger III & Karpicke, 2006b, p. 254).

Roediger and Karpicke (2006a, p. 182) suggest that the educational community's ignorance of the testing effect is perhaps the result of its counterintuitive nature: who would guess that regular testing after once-off exposure to material is better for students' long-term knowledge than regular exposure and study? In part 1 of this paper (Chambers, 2010, pp. 60-61) I discussed constructivism and schooling and suggested that the constructivist paradigm does not always best suit the task of improving student knowledge. The testing effect is counterintuitive to the constructivist approach. This may be another reason why the educational community is ignorant of its value.

Significant for religious education (and education, more generally), McDaniel et al. (2007) state that “taking a test is almost always a more potent learning device than additional study of the target material” (p. 495). Pyc and Rawson (2009, p. 444) have also found that difficult but successful retrievals are better for students' memories than are easier retrievals. This suggests that classroom religious educators should first give consideration to including tests in the religious education classroom as a way of developing students' memory and their mastery of curriculum content. As Roediger and Karpicke (2006b) state, “judicious use of testing may improve performance in educational settings at all levels...Frequent testing leads students to space their study efforts, permits them and their instructors to assess their knowledge on an ongoing basis, and - most important for present purposes – serves as a powerful mnemonic aid for future retention” (p. 254). Second, religious educators should develop their ability to design and administer tests to students in their classes. A refined ability to design these tests - so that the tests are difficult but completed successfully - should maximise the development of students' declarative memory. This in turn, should assist students to demonstrate mastery over foundational content. Then they will be in a better position to engage gainfully and constructively with the higher order processes: “If students have not mastered basic knowledge of the subject matter, they have no chance of thinking critically and creatively about the subject, and testing can help students acquire this body of knowledge” (Roediger III & Karpicke, 2006a, p. 205).

The testing effect is a neglected phenomenon in the religious education classroom. It manifests itself most obviously in a paradigm of teaching and learning that is too frequently dismissed in contemporary schools. This dismissal may be unwise. Regular testing and engagement with memory (including rote learning) may be useful to the contemporary religious educator because, together, they may lead to improved demonstration of student knowledge and understanding of foundational content. At the very least this paper supports further research into the ways that an understanding of memory and the testing effect might inform religious education in the school. More specific is the possibility for further research, in the Australian religious education context, about the extent of engagement with memory in the classrooms of dioceses that engage in internal or external tests as part of their religious education assessment procedure.

Conclusion

Contemporary religious education is disinclined, and in places wholly averse to the use of memory and rote learning in the classroom program. Memory and rote learning tend to be overlooked in constructivist approaches to education. However, they may be effective tools for enhancing student knowledge and understanding of foundational content. This second part (of a two-part paper) has evoked the performing arts as a discipline where memory is applauded and approved. It has also offered the performing arts as an inspiration for religious education to reclaim a balanced use of memory and rote learning in the classroom context. Finally, this paper has considered the testing effect as evidence that memory and rote learning might be useful for improving student learning. The testing effect phenomenon
needs to enter the discourse of classroom religious education. It warrants attention from religious educators and the wider educational community.

Religious educators might also be inspired by John Paul II (1979) who called for an intelligent use of memory in catechesis.

At a time when, in non-religious teaching in certain countries, more and more complaints are being made about the unfortunate consequences of disregarding the human faculty of memory, should we not attempt to put this faculty back into use in an intelligent and even an original way in catechesis, all the more since the celebration or “memorial” of the great events of the history of salvation require a precise knowledge of them? A certain memorisation of the words of Jesus, of important Bible passages, of the Ten Commandments, of the formulas of profession of faith, of the liturgical texts, of the essential prayers, of key doctrinal ideas, etc., far from being opposed to the dignity of young Christians, or constituting an obstacle to personal dialogue with the Lord, is a real need...We must be realists. The blossoms, if we may call them that, of faith and piety do not grow in the desert places of a memory-less catechesis. What is essential is that the texts that are memorised must at the same time be taken in and gradually understood in depth, in order to become a source of Christian life on the personal level and the community level. (para. 55)

Perhaps memory could be returned, in equally intelligent ways, to the religious education classroom.

References


\[1\] This is an example of formative assessment, or a particular aspect of formative assessment known as *assessment for learning.* Formative assessment is very well known in education. Assessment for learning has entered educational discourse in recent years in response to education’s more critical understanding of the complexity of assessment. For further information see Ryan and Grajczonek (2007, pp. 83-102).

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WHAT INFLUENCES THE FORMATION OF A CHILD’S SPIRITUALITY?
AN INITIAL STUDY OF THE PREPARATION OF CHILDREN FOR ADMISSION INTO THE CATHOLIC SACRAMENTS OF INITIATION

Abstract

This paper reports on the first stage of a wider research project investigating the influences on the spiritual development of children within a Catholic parish context, as perceived by Catholic parish personnel who have assumed this responsibility. Eight participants who held religious leadership positions within a parish environment met as a focus group and derived six domains considered to be key influences on a child’s spiritual formation. A subsequent focus group comprising 37 adult participants who held a direct spiritual educative/formative role with children discussed these six key areas of influence, and then individually ranked and weighted them in terms of considered importance. Findings indicated variation among the clusters of domains describing the influences of family, peers and school, relationship with God, and one’s use of time. The influence of information technology was found to be distinct from all other domains. Further research based on these findings is warranted.

Introduction

As foreshadowed by Stoyles, Caputi, Lyons and Mackay (2010), the findings of this first stage of a wider research project identified the principal factors believed to influence the spiritual formation and growth of young children, in this case, children who attend two primary schools within a Catholic parish. The motivation to undertake this study arose from the concern of participating parish members that the needs and life experiences of children were not being taken into account in relation to programmes of sacramental preparation. There was further concern that the manner in which some programmes presented Catholic tradition undermined the child’s opportunities to touch experiences of awe and wonder in self, in others, in the world, and in God by placing an emphasis on knowledge at the expense of spiritual experience. From a wider viewpoint, concerns about the dropout of children and families from Church participation following sacramental preparation programmes suggested that these programmes were not addressing issues relevant to children and parents.

The theoretical foundation for this research incorporated firstly the distinction between religiosity and spirituality, and secondly the spiritual awareness of children (see Stoyles et al., 2010). Traditional religious practice and belief has the capacity to contextualise the expression of one’s spirituality (Hill, Pargament, Hood, McCullough, Swyers, Larson, & Zinnbauer, 2000). However a person’s spiritual awareness does not necessarily depend on religiosity for its validation (Adams, Hyde & Woolley, 2008; de Souza, 2009; Hay & Nye, 1998). Nor can the universality of human spiritual experience be fully contained or expressed by any one religious tradition (Hyde, 2008). Furthermore, the articulation of human spirituality is not limited by ritual or rule. The manifestation of one’s human spirit freely communicates with the created order, and even beyond the created order into the realm of the divine, whatever mental and emotional image this sense of the divine might evoke (O Murchu, 2000). A person who is not traditionally and formally religious can be spiritual. Hence, the goal of viewing sacramental programmes from the standpoint of the child’s spiritual being, including his or her capacity to enrich the child’s spirit rather than determine the trajectory of its formation, is a sensible one.

Champagne’s (2003) three modes of a child’s spiritual being, namely, the Sensitive (children’s expressions of themselves within their environments), the Relational (the spiritual quality of children’s relationships), and the Existential (children’s experiences located in space and time) are expressed and observed in the child’s present moment. From a spiritual perspective, these modes of being describe the
interactions between the child and his or her home, school, community, and personal environment, as well as the human relationships that are part of this environment (see also Hyde, 2008, pp.53-55). Furthermore, while cognitive development is not the principal indicator of spiritual development, cognitive developmental stages offer an insight into how children perceive the people and events that make up their daily experience. In Australia, the age at which children traditionally receive the Sacraments of Initiation is located within cognitively concrete stages of development (Fowler & Dell, 2006). During these periods, a child’s world is predominantly concrete in its awareness, wherein the adage of “what you see is what you get” holds true (Oser, Scarlett & Bucher, 2006; Boyatzis, 2005). Hence, peers and friends, parents and family, other significant adults, and social occasions influence children through a fundamentally tangible cognitive and emotional lens of interpretation. For example, young children describe God in anthropomorphic terms, drawing upon their internal working models of attachment with parents to shape their image of and relationship with God (Boyatzis, 2005; Coles, 1990; Fowler & Dell, 2006; Hart, 2003). In short, expectations surrounding a child’s response to sacramental preparation need to be shaped by the child’s age and life-experience, as well as by the adult’s readiness to respect expressions of spiritual awareness that are appropriate for a child’s varying developmental ages.

Adults who guide children through programmes of sacramental preparation exercise significant influence on their spiritual awareness and development (Granquist & Dickie, 2006). Hence, the meeting point of children and adults who share this formative experience becomes a shared environment of interaction. This meeting point will also reflect the adult and child’s individual contact with life, and so will further reflect each person’s age, spiritual and religious influences, and the readiness of adult and child to be open to the wisdom and spiritual reflection of each other (Granquist & Dickie, 2006). Rossiter (1999) has noted that from the 1960’s onwards, the most evident change in religious education in Australia was the shift towards an “experiential” emphasis and the “quest for the personalism and relevance” within individuals’ spiritual journeys (1999, p.8). Rossiter’s (1999) comment is important for this research since the majority of participants in this research experienced their childhood or adolescence during the 1960’s and 1970’s, and so would have been influenced in their own spirituality by what was happening during this period. Hence, what do adults and children bring to their shared arenas of interaction in terms of personal experience, immersion in religious values and beliefs, and spiritual growth? Is this interaction characterised by the child and adult’s opposed beliefs about what indicates readiness for admission to a particular Sacrament of Initiation?

The current research project developed and tested the importance of domains considered influential for the spiritual growth of children. These domains were initially generated by a group of adults responsible for the spiritual and religious formation of pre-adolescent children. A larger group of adults who held similar responsibilities then ranked and weighted these domains in relation to their comparative and non-relational importance. It is also necessary to understand the particular character of the parish that participated in this research. In 2002, this particular parish was established from the amalgamation of two separate parishes together with one community within another parish, each of which had its own separate identity prior to amalgamation. The new parish church (symbolising the combined identity of all parish communities) was not commenced until 2010. Up to that time, each community continued to use its own church in the knowledge that eventually these churches would be sold. That is, up to now, parishioners have been living in an interim period of eight years knowing that their separate identities would eventually be taken up into one community.

Method

Domains considered relevant to a child’s spiritual development were developed, ranked, and weighted by adult members of a Catholic parish community located in regional New South Wales, Australia. Adults, rather than children, were invited to participate in this research to reflect the pedagogical, social and familial influences that adults exercise over the spiritual development of children. Permission to conduct this research was initially sought from, and granted by a university-endorsed Human Research and Ethics Committee.
The collection of data through focus groups is a widely used qualitative research method (Wilkinson, 2008). Wilkinson (2008) provides a succinct explanation of focus group methodology. Briefly, and according to Wilkinson (2008), a focus group involves a pre-determined number of people in a discussion that is focused on a specific topic or set of issues. The researcher usually acts as the group moderator, posing previously structured questions, encouraging people to respond and interact with each other, and ensuring that the group discussion flows smoothly and remains ‘on task’. A key feature of the focus group approach (and one that tests the skills of the researcher-moderator) is the ability to motivate interaction among participants rather than allowing participants to simply respond to the moderator’s questions. The latter outcome would not be considered valid focus group methodology, since the dynamic quality of the interaction is the defining characteristic of a focus group. Finally, it is the flexibility of a focus group discussion, as well as the ability to combine focus group data with other forms of data (e.g. quantitative data), that marks its research utility and popularity (Wilkinson, 2008).

Two waves of data gathering (using focus group discussion) comprised this research. The first wave consisted of eight adult members of a Catholic parish community, located in regional New South Wales. Participants held senior roles within the parish infrastructure, and exercised parish roles related to the spiritual development of children. Three participants were teachers of religion in the Catholic primary school; one participant was the principal of the Catholic primary school; two participants were teachers of Special Religious Education in the local Government schools, as well as being coordinators of parish programmes of children’s sacramental initiation into the Catholic Church. One participant was the Parish Priest and one participant was a parent of three teenage sons with no official role in the parish. The median age of these participants was 37 years. Experience of parish roles ranged from three to forty-five years, with a mean score of 25.42 years. Six participants were parents of pre-adolescent to adolescent/young adult children. The male-female ratio of participants was 3:2.

The eight participants who generated the first wave of data were formed into a focus group to identify principal arenas of influence on the spiritual development of children whose ages approximated between nine and twelve years. This range incorporated the ages of children potentially involved in sacramental initiation. Participants met on four separate occasions for this purpose. Prior to the initial meeting, the first author presented participants with two key articles directly related to the development of spirituality among children and adolescents (D’Souza, 2008; Hill, Pargement, Hood, McCullough, Swyers, Larson & Zinnbauer, 2000). Participants were asked to read this literature prior to attending the first meeting. Participants used information from the pre-meeting literature as well as their personal and role-related experiences to brainstorm ideas that globally described influences on child spiritual development.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>Nesting place where values are formed; safe and nurturing for all members; the beginning place for one’s development into society and Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with God</td>
<td>Personal experience for each individual; does not develop or exist in a vacuum; is influenced by circumstances and people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>The place into which the child brings family values within an environment of social interaction and gathering; the child’s understanding of the divine are brought into the school setting and taken from the school setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Friendships develop from childhood into adulthood; friends influence us and are influenced by us; friends influence one’s values and beliefs, one’s learning and development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How time is used (Time)</td>
<td>Structured time influences our thinking – structured by work, school, etc; what happens with our thinking when we have “time on our hands”, to ponder, and to use as we wish?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of information Technology (Information Technology)</td>
<td>A reality of our time; an influence on our thought processes, beliefs and values; a means of communication of ideas, hopes; a means of expressing our beliefs, values, ideas and hopes.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Multiple ideas were recorded as broad, descriptive paragraphs, and provided the foundation for participants’ reflection during the week following this initial meeting. When the eight participants met again, they ruled in or out identified arenas of influence on the basis of perceived importance. This process reduced the list of influences to a more manageable content, though still left them in their broad descriptive format. During two further meetings, participants re-considered the list until they mutually agreed upon descriptions of ideas in the list as one-word domain titles with brief descriptors. These domains were finalised through mutual email contact during the week following the second of these two further meetings. The list of domains, with their relevant descriptors, can be found in Table 1.

The second wave of data was generated by participants from the same parish who consented to participate in a second focus group discussion. The eight members of the first focus group drew up a list of 40 people who were considered suitable to participate. Thirty-seven people from the list of forty invitees agreed to participate in this second focus group. Criteria for inclusion in the focus group were listed following discussion among the original focus group members. Suitability for inclusion was decided upon individuals demonstrating a combination, or even one, of the following criteria: active participation in the parish through Sunday church attendance (all participants fulfilled this criterion); the teaching of Special Religious Education in State Schools (N=8), the preparation of children for sacramental initiation into the Catholic Church (N=12), the roles of grandparent or parent (N=14), and community involvement in areas such as children’s sport and leisure activities (N=3). The criterion of active participation in Sunday church attendance was listed because of the research focus on sacramental initiation. Eight participants had children who were currently in Years 5 and 6 at school (10 to 11 years of age), and two participants had grandchildren who were in Year 6 at school. The remaining participants either had no children, or their children were of adolescent or young adult age. Forty percent of participants were male, and 60% were female. The 37 participants gathered on one evening occasion only. On this occasion, participants were randomly divided into six separate groups. Seven of the eight members of the first focus group acted as group leaders for these groups. The Parish priest did not take the role of group leader. The centrality of his role in the parish suggested the potential for social desirability among participants.

Prior to the discussion evening, the six group leaders undertook a brief training course focused on implementing group leadership skills. The training course was conducted over a three hour period by the first author who is a clinical psychologist and experienced in teaching interactional skills to psychology students. The course addressed skills of active listening (use of open ended questions, paraphrasing etc), agenda setting, brainstorming techniques, appropriate and effective time/discussion control, and the theoretical link between research and focus group discussion. The latter aspect was more an awareness of how a focus group discussion such as the one planned needs to be directed around set questions and process if outcomes are to provide useful insights, thus giving reason for practising inter-personal skills. Group leaders were introduced to the meaning and application of ranking and weighting data so that they could answer questions about the ranking and weighting tasks on the discussion night. They also had the opportunity to practise interactional skills, using a video camera. The use of a camera meant that leaders could see themselves using the skills and offer constructive feedback to each other.

On the night, and prior to the start of group discussions, descriptors were explained to participants by one of the original eight members, using a PowerPoint presentation. The descriptors in Table 1 provided the content for each PowerPoint slide. Under the guidance of each group leader, the 37 participants then deliberated over each domain in terms of its importance for a child’s spiritual development. Discussion around each domain was strictly allocated 10 minutes, with a one minute warning bell prior to the end of each ten-minute period. When all domains were discussed, participants were asked to individually rank each domain in order of perceived importance for the spiritual development of children. Participants also weighted the importance of each domain, using a four-point Likert scale (Not important at all [1], Somewhat important [2], Very important [3], Most important [4]). The concept of ranking and weighting was briefly explained before this task began. When all questions about the ranking and weighting process had been answered, this task was independently undertaken without discussion. All ranking and weighting responses were non-identifiable, with participants only being asked to provide their year of birth. Upon
completion of the ranking and weighting task, participants personally placed their response sheets in a sealed box.

Results

Participants ranked the six domains in terms of perceived importance. Twenty-seven participants (84.4%) ranked the Family domain as most important (a ranking of 1). Five respondents (15.6%) ranked Relationship with God as most important. No other domain received a ranking of 1. Twenty-one (65.6%) respondents ranked Information Technology as the least important domain (a ranking of 6), while 7 (21.9%). respondents ranked Time as least important.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of domain indices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>22.84</td>
<td>3.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship with God</td>
<td>15.19</td>
<td>5.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>10.03</td>
<td>5.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How time is used (Time)</td>
<td>6.78</td>
<td>4.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of information</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>2.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of each domain was assessed by constructing an index that was the product of the ranked importance and the weighted importance of each domain. The values of ranks were reverse scored so that a rank of 6 reflected the most important weighting while a rank of 1 reflected the least important weighting. For example, if a respondent ranked Family as ‘three’ and weighted the same domain as ‘three’ then the index value would be ‘nine’. High scores are indicative of more perceived importance. The mean scores and standard deviations for domain indices are provided in Table 2. Domains were entered into Table 2 according to their mean scores so as to reflect relative importance.

The results in Table 2 show that the domains of Family and Relationship with God were perceived as most salient by the respondents, while Time and Information Technology were perceived as least salient.

![Figure 1. Multidimensional representation of the domains](image)

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In order to understand the ordering of mean scores and standard deviations presented in Table 2, spatial relationships between the importance indices for each domain were further explored using multidimensional scaling. The fit to the data was acceptable (stress = .04, RSQ = .99). A plot of the multidimensional solution is provided in Figure 1.

To assist in the interpretation of the multidimensional scaling solution, the axes of Figure 1 were labelled “Insular – Familial” and “Communal-Individualistic” based on the location of domains within the representation. Interestingly, the domains of Relationship with God and Time are located in the Individualistic/Insular quadrant. Hence, Relationship with God is perceived as a domain of influence that is individualistic in nature. Time utilisation (Time) is also perceived as an individualistic pursuit, with its representation being characteristically insular. The domains of Friends, School and Family are located in the Communal/Familial quadrant, characterised by perceptions of family and social contexts of human interaction. The domain of Information Technology is located at the Insular pole of the Insular-Familial dimension. This domain appears isolated from other domains.

Discussion

This study sought to identify domains salient to the spiritual development of school-aged children and, based on the perspectives of adults responsible for childhood spiritual development, to determine their relative importance. Because the research focused on one Catholic parish only, the findings cannot be generalised to wider Catholic populations. Further, as indicated at the conclusion of this paper’s introduction, the participating parish represented an amalgamation of two separate parishes and one community that was part of another parish. However, in terms of ritual and tradition, there was nothing about the participating parish that made it different from other Catholic parishes. From this perspective, and respecting the amalgamation process, the findings of this research might therefore be considered within the context of a mainstream parish. These findings would be especially relevant to parish communities that were either considering or actually going through similar restructuring processes of amalgamation.

Of immediate interest was the level of importance placed as first rank of these domains. Twenty-seven participants (84.4%) ranked the domain of Family as most important, while five respondents ranked the domain of Relationship with God (15.6%) as the most important influence in the spiritual development of a child (a ranking of 1). Anecdotally, the reverse percentage values for these two domains would have been anticipated, given the traditional necessity of the role and place of God in a child’s spiritual formation. The second point of immediate interest was that twenty-one respondents (65.6%) ranked the domain of Information Technology as least important, and seven respondents ranked the domain of Time (21.9%) as least important (a ranking of six). Thus, all participants of this research appeared to place greater importance on the influence of family in a child’s spiritual development than the influence of having a relationship with God. At the same time, 87.5% of participants seemed to believe that the presence of information technology in a child’s life, together with how a child utilises his or her time, exercises the least amount of influence.

From multidimensional scaling results, the positioning of respondents’ beliefs within the four quadrants was notable. The positioning of domains within the four quadrants will be presented first from a global and then from a more specific perspective. From a global perspective, the three domains of Friends, School and Family are linked within the Familial/Communal quadrant, while the domains of Relationship with God and Time reside within the Individualistic/Insular quadrant. The domain of Information Technology resides close to the Insular pole of the Insular-Familial quadrant. The positioning of all domains appears to pull together the social influences of Friends, School and Family within the top two quadrants, while the use of Time and Relationship with God group together within the bottom two quadrants. The domain of Information Technology appears relegated more to a position in its own right rather than linked to one or more domains.
From a specific perspective, while the influence of Family appears more related to the influences of School and Friends rather than to God, Information Technology or the use of Time, it can also be seen that Family influence stands apart from the influences of School and Friends. Furthermore, although the influences of School and Friends are positioned in two different quadrants, they are related to each other in distance. Participants seemed to view the influence of a child’s school friends and the school environment as separate from the influence of a child’s family. That is, participants appeared to perceive a child as leaving home, going to school, engaging with friends, and then returning home. This perception seems reasonable in relation to the movement of a child’s daily life. Children’s experiences are different when at home compared to school; when with friends compared to parents and teachers. However, participants were explicitly asked to consider these domains from the perspective of influences over a child’s spiritual formation. It would therefore seem that participants viewed the influence of home as being partitioned from the influences of school and friends. From a child’s perspective, any partition between these domains is interesting since a child’s world moves freely across both environments, with both environments having an independent as well as an interconnected effect on a child’s spirituality. This finding is important when one considers that the pre-adolescent child (the developmental span when Sacraments of Initiation are received) is a concrete thinker. As a concrete thinker, the pre-adolescent child will look to significant adults such as parents and teachers as models for living, thinking, and believing, and be likely to accept what they hear and see in significant adults without the critique of abstract reasoning (Oser, Scarlett & Bucher, 2006; Boyatzis, 2005). Since the depth of questioning in this research was insufficient to offer an answer to this curiosity, further research investigating this finding would be useful.

The perceived interrelationship between a child’s use of time and relationship with God was of further interest. Further to this point, it was also notable that participants ranked the influence of Relationship with God as being less important than that of Family. While both domains of Time and Relationship with God were found to reside in two separate quadrants, they did nonetheless appear to cluster together when considered against the cluster of Family, Friends, School, and Information Technology, suggesting that participants saw the influence of Time and Relationship with God as unrelated in some way to socially significant influences. This broader two-fold clustering of domains is also supported by their percentage values. What participants seem to be indicating here is that they see the influence of a relationship with God and time-use as being different from the social contexts of a child’s family, friends, and school. The separation of these domain clusters is less likely to indicate comparative importance of their influences, and more likely to suggest a difference in understanding the way each cluster influences a child’s spiritual development. One interpretation is that participants viewed the child’s use of time in relation to developing a relationship with God as being a personal experience, different from how the child would use time with his or her family, friends and school. Instead of a child reaching God in his or her spiritual journey by interacting with one’s family, school experiences and peers, and by modelling the thoughts, actions and beliefs of family and peers, the child reaches God through a more private time spent with God alone, a time that is not necessarily shared by others. Therefore, did participants view a child’s spiritual formation as being confined to a personal relationship with God, excluding all other personal and social interactions - a type of “top down” understanding (Zohar & Marshall, 2000)?

The points raised in the above paragraph are of further interest when considered against the increasing tendency to involve parents and families in children’s preparation for Sacraments of Initiation. The involvement of parents and families would necessarily take into account aspects such as the parents’ beliefs about spirituality and religion and the child’s perception of these beliefs, as well as the opportunity for the child and parents/family to share their impressions of each others’ belief systems and spiritual experience. Once again, the median age of participants might shed light on this consideration, suggesting that the majority of participants would have celebrated their own Sacraments of Initiation in the context of relative isolation from the influence of parents and family (Rossiter 1999). The personal and individualistic nature of spiritual and religious development that emerged in the 1960’s and 1970’s (Rossiter, 1999) would be relevant to the spiritual and religious journeys of the majority of those who participated in this research. It is also highly possible that their preparation would have been presented and viewed as being couched in a personal and private relationship with God. If this is so, then it would seem reasonable that the
participants would not have immediately considered the importance of family, friends and school over the importance of spending time with God in private relationship. While this hypothesis cannot be extended beyond the limitations of the current participant sample, further investigation into this interpretation is warranted.

Two further positioning of domains was of interest. First, the domain of Information Technology appeared to be located within its own space, apparently unrelated to other domains. The median birth year of 1964 would have located participants as adults somewhere around 1985-1990. It was around this time that computers started to enter the lives of ordinary people, although the benefits of global communication as we currently experience them were not part of this advent. Thus, unlike children of today, these adults would not have grown up with computers and their associated information technology. Thus the allocation of Information Technology within an isolated space might have suggested a lack of participants’ insight into the potential of this medium to affect people’s thought and action as much as it does, including its potential influence on spiritual development and religious knowledge/understanding. Another way of viewing this finding might be through the adage of “out of sight, out of mind”. Indeed, when viewed in its isolated location, this domain does appear to be “out of sight” and “out of mind”. In general, then, this finding was to some extent surprising. While participants might not have grown up with computer technology, at the same time they would be surrounded by its influence today, and so would be aware of how much its influence affects not only our learning but also everyday activities ranging from sending emails, using a mobile phone, surfing the web, and drawing money from the bank. For instance, many churches today use data projection during times of communal prayer. Whether or not this finding would be replicated among children and parents warranted further investigation.

The findings of this research can be succinctly summarised as follows. First, domains identified by participants as important to a child’s spiritual development were represented by family, societal, school and technological influences in the child’s life, as well as one’s fundamental relationship with God, seen to develop within the everyday experiences of a child’s life (hence the importance of how one uses time). Second, and interestingly, participants appeared to understand that one’s relationship with God, developed over time, appeared to stand separately from human and technological influences in the child’s life. Hence there appeared to be a dichotomy present in the findings of this research. On the one hand, participants acknowledged that the presence and varying importance of a child’s daily experiences are instrumental in the child’s ability to sense and savour the spiritual and the divine. On the other hand, participants seemed to divorce human and social contexts of interaction from the child’s spiritual experience. The notion of a “yes…but” response by participants seemed evident in these research findings. That is, “yes” a child’s spiritual sense comes to life within the contexts of everyday living, “but” these contexts stand as subservient before the context of one’s (separate) relationship with God. If this understanding is correct, then one might reasonably feel concerned that the opportunities for a child to spiritually express wonder and awe within the world, and about the world, self, others and God were not being fully acknowledged or respected by those responsible for the child’s spiritual formation. The reason for undertaking this research was the concern that some programmes of children’s sacramental preparation are too strongly focused on the acquisition of knowledge at the expense of the child’s spiritual awareness. The hypotheses just presented would therefore suggest the need to further this research beyond the participant views of the current study.

Future Research

This research focused on adults who held responsibility for the spiritual formation of primary school-aged children within a Catholic parish context. A second stage of this research is currently underway. In this second stage, children and parents who are connected to the Catholic parish of the current research will also be invited to rank and weight the influential importance of the domains derived by the present research. These data will allow a comparison of rankings and weightings between children and their parents with those of the adults who participated in the current research. Focus group discussions are planned to follow on from the second stage of research, providing children and parents with the
opportunity to reflect on how identified domains influence childhood spirituality. It is also possible that these discussions will broaden the breadth of influence beyond identified domains. These qualitative data would offer a beneficial adjunct to quantitative findings, in that they would provide flesh on the bones of the quantitative data gleaned so far. The second and third stages of research will also be of special interest for a parish that is entering a new history of identity as a parish community. Finally, the development of a sacramental preparation programme for one of the three Sacraments of Initiation is an anticipated outcome of the overall research project.

References


Literature on the place and role of intelligence in spirituality is extensive and diverse, and space precludes a discussion of this aspect. However, for examples of this literature, see Zohar & Marshall, 2000; Emmons, 2000; Mayer, 2000 within the reference list.

One parish built its church in 1861, while the second parish was established in 1973. The third community was established as part of another parish in 1972. The church belonging to the second parish has already been sold to a non-Church corporation. Until the building of the new parish church is completed, these parish communities will function as “Mass centres”, after which time all parish liturgies and functions will take place in the new parish church environs.

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Marian de Souza*

PROMOTING INTER-SPRITUAL EDUCATION IN THE CLASSROOM: EXPLORING A CONCEPT AT THE HEART OF THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY AS A USEFUL STRATEGY TO ENCOURAGE FREEDOM OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICE AND BELIEF

Abstract

The beginning of the twenty-first century has witnessed the emergence, globally, of multi-faith, multi-cultural and multi-linguistic societies which, in some ways, have ‘grown’ more inclusive and interactive communities with increased tolerance levels. Nonetheless, recent global events in the political, cultural and religious spheres have resulted in division, discrimination and distrust, often between different religious groups.

This paper argues that what is needed is an inter-spiritual education for all students, one that promotes dialogue and engagement and which reflects the perennial philosophy, as discussed by Huxley (1945) where two thought patterns prevail in all the main religions: the esoteric and the exoteric. The first subscribes to the metaphysic of a divine Reality at the core of being; it is the spiritual, almost secretive face of religion and is practised by only a few adherents. The second is the exoteric form which is the public form by which the religion is usually identified, that is, through its rituals, practices, architecture and so on. Arguably, it is this form in today’s world that tends to exclusivity; it provides a boundary around its followers which promotes a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Thus, the exoteric form encourages divisiveness but the essence of esoteric thinking is connectedness. Education programs that address these two dimensions may lead to a change in consciousness where respect for and acceptance of the Other is paramount and, therefore, such programs may be more appropriate for the contemporary world. However, there is, first, a brief discussion of the context that seems to call for a program in interspiritual learning.

Introduction

This paper is a work in progress. It is the beginning point of an examination of a concept, that is, for me, relatively new. It is pertinent to the social and political contexts that determine so many aspects of the lives of people in today’s world, aspects which are significant influential factors in shaping education systems. While it focuses primarily on the Australian context, there are implications for other societies that have also become pluralistic in a relatively short space of time.

What is proposed here is a renewed education system which would include religious education. It would be a system that is responsive and relevant to the changes brought about by technological advances which have increased access to a global world and brought the happenings from the other side of the world right into our living rooms. Another element also linked to advances in science and technology is the access we now have to how the brain functions. This has clear implications for education. Third, the movement of people across the globe has resulted in societies where widely diverse cultures, religions, histories, political sentiments and languages rub shoulders with each other. Such a situation has the potential to ‘grow’ wonderfully stimulating, exciting and colourful communities. Nonetheless, with mishandling and, sometimes, quite deliberately provocative attitudes and action from authorities, there can be unfortunate consequences which become evident by a growing divisiveness, disharmony and actual antagonism towards the Other who is inevitably different. Accordingly, there are two sections to this paper:
1. A brief discussion of the social and technological contexts that determine existing structures, programs and practices of an education system, including programs for learning about religions.

2. A discussion as to why an inter-spiritual approach to learning about religion may be more appropriate for current social, cultural and political conditions.

**Part 1 – The changing context**

*Specific features that have relevance for contemporary education programs*

Contemporary Western education is, for the most part, based on an education system that has been generated by and responsive to the European context and culture of the 19th century. Over the past forty-plus years, there have been ongoing educational reviews across many countries, resulting in the rewriting of curriculum documents accompanied by an enormous expenditure of public funds. The fact that most of the new curriculum programs have a relatively limited lifespan before there is yet another review and another revision surely points to the fact that something more is necessary than just patching up a system that appears to have problems in both addressing the needs of students and the expectations of parents and societies in today’s world. This has also been the case with religious education programs in Australian Catholic schools where curriculum guidelines were introduced in the 1970s and renewed in the 1980s and 1990s. These were replaced with new curriculum frameworks in the early years of the first decade of the new millennium across many Catholic dioceses.

Accompanying these consistent curriculum renewals have been some educators who have called for radical changes to curriculum structures as opposed to the constant ‘patching up’ of existing curricula. Others have, at different times, identified inadequacies of the present systems and have outlined proposals that they believe would be more suitable to addressing the issues and requirements that characterize the new century. Generally, the problems that are noted are ones associated with a system that espouses the scientific, dualist, objective and reductionist mindset of a past era. It is one, therefore, which compartmentalizes learning, focuses on competition and assessment and gives weight to some gifts and skills over others, thus dehumanizing some students and creating divisive elements within the class community. Consequently, the call for change is usually about transforming the teaching and learning processes and environments to reflect more clearly the paradigm shifts that have been emerging over the past forty years.

*De-institutionalizing education and responding to the individual needs of the whole child*

An extensive discussion of the various theories for changes in education that have been offered over the past few decades is beyond the brief of this paper. Nonetheless, some elements contained in the ideas of a few notable educators will be identified to establish a common trend that appears to be a characteristic of some of the proposals. An early advocate for a radically changed education system was Illich (1970, 1971) who argued that when an education system is focused on the ‘institutionalization of values (it) leads inevitably to physical pollution, social polarization and psychological impotence’ (p. 9). He called for a de-schooling of education and argued that there was a need to find a new balance in the global milieu where, in place of schools, there would be networks that would allow individuals the freedom to meet with like-minded individuals to further their learning and to focus on their needs and concerns. Similarly, Freire (1970) described the education system as an instrument that was used to keep the poor in their place and to cultivate a culture of silence. He described it as a banking model which led to domination. He argued for an education system that would lead to freedom. Both these educators identified the rigid framework that determined content and processes for classroom practice with little attention being given to the real needs and interests of each student. The alternative was a system that would nurture individual strengths and aptitudes and would offer openings to further horizons.
hooks (1994), over twenty years later, also spoke of an education system that promoted the practice of freedom. She described it as a way of teaching where anyone could learn and where care for the soul of the student was paramount. Accordingly, students are taught to ‘transgress’ against racial, sexual and class boundaries in order to be free. hooks, writing from the context of the 1990s, had moved the argument further by introducing another dimension, namely, the concept of educating the soul of the student with the aim of making the students free from the social, cultural and political constraints that dominated their lives. This was, surely, a far cry from earlier educational systems in industrial societies that had focused on educating for knowledge and skills as a preparation for the work force and which led, in the late twentieth century, to terms such as the ‘knowledge society’.

Also writing in the 1990s and coming from a similar philosophical perspective, Noddings (1992) discussed the problems associated with the restrictive organization, structure and curriculum practices and processes in schools today and the negative impact on children. She proposed an alternative model for schooling, one where education was organized around centres of caring – ‘care for self, care for intimate others, care for associates and distance others, for non-human life, for human-made environments of objects and instruments, and for ideas’ (p. 47). Moffett (1994) shared this theme when he proposed a spiritual education which focused on personal growth and individualization. Echoing Freire, he claimed that when students’ learning programs and processes are determined by external authorities, the students become passive learners and stop thinking for themselves:

Homogenizing a populace through a cookie-cutter curriculum at once nullifies the diversity that ensures collective survival and thwarts the individualization on which self-realization depends. Thus, it works equally against the social and the personal, the practical and the spiritual (p. 6).

According to Moffett, spiritualizing education is intended to include everyone because:

It brings to our daily efforts to improve our life in this world a sorely needed focus on being good for one another because we’re not just thinking of ourselves. It energizes these efforts with a life force common to everything but working through each of us in a particular way characteristic of our individuality. It validates the inner life of thought and feeling and the sense of personal being in the face of depersonalization and a preoccupation with physical things. It calls us back from surfaces to essences, to whatever may be at the bottom of things or beyond our immediate kin and ken. It invites us to seek commonalities beneath common-places, for the sake of mind as well as morality. It’s a toast to wits with spirit (p.19).

The particular problem identified by these educators and others is that education systems are top heavy. They are policy driven and responsive to factors that are more about societal and economic pressures and workplace demands. Education, however, should be a process that allows each child to draw on his/her individual assets so as to reach his/her potential as a whole person; as well, it should equip him/her to engage positively with the world as each of them experiences it; and, finally, it should develop their innate capabilities to make effective and beneficial contributions to the wellbeing of future communities which, in turn, will promote their own wellbeing.

Recognizing the obvious and subtle impact of technology

Another factor that is pertinent to this discussion about proposed changes in education practices may be linked to the impact of the accelerated technological developments which took place in the latter half of the twentieth century and which helped to shrink the world by making distant and remote areas accessible. As well, natural disasters, political crises and other catastrophes have been beamed into living rooms of people giving them an urgency and immediacy that was not possible with news coverage and reporting in the past. One effect is the recognition that we cannot live in isolation from the rest of the world, that we are part of the whole and therefore have some responsibility to care and act for the Other in the world. This is an important consideration for Australians today who, because of their physical location, were once
able to maintain a certain distance and naivety from events and influences that stemmed from other parts of the world to which they felt little connection. This is no longer the case.

The explosion of information which is now available because of technology may cause some concern and anxiety amongst older generations who knew a time without it. It is however an indisputable fact that young people are ‘savvy’ and comfortable with technological environments, programs and processes and show confidence and competence in their handling of the latest gadgets. With reference to these circumstances, Prensky (2008) asserts that many teachers are wary of technology and are prone to teaching what he calls ‘backup’ education of old methods – ones that are only useful in emergencies when technology breaks down. He argues that when teachers fill their learning programs with ‘backup’ stuff, they are not teaching for the future.

Within the working lives of our students, technology will become a billion times more powerful, likely more powerful than the human brain. What will serve our kids better in 20 years – memorized multiplication tables or fundamental knowledge of programming concepts? Long division algorithms or the ability to think logically... The ability to write cursive handwriting or the ability to create meaningfully in multimedia? (pp. 2-3).

In other words, future classrooms need to examine more spaces and environments, learning and teaching strategies and a variety of resources that will be more appropriate for children whose perceptions and understandings, indeed their very ability to learn, have been shaped and determined by a world powered by technology.

**Focusing on the process of learning**

Finally, there is the improved understanding of the learning process as a result of new findings from brain research. For instance, another aspect of the information garnered from different media outlets is that it is a result of a passive learning process. The problems associated with passive learning that educators like Moffett (1994) had identified in the 1990s have been compounded by the use of new technology where different sized screens have become an increased source of education and entertainment for young people. As a result, there is a generation of children who have accumulated hours of television viewing and internet surfing and have amassed a huge amount of information which they may be able to recall but on which they are unable to act. This is, precisely, because the part of the brain that receives and memorizes information may have become well developed but connections have not been made to the part of the brain that leads a person to act on the information. Zull (2002) argues that this is the result of an imbalance in the learning process. He suggests that there are three components to the process that leads to transformative learning:

1. The first is the transformation from the past to the future. Thus, perceptions and experiences become memories which then generate ideas for future ideas and action. This means that individuals will be changed in how and what they do, that is, their world view has been changed and will impact on future actions and attitudes.

2. Second, the information processed through the perceptions and sensations comes from an external source but becomes transformed within the individual as it merges with previous learning so it becomes new knowledge and understanding. Thus the learner has been transformed from receiver to producer.

3. Third, there is the transformation of power where the control of the learning passes from others to the individual. The individual is now knowledgeable about what s/he needs for further learning and can make appropriate decisions about how s/he will attain this. Thus the previous position of weakness and dependence on the part of the learner has been transformed through the learning process to one of strength and independence. (see pp 33-34 for a more detailed explanation).
Zull asserts that these changes happen at the same point in time, ‘a juncture defined by the structure of the brain itself... this juncture is the fulcrum on which information is leveraged into understanding’ (p. 34). He describes the structure of the brain as having two parts, one for receiving, remembering and integrating information from external sources and the other for acting, modifying, creating and controlling. With passive learning, it is only the first part of this structure that is activated so the learning becomes imbalanced.

A further matter for deliberation is the knowledge of how the parallel information processes of the brain leads to conscious and non-conscious learning (de Souza, 2009, 2010). Most education systems have paid scanty attention to the latter and yet it has a role to play in encouraging the development of stereotypes which can lead to hidden prejudices and biases (Myers, 2002; Wilson, 2002). Needless to say, this is a significant factor in pluralist societies where ‘them-and-us’ scenarios often arise. There is also the issue wherein the collective non-conscious learning of a community can be manipulated by authorities and community leaders to promote the superiority of one race over another, one religious culture over another, and so on. Hence, the ability to identify the negative impulses that may be generated by one’s own non-conscious learning becomes an important consideration for educators and others in the field. Furthermore, it is the combination of both conscious and non-conscious learning that leads to intuitive, imaginative and creative ideas which, once again, becomes important in the planning of learning programs and environments. These elements are particularly important when learning about different religions since the positive aspects of conscious and non-conscious learning can lead the individual to be open to and inclusive of the Other and develop empathy with and compassion for the Other. Such sentiments are more likely to create in the individual an interest in learning about the religious and spiritual culture of the Other.

Summary

These factors all herald the urgency for new educational systems to be put in place, ones which will be more fitting and meaningful for the times. We need to appreciate that learning environments should no longer be restricted to traditional classroom spaces, or even traditional school spaces. We need to recognize that there may be alternative spaces that could be designed and used more effectively to promote learning through the use of technology. This is particularly relevant for the learning space of the religious education classroom which is, often, space, time and content bound thus disabling the development of an empathetic knowledge and understanding of religion and what it can mean in the lives of its adherents. Without such empathy the emotional, devotional, passionate and deeply spiritual aspects of religion can remain unrealized.

While the current system of education is an area that requires investigation for the broader curriculum, there are also elements that need to be examined that could lead to changes in the approaches to learning in religious education. In particular, how can technology be used to improve access to people and practices of other faiths and cultural traditions or to create more inviting and inclusive learning spaces? This should be an important consideration in most pluralist countries where the large movement of people across the globe over the past few decades have brought individuals, often for the first time, into close contact with the Other who is often culturally, religiously and racially different. It is particularly significant in subjects like religion for the learning to be holistic since religion has the potential to engage the individual at the intellectual, emotional and spiritual dimensions of their lives. If learning about religious difference remains merely at a cognitive level, it may not have a lasting impact, one that touches the deepest levels of a person. Potentially, it leaves the learner detached from the object of learning, being restricted to a cerebral exercise and so offering little opportunity for the individual to truly engage or develop empathy with the Other.

These are just some of the factors that point to the need for new learning structures and spaces for programs that aim to promote a study of religion. Moreover, they highlight the need for such programs to be embedded in whole new frameworks which are more meaningful and relevant to the lives of young
people and which may help them develop into active, thoughtful and empathetic citizens in their future communities.

Part 2 - An inter-spiritual approach as a possible way forward to learning about religions

Over the past few decades, curriculum planners in Australia have attempted to respond to the multicultural nature of contemporary society by introducing various elements across the curriculum that reflect diversity. Nonetheless, they have failed to recognize the importance of religion in the lives of many new Australians and the subsequent influence this has on their cultural beliefs and practices. Accordingly, learning about religion has not been included in the core curriculum for all children in public education systems in Australia. Without such learning, young Australians do not always develop appropriate knowledge and empathetic understanding about the different religions and cultures that have become part of society. Not surprisingly, when children meet others who are religiously and culturally different, they perceive them as ‘them’ rather than someone who may be one of ‘us’.

While faith based schools in Australia do have religious education as part of their core curriculum, the main intention is to promote knowledge of their own faith tradition. In some programs, there may be a unit of study that looks at world religions but this is not consistently the case across primary and secondary levels. Furthermore, many RE teachers have limited engagement or encounters with people from different faith traditions so that they teach not only from an outsider’s viewpoint but also an outsider who has been raised in another faith tradition, often a Western Christian faith tradition. This may compromise their ability to impart accurate knowledge and understanding about a different faith tradition (see Buchanan, 2010) and, despite their best efforts, the notion of ‘them-and-us’ may be maintained.

In the 1980s, the final school certificate in most Australian states introduced a study of religion as an optional subject that senior students could choose to study, usually in their final year of schooling or sometimes spread over the final two years. For the most part, these programs were based on the Typological and Critical approach of Moore & Habel (1982) and Lovat (1989) respectively, which in turn, was influenced by Smart’s phenomenological approach (1968, 1973). While the phenomenological approach did articulate cognitive and experiential aspects, the restrictions of the classroom environment meant that, in practice, the focus was largely on cognitive learning and there were few components that attempted to incorporate affective/experiential learning.

While British educators have spent years examining different ways to approach a study of religion in their schools in response to their multicultural and multi-religious context, neither the phenomenological approach nor the ones that have followed, such as the interpretive approach (Jackson & McKenna, 2005; Jackson 1997) or the conceptual and interdisciplinary approach (Ericker 2010), are always appropriate for the Australian context. Apart from the highly charged secular nature of Australian society, which is a distinct characteristic and which, inevitably, provokes a level of hostility towards any perceived links between education and religion from a significant percentage of the public, schools across Australia can range from ones which show little evidence of a multicultural society to ones that can have upward of fifty different cultures, including new arrivals, represented in their school community. Hence, some approaches that depend on children’s experiences, both religious and cultural, may never get beyond the point of learning about the dominant religious culture. There needs to be a distinct approach to learning about different religious and spiritual cultures in Australia that will work for all students regardless of their background and regardless of the region where their school is situated. To this end, I am proposing an inter-spiritual approach.

Why inter-spirituality?

I would like to begin this section of the paper by reflecting on a question that was asked of me by a colleague at a conference for religious education academics. I had been discussing why religious educators
needed to note the difference between religion and spirituality and described a relational continuum that reflected the individual’s journey to spiritual maturity.

One of the participants in my session asked me the following question:

What about suicide bombers? These are people deeply religious who are deeply connected to their God. Where are they on this continuum?

To elucidate my position, by drawing on relevant literature and some early research findings I have argued that spirituality pertains to the relational dimension of being; it is the connectedness that an individual feels to everything other than self (de Souza 2003; 2004). Individuals pass along a relational continuum where, at one end, they are quite separate from the Other but, as they pass along the continuum, they grow closer to and feel connectedness and empathy with others who are the same as themselves; in other words, with their families and communities. Further along, their life experiences may take them forward to feel connected to others who are different from themselves, and they may develop some feelings of empathy with them. Logically then, at the other end of the continuum, the individual becomes one with the Other, Self becomes part of the whole which comprises the Other. The individual has passed the point of relationality and entered the reality of Ultimate Unity. Some religious traditions may describe this Ultimate Reality as the Kingdom of God, Nirvana, Dao, Brahman, and so on.

Religiosity, on the other hand, may be used to describe those who live their lives as adherents of a religious tradition. Thus, their worldviews are shaped by the beliefs and practices which, in turn, are determined by the history, doctrines and regulations of that tradition. As well, their expressions of spirituality may be restricted by the same doctrines and regulations since barriers are created between them and others who do not share their faith, thereby impeding their relationality or connectedness to the Other. Arguably, people who get caught up in the doctrine, the rules and rituals of their faith traditions are, indeed, religious people but they may not be too far along their journey towards wholeness where they experience being one with everything other than self.

To return to the question, I realized that, of course, my colleague’s question actually provided an excellent example to support my stance about the distinction between religion and spirituality. Suicide bombers may, indeed, be deeply religious people; they could be said to be steeped in religiosity. They may be deeply connected to their personal God or, indeed, their particular concept of God, and they may live their lives according to their religious beliefs and doctrines. However, they also present a classic example of people who are religious and not spiritual. If spirituality is about connectedness, about the experience of transcendence and being part of the whole, about living as a relational being, then spiritual people would not be able to commit such acts of desecration against God’s creation because they would be too deeply connected to it. They would perceive that any act that destroyed another would also destroy them. Unlike suicide bombers who apparently believe they will be saved for paradise as they envision it, a spiritual person would realize that they are not separate from the other and the other’s destination will be the same as their own. In other words, a spiritual person would understand the pronouncement in Donne’s 17th Meditation: Ask not for whom the bell tolls...
Drawing on the above incident, I would like to highlight a few issues that support the notion of an inter-spiritual approach to learning about religions.

An interspiritual approach that is inspired by Huxley’s (1945) concept of the perennial philosophy

To begin with, an interreligious/faith or multi-religious/faith approach is usually a cognitive study and begins with the external features of religion. A study of religion which is engendered by these approaches is based on recognizing religious difference by identifying the various phenomena that make them different. In other words, it starts at the surface of the religion and focuses on knowledge about the tradition and it aims to develop skills to analyse, categorize, evaluate, and so on. Any experiential learning, that is, the notion that one should try and understand and appreciate the religion from the perspective and experience of a believer within the tradition, is unlikely to reach any level of depth, given the constraints and reality of the classroom environment. These latter would include the time allowed for the lesson, the interest of the students, the knowledge and enthusiasm of the teacher, the resources available and so on. In other words, while the knowledge base of the students may be improved, it can remain a clinical and diluted learning experience, with little evidence of the emotion, passion and spirit that religions can inspire. Therefore, the approach to learning about religions that I am proposing works in reverse, namely, from the inside out. It is about inter-spirituality which focuses on the connectedness between all individuals which may, potentially, promote a deeper understanding amongst students and which may lead to transformative knowledge and changed attitudes.

Such an approach would draw on the thinking contained in Huxley’s (1945) description of the perennial philosophy when he suggested that two thought patterns prevail in all the main religions as well as in many Indigenous systems of belief: these are the exoteric and the esoteric. The first is the outer appearance of the religion, the public face that allows it to be identified as a particular faith tradition. It is composed of the doctrines, the rules, the rituals and practices, as well as the buildings that signify the places of worship. It is the exoteric form of religion that provides the content which is foundational to the current approaches to religious education that were referred to earlier.

The second face of religion is the more secretive side and often has fewer members than the exoteric version. It is the metaphysic that recognizes:

a divine Reality substantial to the world of things and lives and minds; the psychology that finds in the soul something similar to, or even identical with, divine Reality; the ethic that places man’s final end in the knowledge of the immanent and transcendent Ground of all being (Huxley, 1945, p. 9).

Furthermore, Huxley contends:

Direct knowledge of the Ground cannot be had except by union, and union can be achieved only by the annihilation of the self-regarding ego, which is the barrier separating the ‘thou’ from the ‘That’ (p. 57).

In his preface to the second edition of his book Forgotten Truths, Huston Smith (1992) supports Huxley’s thesis when he identifies a pattern common to human belief systems, ‘a remarkable unity underlying the surface differences’ (p. v).

Arguably, it is the exoteric form of religion that tends to exclusivity since it provides a boundary around its followers which promotes a sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’. Newberg & Waldman (2006), writing from a neuroscientific perspective, further highlight how brain research has shown that a belief system can encourage individuals to maintain a boundary to protect them from others who are different. They argue that:

emotions not only help us to maintain our beliefs but also defend us against other beliefs that threaten our worldview. When someone comes along with a different belief, what do we usually do? First, we
dismiss him or her. After all, our brain has already done a lot of work establishing what we should and should not believe in, and the neural circuits have been set (neurons that fire together wire together, or so we currently believe) (p. 34).

Furthermore, they cite Spinoza’s rejection of the Cartesian notion of dualism and his offer of an alternative theory that the human person could intuitively move beyond personal beliefs and draw closer to an ultimate reality and truth. In such a state, the individual could experience ‘the essence of an infinite, indivisible “substance”, a term that Spinoza used to simultaneously embrace God, nature and the sum total of reality itself’ (p. 41). Newberg and Waldman point out that, while Spinoza’s thinking was not well received in the 17th century, it is more appropriate to the understanding of spirituality in the contemporary world, particularly where people have moved away from religious influences and begun to embrace different expressions of spirituality which they appear to find more relevant and authentic (O’Murchu, 1997; Tacey, 2003). As well, Newberg & Waldman confirm that Spinoza’s thinking correlates with the understanding, today, of the processes used by the brain to create a holistic image of the world by assembling disparate pieces to compose a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts.

In tracing the historical evidence of the human person’s search for a transcendent reality, Armstrong (2009) asserts that ‘religion was not something tacked on to the human condition, an optional extra imposed on people by unscrupulous priests. The desire to cultivate a sense of the transcendent may be the defining human characteristic.’ (p. 19). Through ritualistic action they learnt to transcend their ordinary lives, what the Greeks call ekstasis, a “stepping outside” the norm (p. 4). She further argues that the ultimate reality was not a personalized god. Rather, it was a transcendent mystery, the depths of which could never be comprehended. Armstrong also identifies the fact that, while different faith traditions have their own ‘unique genius and distinctive vision: each its peculiar flaws’ there are some fundamental principles common to most faith traditions: ‘when one loses all sense of duality and is “oblivious to everything within or without”’ (p. 31).

There are other writers and theorists who will further inform the thesis contained in this paper but the general thrust that has been identified here provides the initial foundation on which an argument for an inter-spiritual approach to learning about religions is offered, an inside out process. If the exoteric form of religion encourages divisiveness but the essence of esoteric thinking is connectedness and unity, an approach to learning about religions should start with the esoteric face of religion and move on to the exoteric dimension. In other words, the spirituality and religiosity of faith traditions will be identified as distinct entities and an aim of the study will be to understand and appreciate the distinct roles and expressions of each in the lives of adherents. This is necessary in pluralist communities if there is a desire or intention to promote understanding and appreciation of diversity as the first step towards acceptance and inclusion of a different ‘Other’.

As well, there should be recognition of the complementarity of different world views from East and West that will enhance an understanding of the human condition that led to the construction of religious frameworks. Again, this is an important consideration in the contemporary world where Eastern and Western cultural traditions may find themselves living as neighbours. As well, such recognition would reflect the shifting mind set from the twentieth century to the twenty-first. Harman (1998) summed this up well when he argued that humans have created their knowledge systems to reflect and shape their societies which accounts for the differences between East and Western world views. Certainly, in the past few hundred years, the West has assumed a certain confidence and superiority that its scientific view of reality is essentially correct and all other views are wrong. However, Harman argues that there is a need to consider that other views may perceive reality through different cultural windows which emphasize other aspects of the total human experience. This would make them complementary rather than wrong. As Hull (2009) states:
In spite of the difficulties in encountering them, we should take heart from the fact that the many human worlds remain human. After all what we have in common as human beings should enable us to enter every human world for nothing that is human is foreign to us (p. 32).

Conclusion

To sum up, a study of the concept that underlies different traditions, which Huxley (1945) identifies, may make a good starting point, followed by the way and the reasons why religious frameworks developed and changed, depending on the cultural context within which they were born. Such a study will not reduce the differences inherent in the exoteric form of religions but will emphasize them since they are what make the religion distinctive, the public face that is recognizable. However, by providing students with the opportunity to discover the underlying unity of thought that is at the core of the human person’s search for a transcendent reality, there is less chance that ‘us and them’ attitudes will develop. The other possible outcome is that students may be more open to and accepting of the religious beliefs and practices of the Other. Education programs that address these two faces of religion may lead to a change in consciousness where knowledge of the underlying unity that links self with the Other may promote respect for and inclusion of the Other and, therefore, be more appropriate for a 21st century education system.

References:

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1 This is in particular reference to Huxley’s (1945) concept of the perennial philosophy and this is discussed further in this paper.

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TRANSFORMATIVE CATHOLIC PEDAGOGY – A TEACHER INSERVICE AND EVALUATION PROGRAM IN THE DIOCESE OF WILCANNIA-FORBES (PART ONE)

Abstract

This two-part article aims to outline and provide selected working examples of one trialled approach to mapping the total life of a Catholic school. This approach is entitled ‘Transformative Catholic Pedagogy’ (hereafter TCP or ‘Six Circles’). As its various titles suggest, it refers to a process of mapping six spheres or circles of involvement across the total curriculum or life of a school, ranging from Grace-, God-, Jesus Christ-, and Reign of God-images, through the foundational characteristics of a Catholic school, and onward through the spheres of spirituality, pedagogy, teaching strategies and professional development/formation.

This TCP framework has been employed between 2008 and 2010 to map eighteen primary schools in the Diocese of Wilcannia-Forbes, as well as to map the six dimensions in primary and secondary schools, and Catholic Education Offices, in other dioceses.

This article (Part One) provides an introduction to TCP and outlines the components of Circle One. The ensuing article, Part Two, addresses TCP Circles Two to Six, maps key themes across the Six Circles, and summarises teacher evaluations on the process. Finally, this article’s contents and insights are counterpointed throughout with quotes on personal, spiritual and social transformation from Franciscan Richard Rohr, in this author’s view one of the most significant Christian commentators today on these and other topics.

Introduction

The school mapping approach of ‘Transformative Catholic Pedagogy’ (hereafter TCP or ‘Six Circles’) is one that seeks to map six areas of major activity and consciousness across the total curriculum or life of a school. In pictorial format (refer to the template in Figure 1 below) it consists of three inner circles that relate to the ‘being’ or contemplation of the Catholic school (ethos, charism, spirituality, core vision and mission characteristics). It also comprises three outer circles that describe the ‘doing’ or action of the school (pedagogy, teaching strategies, and professional development/spiritual formation activity).

In the context of this focus on ‘transformative Catholic pedagogy’, it is significant to observe that the key words associated with this title are strongly attested in documents on The Holy See website. This website and its connecting links, accessed on 10 June 2010, use the word ‘transform’ in various contexts 890 times across church documents, papal speeches, prayers and other official documents. The word ‘transformation’ is used in the same contexts 1060 times. The word ‘pedagogy’, itself often associated with transformation and education, is used 242 times (The Holy See, 2010).

To return to the Circle diagram, why have these particular circle themes been chosen compared with other possible themes? The principal reason is that, in light of the Catholic Scriptures on the topics of encounter, conversion and discipleship; and Tradition on the subjects of education and evangelization, these themes seem to be among the most important that impact upon the life of the school. As this booklet and its sources make clear, the themes that give their name to the circles are mentioned again and again (either directly or as synonyms) in the Scriptures, in the spiritual writings and commentaries of the Church, and especially across a broad spectrum of Church documents.
More specifically, the mapping of each individual Circle is as follows:

- * Circle 1 – introductory discussion about the nature of God’s Grace; plus mapping of key words relating to God as Trinity, Jesus Christ as teacher, and the Reign or Kingdom of God;
- Circle 2 – the key characteristics of a Catholic School (outlined by Archbishop J. Michael Miller (year of publication));
- Circle 3 – the vision, mission, charism, spirituality and philosophy of the school;
- Circle 4 – the pedagogical cycle of the entire school;
- Circle 5 – the range of key learning strategies (teaching, learning, assessment and reporting) of the whole school;
- Circle 6 – the past, present and future planned cycle of Professional Development and Spiritual Formation (refer to Part Two for the detailed composition each Circle).

**Figure 1 – TCP or ‘Six Circles’ mapping template**

Why map the Six Circles?

It is important to point out at the beginning of inservices on the Six Circles model a series of reasons for why mapping of these themes is attempted by schools in the first place. Whilst the thinking between such reasons becomes clearer after schools complete the actual mapping, nevertheless, I like to adopt Stephen Covey’s approach of ‘beginning with the end in mind’ by listing insights for participating staffs from various schools about the advantages of completing this type of mapping. The principal reasons are:
1. The advantage of mapping who you are & what you do – enlarged to A3 colour page this gives a broad-ranging “snapshot” of the school;
2. Aligning “being” with “doing” for your school – this provides not only a panoramic view of the ‘total curriculum’ of the school but beyond this to its vision, mission and spirituality;
3. It takes the school’s spirituality, philosophy, vision and mission seriously and doesn’t ignore or patronise them as “a waste of time” (e.g. prayer, liturgy, meditation);
4. Circle Two gives a unified purpose across all Catholic schools through the lens of Archbishop Miller’s five hallmarks of the Catholic school;
5. The mapping chart can be used for planning pedagogy and future professional development;
6. The circles can be used to track and revise the school’s Vision & Mission and compared with that of the local diocese;
7. The chart can help explain to new parents and teachers what the school is about;
8. It can be used for (re-)designing the school motto and crest;
9. Perhaps most importantly, it can be used to anchor and chart progress before, during and after School Review;
10. Six Circles is the ONLY known single chart or instrument that gives the “big picture” of what a school is about, without looking at a range of large documents, and that weighs the “being” aspects of a school against its “doing” aspects. As such, it can be updated, mapped and expanded continually.

What is ‘Transformative Catholic Pedagogy’?

‘A lot of people think that transformation means becoming more pious or becoming more law abiding or...more polite. By transformation I mean a different consciousness...looking at reality in a different way [with new eyes], which will certainly lead you to operate in highly moral ways’ (Richard Rohr, 2007, podcast, Episode 3)

The aim of this section is to describe the three components of the title ‘Transformative Catholic Pedagogy’. Subsequent sections will outline scriptural paradigms of transformation, detail components of the Six Circles, and summarise teacher evaluations of the mapping project.

Transform, Transformation

Firstly, the TCP framework implies and invites ‘transformation’. The Collins English Dictionary and Thesaurus defines this as ‘change or alteration, especially a radical one’ and relates the word in various contexts to ‘a change in position or direction’. The thesaurus entries on the same page list synonyms such as ‘conversion, metamorphosis, radical change, renewal, revolution, transfiguration, [and] transmutation’ (Sinclair, 2003, p. 1268). Such definitions and synonyms imply that transformation is not simply a ‘one off’ event but more a formative process in which a person or staff community are challenged to change, look at things in a new way, take risks, and ask generative or fertile questions in relation to the ‘being’ and ‘doing’ of their school. It is significant to note that the word ‘radical’, used above in relation to ‘transformation’ derives from the Latin word radix meaning ‘a root’. ‘Radical’ in its original sense therefore does not support the modern assignation of excessive zeal or political activism, but refers more accurately to the idea of returning to the source, original inspiration, or foundational vision of something – a religious vision, dream, movement, system or model (Sinclair, 2003, p.974).

This sense of ‘transformation’ as inherent risk and radical change is effectively captured in a poem by Christopher Logue:
Catholic, Catholic Christian tradition

The word ‘Catholic’ is understood throughout this article in two primary senses. Firstly, in a more specific way with reference to the Catholic Christian tradition and its attendant approaches to scripture, liturgy, ethics and morality, social justice, sacraments, anthropology, prayer and other dimensions. Secondly, in a more generic, holistic way as ‘universal, applying to all people, broad-minded and liberal’. This is an understanding based on the Greek word katholikos meaning ‘universal’, at its root derived from kata + holos meaning ‘according to the whole’ (Sinclair, 2003, p. 180). Thomas Groome affirms this broader understanding of the Catholic Christian tradition when he asserts: ‘I tend to favor the term “Catholic Christian” throughout…to signal that the Catholic tradition is a deep river from which all Christians [and others] can refresh themselves as desired’ (1998, p. 23).

In the same work, Groome writes: ‘I will often cite St. Augustine for this conviction [of ‘Catholicity’ as openness to truth and hospitality for all], so let me endnote it here. Openness to the truth as an aspect of Catholicity was a frequent theme throughout Augustine’s writings. A classic statement is in his text De Doctrina Christiana—“All good and true Christians should understand that truth, wherever they may find it, belongs to their God.” Saint Augustine, Teaching Christianity, 144’ (1998, fn. 31, p. 65).

This sense of ‘Catholic’ embraces all that does not conflict with the broad tenets of a tolerant, inclusive, and compassionate Catholic world view. It is crystallized in the gospel event where Jesus’ disciples complain about ‘competition’ from a local exorcist casting out devils in Jesus’ name. Jesus replies:

“Do not stop him; for no one who does a deed of power in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. Whoever is not against us is for us. For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose their reward” (Mk 9:39-41 New RSV).

Pedagogy

Finally, let us examine the term ‘pedagogy’ – which simply cannot be reduced to its foundational meaning of ‘the principles, practice, or profession of teaching’ (Sinclair, 2003, p. 866). It is interesting to note that the word derives from the Greek paidagogos meaning a ‘slave who looked after his master’s son’, or the leader of the boy or son (Ibid). This implies the twin concepts of self-emptying (kenosis) or humility, along with leadership or the process of leading another on to new insights and wisdom.

However, ‘pedagogy’ also means much more than this. In the context of this diocese’s work in Catholic schools, ‘pedagogy’ (as well as the related term ‘education’) insinuates what Groome calls an engagement
of people’s heads (all one’s mind), hearts (all one’s heart and soul), and hands (all one’s strength). At the same time it stresses the cognitive, affective, and behavioural aspects of the human person. It is therefore a way of the hands, heart and head, a way in which the learner or student is informed, formed and transformed as part of their ‘being-in-the-world’ (Groome, 2002, p. 178; Groome, 1991, p. 2).

‘Pedagogy’ is typically inquiry-based, constructivist, and transformational in nature. Therefore, it seeks to effect the movement of teachers and students from transmission, on through transaction, and then ultimately to transformation (Miller, 2007, pp. 6-14). Finally, at its deepest level, it aspires to cultivate love, compassion and hope in the soul and whole person of a child, to encourage students to continually ask fertile or generative questions, and to enlarge the capacity and potential for every person and for the relationships between persons (McKeown, 2008, p. 1226; Berg, 2007, p. 3; Yero, 2002, pp. 1-2; McShane, 2007, p. 1; Postman & Weingartner, 1969, pp. 31-33; Harpaz, 2005, pp.140-157; O’Sullivan Morrell & O’Connor, 2002, p. xvii).

“Transformative Catholic Pedagogy”

Summing up then, the framework of ‘transformative Catholic pedagogy’ refers to the context of a broad-minded, expansive Catholic Christian tradition in which transformation is able to take place. This transformation occurs beyond the boundaries of transmission and transaction, and is characterized by radical change, risk-taking, renewal, and the shaking and re-orientation of one’s foundational tenets, beliefs and world view. This in turn transpires within a holistic pedagogy which itself endeavours to transform the theory and practice of any teaching that occurs by stressing the inter-relationship between head, heart and hands, or between the cognitive, affective and behavioural capacities. This pedagogy is constructivist and inquiry-based, and at its deepest level, aspires to cultivate love, compassion and hope in the whole being of a child, to encourage students to continually ask fertile or generative questions, and to enlarge the capacity and potential for every person and for the relationships between persons, and their ‘being-in-the-world’.

Such an understanding of transformative pedagogy is affirmed by a range of other academic theorists including Maddox (2009), and Mezirow et al (2000). Religious reformers such as St. Clare of Assisi also support these understandings of transformative pedagogy: ‘Transform your whole being into the image of the Godhead itself through contemplation’ (cited in Kun, 2008, June 1). Parker Palmer associates transformation with a sustained exploration of the meaning of community, teaching and learning for transformation, and the importance of nonviolent social change (2009, passim).

Similar understandings are also broadly present in the writings of other practitioners in various contexts. Peck (2002) applies similar understandings and principles in the context of powerful learning; Meyers (2008) likewise applies them in the context of transformative pedagogy for online teaching; Nagda, Gurin and Lopez (2003) link transformative pedagogy with democracy and social justice; while Elsdon-Clifton (2008) examines the tension of discomfort and support within transformative pedagogy, along with its potential to shift, transform, and inform the learning of pre-service teachers.

In my view, one of the best working definitions of Catholic Christian transformation (and by inference transformative pedagogy) is provided by the Center for Christian Leadership:

[Christian transformation is] The process by which God forms Christ’s character in believers by the ministry of the Spirit, in the context of community, and in accordance with biblical standards. This process involves the transformation of the whole person in thoughts, behaviours, and styles of relating with God and others. It results in a life of service to others and witness for Christ (‘A Model of Spiritual Transformation’, 2006, website, p. 2).
Patterns of transformation in Scripture – seeing with new eyes, acting in new ways

‘...information is not necessarily transformation...We need transformed people today, and not just people with answers’
(Rohr, 2008, p. 7)

Before outlining the components of each of the Six Circles, it is important to acknowledge and recognise some basic patterns of transformation and transformative pedagogy presented by commentators, along with some examples from the Jewish and Christian Scriptures – namely that process whereby God calls individuals and communities to a series of experiences or encounters focused on: hearing God’s call, feeling overwhelmed and disoriented, feeling unworthy and the need for purification, questioning and testing by God, and finally a challenge to involve oneself and one’s community in transformative service, mission and witness to God’s revelation.

This overall pattern of encounter, revelation/disturbance and mission is first of all evident in what the General Directory for Catechesis refers to as the ‘pedagogy of God, source and model of the pedagogy of the faith’ (Congregation for the Clergy, 1997, pp. 155-156). This document points out that the ‘pedagogy of God’ is present throughout history, is based on relationship with God as merciful Father, teacher and sage, and serves to liberate the person. To this end, God acts as ‘a creative and insightful teacher, [who] transforms events in the life of [God’s] people into lessons of wisdom, adapting [Godself] to the diverse ages and life situations’. The aim of the catechist and teacher then becomes ‘to help a person to encounter God, [which] means to emphasize above all the relationship that the person has with God so that he can make it his own and allow himself to be guided by God’ (1997, pp. 155-156).

This same paradigm emerges from Anthony J. Gittins’ studies of call, mission and discipleship. Gittins writes about the manner in which God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit calls us to life-long and life-transforming discipleship. Jesus’ challenge of discipleship and mission ‘was not only intended for those who followed Jesus in his own lifetime but also those who, generations later, would learn from his teaching: disciple...simply means ‘a learner’ (Mt 11:29). Radical (from radix, root) discipleship must be thorough-going, committed, and deeply rooted; that is, it must become a way of life. He continues:

...[Therefore] the life of a disciple must be reoriented to Jesus by being countercultural, Spirit-led and Jesus-like, but explicitly in one’s own time, place, and circumstances. Such discipleship requires imagination, as well as loyalty, risk as well as prudence, and a movement beyond one’s comfort zone, an outreach from the center to the edge, to an encounter with marginalized people and broken lives, as well as to unimagined opportunity and the potential for personal transformation... Looking cumulatively at the [Gospel writers’] accounts of the life of Jesus and his encounters, we can identify three stages of discipleship, or three steps that can move a person from going his or her own way to the following of Jesus, the Way of discipleship. These are (1) the call or encounter itself, (2) the disturbance or displacement it creates, and (3) the resulting sending forth or commissioning (2008, pp. 3, 10).

Jerome H. Neyrey observes a similar and complementary cyclical pattern whilst using different descriptive terms for his five observed phases: (1) Introduction; (2) Confirmation, Reaction and Reassurance based on the call; (3) Commission given to the person; (4) Objection, request for Reassurance, provision of a Sign as validation of the call; (5) Conclusion and Further Mission is given (2006, pp. 25-30).

These same characteristics are reflected in scriptural accounts of encounter and transformation. These characteristics are particularly evident in the call and conversion narratives focused on a range of biblical figures – from Abraham to Jonah, and from the woman at the well to the vision of Peter at the house of Cornelius. The typical five-stage transformative narrative involving these figures is:
1. Experiencing God and hearing God’s call;
2. Being initially overwhelmed and then disturbed or disoriented;
3. Experiencing feelings of not being worthy, followed by a phase of purification;
4. Encountering trials, questioning and testing by God and the community;
5. Being called by God to an ongoing response and mission; being ‘sent by God to others out into the world’.

Two examples of this five-step process from each of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures will I hope suffice to validate it as a general pattern, along with references to parallel biblical accounts. In the Jewish Scriptures the call of Abram to become Abraham can be patterned as follows: (1) Abram is directed: ‘Go from your country, your kindred and your father’s house to a land that I will show you’ (Gen 12:1-3); (2) After a long journey, Abram journeys by stages towards Negeb, where deep sleep and terrifying darkness fall upon him (Gen 12:4-9; 15:12, 17); (3) He asks God: ‘How am I to know...’; he is blessed by Melchizedek, and his name is changed to Abraham (Gen 15:8; 14:17f; 17:5); (4) His trials and testing emerge with the Sign of the Covenant, and God’s command to sacrifice his only son by Sarah, Isaac (Gen 17; 22:1-19); (5) His ongoing response, mission or ‘sending out’ take place when Abraham is sent to a foreign land, he is made the ancestor of a multitude of nations, and intervenes in the initial sparing of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 17:5f; 18:16-33). The same general pattern applies in the Jewish Scriptures to the calls of Moses (Ex 3:1-4:17); Isaiah (Isa 6:1-13); Jeremiah (Jer 1:1-10); Ezekiel (Ezek 1:1-26); Samuel (1 Sam 3:1-21); the patriarch Joseph (Gen 37-45); and the runaway prophet Jonah (Jon 1-4).

In the Christian Scriptures, one example reflecting the same pattern is the narrative of the huge catch of fish and call to discipleship in Luke 5:1-11, mirrored in John 21:1-11. The specific stages are: (1) The crowd is pressing upon Jesus to hear God’s word. He gets into Simon’s boat and continues to teach them; (2) Jesus instructs Simon to let out his nets for a catch. Simon has doubts. The huge catch overwhelms Simon and his crew; (3) Peter falls down before Jesus: ‘Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man’; (4) Ongoing trials, questions and challenges as Jesus teaches them the meaning of mission and discipleship; (5) Jesus says: ‘Do not be afraid, from now on you will be catching people’. The disciples are sent out on mission to the ends of the earth. The same general pattern applies in the Christian Scriptures to the call of the first disciples (Mt 4:18-22), the Transfiguration (Mt 17:1-3); when Jesus turns water into wine at Cana (Jn 2:1-11); the Woman at the Well (Jn 4:1-39); Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mt 26:36-46); the call of Saul to become Paul (1 Thess 1:9; Acts 9:1-31), and the conversion of Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10:1-48).

Circle 1 – Grace, God as Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, the Reign or Kingdom of God

‘To be capable of mutual indwelling, or coinherence, means that religion has achieved its full and final purpose’
(Rohr, 2008, p. 214)

Introduction

Circle One is concerned with the very essence of “Being” and “Contemplation” in a Catholic school. As such, it is focused on those central components that give life, vision and direction to the Catholic school – the Grace of God, the acknowledgement and worship of God as indwelling and relational Holy Trinity, the active presence of Jesus Christ the Son of God, and the reality which he preached and lived out – the Reign or Kingdom of God. A statement linking these key concepts within Circle One is included at the end of this section. In what follows I have included key quotes and references only, those that seem to connect with teachers and promote deeper reflection and discussion.
It is crucial for the successful and integrated mapping of the Six Circles for teachers to understand that the theological concept of ‘Grace’ underpins everything that they are, believe and do. Grace is understood here as the pure gift of God’s presence and power that allows everything in life to be and to transpire.

Grace is the foundation in God through Christ of all being, doing and living. It is God’s totally undeserved, unmerited and free gift to us in many forms. ‘Grace’ comes from the Latin word meaning ‘favour’ and refers to ‘any undeserved gift or help freely and lovingly provided by God, but above all the utterly basic gift of being saved in Christ through faith (Rom 3:21,...)’ (O’Collins & Farrugia, 2000, p. 98).

During reflection on this part of Circle One, I encourage teachers to reflect on selected aspects of God’s grace such as - Grace is the foundation in God through Christ of all existence; Divine Grace builds on human nature; Grace means ‘gift’ or ‘favour’; Grace is the free, undeserved, unrepayable gift(s) given by God; God’s eternal loving of us and sustaining of us is pure grace; and Grace allows us to become free children of God.

Mapping of all Six Circles is also an opportunity for teachers to spend quiet time reading and sharing insights, by reflecting on key quotes such as:

God’s love is total, unconditional, absolute and forever. The state of grace – God’s attitude toward us – is eternal. We are the ones who change. Sometimes we are able to believe that God loves us unconditionally, absolutely and forever. That’s grace! And sometimes because we get down on ourselves, and carry guilt and fear and burdens, we are not able to believe that God loves us. Biblically, that’s the greatest sin: not to believe the good news, not to accept the unconditional love of God. When we no longer believe God loves us, we can no longer love ourselves. We have to allow God to continually fill us. Then we find in our own lives the power to give love away (Feister, 1995, p. 107).

Other recommended insights on Grace suitable for teachers’ personal reflection and transformation can be found in the reflections of Roger Haight and Karl Rahner (Sheldrake, 2005, pp. 327-328), and in Daniel Ang’s article ‘Gift and Graciousness’ (2009).

The second aspect of Circle One is the realisation and prayerful worship of God as Holy Trinity. Not only is the Holy Trinity foundational to Christian faith, it is the cornerstone of our relationship with God, and the inspiration and graced energy we require to reach beyond ourselves in service to others. Some of the insights which I seek to communicate for this aspect are - God as Holy Trinity is the central Mystery of the Catholic Christian faith; The Trinity is inaccessible to human reason alone; thus we need images and symbols; one helpful image of the Trinity as ekstasis – ‘going out from the self and beyond the limits of the self to reach & serve others’ (Edwards, 2006, p. 73); Father, Son & Spirit are inseparable – they ‘walk around’ (circumincession) or ‘dance around’ (perichoresis) each other and within each other (Ann Fatule in Jegen, 2008, pp.95-96).

I also endeavour to incorporate selected quotes for reflection and discussion from spiritual and mystical writings, such as those of St. Catherine of Siena:

Eternal Trinity, you are like a deep sea, in which the more I seek, the more I find; and the more I find, the more I seek you. You fill the soul, yet somehow without satisfying it: ...you are an abyss, a deep sea...You are a fire, ever burning, and never consumed, consuming in your heat all the self-love of the soul, taking away all coldness. By your light, you enlighten our minds, as by your light you have brought me to know your truth (Episcopal Conferences, 1974, pp. 124-125).

Other useful sources which I recommend to teachers are: Richard Rohr’s “God isn’t a Twosome off in a corner” (Feister, 1995, p. 259); Pope Benedict XVI’s ‘On the Holy Trinity, Inexhaustible Font of Life that
Unceasingly gives Itself’ (2009); Rabbi David Cooper’s Jewish perspectives on God (1998, pp. 65-70); Catherine Mowry Lacugna’s consideration of Trinity as ‘God for us’ (1993, pp. 410-411); Jack Mahoney’s article ‘God with us’ (2009); Michael Vial’s series of three articles – ‘Encountering God as Trinity’, ‘God who is Personal’, ‘We are Held for Communion’ (2008a; 2008b; 2008c); and selected quotes from Michael Downey’s Altogether Gift: A Trinitarian Spirituality (2000).

Jesus Christ

As the incarnate Word of God, Jesus Christ represents the visible form of the Holy Trinity. As the Compendium states: ‘Jesus knew us and loved us with a human heart. His Heart, pierced for our salvation, is the symbol of that infinite love with which he loves the Father and each one of us’ (CCCC, 2006, n.93). The challenge for teachers in considering this part of Circle One is to reflect upon the need for an intimate encounter and relationship with the person of Jesus Christ; to consider the deeper implications of expressions included in this section such as ‘gazing upon the face of Christ’, ‘contemplating Christ’. This encounter with Christ implies a dynamic process. As Thomas Merton asserts: ‘Make ready for the Christ, whose smile – like lightning – sets free the song of everlasting glory that now sleeps, in your paper flesh – like dynamite’ (cited in Rohr, 1993, p. 7).

In this regard, it is instructive to consider John Paul II’s call for ‘an ever greater pastoral engagement based on the contemplation of the face of Christ, as part of an ecclesial pedagogy’ (2004, n.8), along with the following insights – Jesus Christ came to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable (both types of images need to be included in mapping this and other aspects); Jesus is imaged as ‘the compassionate shepherd of God’. Thomas Rosica reflects: ‘The compassion of Jesus heals and feeds, forgives huge debts, nurses hurt bodies back to health and welcomes home sinners, restoring them to a place of honor. Jesus will not let his compassion stay with God or in heaven. He commands us: “Be compassionate as your Father is compassionate”’ (2009, p. 2); Christ is hidden, surprising and unexpected (cf. Lk 24); Jesus Christ is not a philosophy, an idea, a set of values, or just a model, but a living person who challenges us to encounter him, to radically respond, to be transformed – “It is no longer I who live but it is Christ who lives in me” (Galatians 2:20) (Lennan, 2006, p. 1).

As Educating Together in Catholic Schools states: ‘Catholic educators need “a ‘formation of heart’: they need to be led to that encounter with God in Christ which awakens their love and opens their spirits to others”, so that their educational commitment becomes a “consequence deriving from their faith, a faith which becomes active through love (cf. Gal 5:6)” In fact, even “care for instruction means loving” (Wis 6:17)’ (Congregation for Catholic Education, 2008, pp. 19-20).

Other useful sources and quotes for this part of Circle One can be found in: John Paul II, Rosarium Virginis Mariae (2002b, n.1), Novo Millennio Inuinti (2001, n.15); Toronto World Youth Day (2002a); Catechesis in our Time (1979, n.5); and Thomas Rosica’s ‘The Only Question That Matters – “Who do you say that I am?”’ (2010).

The Reign or Kingdom of God

Like the other elements of Circle One, the Reign of God is central because it is foundational to whom Jesus is and the message that he preaches. It is proclaimed by Jesus as a vision of radical transformation of human beings and human institutions into a form that expresses the character and nature of God (Struckmeyer, 2002, pp. 1-3). As Kater notes, the Reign of God ‘anticipates the transformation and renewal of the earth, abundance and celebration, social and economic justice, and end to oppression, the overcoming of suffering and death, intimacy with God and harmony within the whole created order – all implied by the [ultimately not fully translatable] Hebrew word shalom’ (cited in Sheldrake, 2005, pp. 535-536).

Aspects of the Reign of God that I ask teachers to reflect on and discuss include - everyone, even the worst of sinners and ‘failures’ is invited by Jesus to enter God’s Reign, and to accept God’s boundless
mercy, and this Reign belongs to those who accept it like a child and with a humble heart (CCCC, n.107); The Reign of God includes everyone especially the marginalised, sinners and outcasts – it is simply God’s overflowing generosity of love (cf. Grace above; Cassidy, 2007, p. 1).

Other sources and quotes that I refer staff to for this final aspect of Circle One are – becoming a vulnerable and non-status child in order to enter the Kingdom (Gundry-Volf, 2000); Rohr on ‘Thy Kingdom come, my kingdoms go’ and other themes (with Feister, 1996, pp. 4-5); and Anthony Steel’s article ‘What is this Kingdom of God thing?’ (2006).

In Part Two of this article we will continue to explore the components of Circles Two through Six, map key themes across the Six Circles, and summarise teacher evaluations arising from this mapping process across the eighteen primary schools. This article concludes with a statement which links up key concepts contained within Circle One.

**Linking statement for Circle One**

- **Grace** is at the centre of God’s identity in God’s unmerited gift, presence and mercy; this is at the heart of the *Holy Trinity* where God reaches beyond Godself towards each person of the Trinity (ekstasis).
- This is reflected in the life, death and resurrection of *Jesus Christ*, truly divine and human, the Son of God, Compassion of God, and Parable of God,...
- who in turn embodies the *Reign or Kingdom of God*, especially its themes of justice, transformation, and intimacy with God within the re-created order.

**Conclusions and links into Part Two**

Transformative Catholic Pedagogy (TCP) represents an important concept for teachers in Catholic schools as, by extension, does the Six Circles mapping model, which assists them in tracking and calibrating key concepts across the entire involvement of those in a Catholic school.

This article (Part One) has examined the components of Circle One, components which are central to the theological and spiritual underpinnings of any Catholic school. Understood in relation to the other five circles, Circle One enables Catholic teachers to identify and maintain a balance between theory and practice, contemplation and action, presence and concrete involvement.

In addition, Circle One, in combination with the next five circles, takes seriously the school’s spirituality, charism, philosophy, vision and mission. TCP is a powerful diagnostic school for use during School Review, as well as during ongoing staff discussions and professional development sessions. Moreover, it is the only known school mapping model of its kind which tracks the topics contained within all Six Circles in an integrated, sustained and practical way.

Finally, the working definition of ‘transformative Catholic pedagogy’ proposed in this article will challenge teachers to evaluate their own and their school’s approach to all three terms contained therein. The attendant scripture references in particular will also assist them in critiquing their own relationship with Christ in God in relation to ‘encounter-disturbance-com-mission’ and other models of scripture-based transformation.

It is also hoped that the many provocative insights from Circle One on Grace, God as Trinity, Jesus Christ, and the Reign of God, will assist teachers in clarifying their own lived commitment to these topics. Without Circle One, the Catholic School loses much of its valuable foundations in theology, Christology, spirituality and social justice. This article then provides a foundation for considering Circles Two through Six, which will be covered in Part Two of this article.
References


Gundry-Volf, J. (2000). To such as these belongs the reign of God: Jesus and children. Theology Today 56, pp. 469-80.


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CHARACTERISTICS OF RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AMONG DRUZE ADOLESCENTS & HOW IT IS DESIGNED

Abstract

Religious identity is perceived as religious belief, values and mitzvot (Fisherman, 1992) when religion is at the base formulation for its construction. It is important to distinguish between religious identity, and "religious belief." 'Religious identity' stems from the individual's identification with the personal value system. ‘Achievement oriented identity’ is acquired as a result of identification of individuals with a personal value system that draws the forces of religious values (Oron, 1998; Gutman and, 1977; Bar - Lev, 1977; Bar - Lev & Kedem, 1996). On the other hand, "religious belief" has the same associations and social tag (Hallahmi, 1989), as nationality, gender, social class, which most people are born into. The current study examined the nature of the Druze religious identity amongst adolescents and in which identity may be shaped. The study interviewed 52 adolescents (28 girls, 24 boys) from three Druze communities in Israel. The data of the study pointed out that religious identity amongst adolescents is characterized by identity associations, a social tag into which they were born, that is, the social identity of the Druze father and mother. The arguments about the shaping of such an identity among them were linked to the changes that have occurred in the communal social structure of community where separation prevails between the secular camp and the religious camp.

Introduction

Religious identity is defined as religious faith, values and commandments (Fisherman, 1992) when the religion underlines its unity and structure. The uniqueness of each religious group (in ceremonies, beliefs, and emotional involvement) creates the collective identification and it is nurtured by it. The religious facts later become a personal part of the individual who belongs to the group and, therefore, a component of his religious identity (Mol, 1978). Thus, religion gives meaning and shape to what we are and integrates the different cycles and components of human identity (Rosen, 2005).

It is important to distinguish between religious identity and "religious belief" since it is only a social label (Hallahmi, 1989). Treating religious identity as a cultural label, for instance, as nation, gender and social status, means that people are born with it. That is, this is an identity forced on the individual and not acquired by him/her – it is an identity of belonging and an identity which can be achieved. A person grows up in a family and a community with a religious label. He/she gradually notices the uniqueness of this identity, and only in a later stage understands that his/her belonging to a certain group means having unique beliefs and ritual behaviors (Cohen, 1975; Ben-Meir and Kedem, 1979). However, there is a religious identity which results from the individual's identification with a personal system of values. That is, it is an identity which is acquired as a result of the individual's identification with a personal value system and it gets its strength from the religious values (Oron, 1998; Gottman and Mann, 1977; Bar-Lave, 1977; Bar-Lave and Kedem, 1996). It is this perception of religious identity that underlies this research about Druze adolescents.

The questions of the research reported in this paper are:

What is the character of the religious identity among the Druze adolescents?
What are its components? How is it crystallized?
How does it contribute to the adolescents?
The goal of this research is
- to understand the character of religious identity amongst Druze adolescents; and
- to identify the belief system that underlies it and the narrative behind it.

The importance of this research were the findings that helped to develop new insights into the ways religious identity may be crystallized amongst the adolescents by building new educational programs that would deal with the issue of religious identity amongst adolescents and encouraging critical ways of thinking. The research method was based on semi-structured interviews with Druze adolescents from three villages in Israel.

First, this paper presents a historical review of the Druze community in order to emphasize the changes that it has experienced.

**Historical Background of the Druzes**

The Druzes were known as holders of religion and philosophy during the 11th century (Saleh, 1989; Falah, 1983). In the past, the Druzes lived for a long period of time under the patronage of Islam. Many of the Druzes were killed and they had to show superior courage and wisdom in order to survive and reserve their unique identity (Falah, 2000; Hitti, 1928). The Druzes live in different areas in the Middle East: in Al-Ela Mount near Halab, in Jotta in Damascus, in the Druzes Mount in Syria, in the Golan Heights, in Wadi Al-Time in South Lebanon, in Al-Shoof Mount in Lebanon, in the Galilee and the Carmel. There are about one million Druzes in the Middle East and 100,000 Druzes live in Israel. The Israeli Druzes are spread in 18 villages in four areas: the plain of the western Galilee called "Al-Sahel"; Upper Galilee Mountains, especially in the west; lower Galilee, Shfaraam and Mg'ar; the Carmel – two villages. Five out of the 18 Druze villages are not mixed, that is only Druzes live there (Shtandill, 1992).

The Druzes did not develop a Druze political territory in the sense of a modern national country, even when the Druze Princes ruled in Lebanon. To a large extent this situation was a result of the Druze's secretive nature of their religion (Jonblat, 1978) which prefers the heavenly rule over the worldly rule, and it asks its followers to act in the "takiah" mode which has affected their political behavior for many years. The Middle Eastern Druze speak Arabic and their culture resembles their neighbours' cultures.

The factors that helped the Druze to preserve themselves and their uniqueness through history were (Falah, 2000):
- The religious factor, the Druze religion and its strength helped the Druze survive and preserve their uniqueness;
- Keeping a patriarchal social order which was enforced by the family's father and the head of the tribe;
- The social values system, which is inspired by the Druze religion, for example, modesty, telling the truth, courage, hospitality, the need for land and the work in cultivation;
- The development of anecdotes about heroic historical Druze figures and stories about the superior way of life of the religious people.

During the last thirty years essential changes took place amongst the Druze, but the main change was the nearly complete abandonment of the land. The reasons behind these changes were:
1. The recruitment of the Druze by the army and their subsequent integration into the security system after their military service. Some Druze who served in the security system continued their academic studies and then worked in the public sector and in industry (Hasan, 1992).
2. The reduction in the number of cultivation lands because the Cultivation Ministry did not work on extending them.
3. The modernization process that reached the Druze villages. The general increase in the education level of the individual and the ability to choose high academic and free subjects, led the young generation to look for alternative income sources in the modern employment sectors.
The Druze villages have experienced social, economic and technological changes since the establishment of Israel. The changes in the construction area of villages are the result of the increase in the life level and the demographic increases (Falah, 1983). Today, the villages deal with the problem of lack of construction lands. The changes in the village structure led to economic activities whose aim was marketing and not consumption (Ferro, 1993). Druze life style in Israel implies two central lines in the way they perceive themselves in the specific and public space. The Druzes feel that they belong to Israel and they perceive the country as a national state on the one hand, but on the other hand, they feel they belong to the Arab culture. Despite this, the Druze serve in the different security branches and fight against the Arabs.

The Druze identity was perceived as a central nuclear identity of the Druze individual (Al-Sheikh, 1978; Kanel, 2006). Recently, adults defined this identity as the feeling of unconditioned belonging to the ethnic religious community (Halabi, 2006, p. 32). However, there had been little research amongst the adolescents about the character of this identity.

The Druze adolescents today, unlike other adolescents in the country, experience the modern and technological world in their family circle and in the surrounding society. In addition, they are growing up in much more secular circles. Therefore, the religious value-based foundation which relies on the principles of the religion is giving place to other values derived from the modern environment. Adolescence is discussed as an important stage in a person's identity design. At this stage the adolescents deal with the identity crisis and in the process of overcoming this crisis they build their identity (Arikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980).

On the other hand, the Druze adolescents belong to a village to which they are attached all the time (Holland, 1998; Carbaugh, 1996). Within this context they examine the traditional life style of their ancestors compared to their present life style which is based on progress, knowledge, modernism and technology. This distinction sometimes raises contrasts between the traditional life of the ancestors and the modern life of the children. This issue becomes especially important when children reach adolescence and they try to find some independence and individuation away from their parents (Marcia, 1980; Arikson, 1968).

**Religious Education**

The Druze in Israel were defined as a specific group with a specific religion. Religious education is the term given to education concerned with religion. It may refer to education provided by a church or religious organization, for instruction in doctrine and faith, or for education in various aspects of religion, but without explicitly religious or moral aims, e.g. in a school or college. The term often overlaps with religious studies (Browning, 1982).

Religious education is the teaching of a particular religion and its varied aspects - its beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites, and personal roles. In Western and secular culture, religious education implies a type of education which is largely separate from academia, and which (generally) regards religious belief as a fundamental tenet and operating modality, as well as a prerequisite condition of attendance (Asher, 2007).

People oppose religious education in public schools on various grounds. One is that it constitutes a state sponsorship or establishment of whatever religious beliefs are taught. Others argue that if a particular religion is taught in school, children who do not belong to that religion will either feel pressure to conform or be excluded from their peers. Proponents argue that religious beliefs have historically socialized people's behavior and morality. They feel that teaching religion in school is important to encourage children to be responsible, spiritually sound adults.

In the Middle East, many Catholic schools are French-controlled so while following the mandated curriculum, Catholic school students in the Middle East learn English, Arabic and French as well as theology and the parochial church's liturgical language (Ailon & Vaserman, 2004).
In Israel, children who receive a traditional Jewish education are taught Biblical Hebrew, and learn excerpts of the Torah (first five books of the Bible) and the Talmud (commentary on the scriptures). Secular Jews only speak "Modern Hebrew". This tradition generally hopes that by passing on the traditional language, the students will also retain a better memory of their culture’s history and a stronger sense of cultural identity (Maos, 2007). On the other hand Druze children receive Heritage education lessons, which are based on Druze religious text. Druze Heritage education aims to develop religious identity amongst Druze children and adolescents.

Since people in Israel holds varying religious and non-religious beliefs, government-sponsored religious education can be a source of conflict. Certainly, countries vary widely in whether religious education is allowed in government-run schools (often called "public schools") and those that allow it, also vary in the type of education provided.

The complexity of the context, in addition to the social and economic changes that took place in the Israeli Druze life, raise a number of questions about their ethnic identity: how is the Druze identity perceived among Druze adolescents? What are its components? How is it designed in the present reality? And what is its contribution to the adolescents? These research questions are oriented to a qualitative methodology that can provide rich information.

Methodology

Fifty-two adolescents from three Druze high schools took part in the research when the schools represented the Druze community in Israel. The goal behind choosing three school was to make rich explanations and wide analysis of the character of the religious identity amongst Druze adolescents (Multi-Site Ethnographic Research) (Tzabar Ben-Joshua, 2001). The interviewees were 17 years old (28 females and 24 males) and they were mostly secular except for a few (that is, 6 interviewees, 5 boys and one girl). Only Druze students attended these three schools, except for one school where there were a number of Moslem and Christian students. The data collection was based mainly on semi-structured interviews. The interviewees were asked to explain the meaning of the Druze identity, its characteristics, how it was designed and how it contributed to their lives. The data processing was based on qualitative research methods, which looked for themes that kept recurring. The themes were then categorized and the categories were linked to authentic religious theories (Beit Halahmi, 1989; Rosen, 2005; Fisherman, 1992; Taylor, 1991; Kanel, 2006; Alexander, 2001). The data were presented under fabricated names. The present research does not discuss the differences between males and females or between villages, but it presents rich examples about the characteristics of the Druze religious identity and the ways it is designed amongst adolescents.

Findings

The results of the study highlighted two key issues:
1. Characteristics of the Druze identity
2. How religious identity is shaped

Characteristics of the Religious Identity Among Druze Adolescents (girls & boys).

The religious identity as it was expressed amongst adolescents reflected a religious identity of belonging and not a religious identity which was achievable (Beit Halahmi, 1989). A religious identity of belonging amongst most of the adolescents from the three villages (51 out of 52) meant that a person is born Druze, both parents are Druze, his/her religion is Druze, the community in which s/he live is Druze. This was different to the achievable identity where the Druze person was perceived to have certain beliefs, for instance, believing in God, his prophets and messengers, in destiny, and in reincarnation.
Further practices related to seven permanent rules: the belief in judgement day; in reward and in punishment; that a Druze would not marry a non-Druze; that the religion was shrouded in secrecy and closed to foreigners; and v) that there was a clear distinction between right and wrong.

The ways in which the Druze Religious Identity is shaped

The explanations concerning the development of a religious identity of belonging amongst Druze adolescents focused on two main points: the change in the social structure of the community and its influence on building the ethnic identity, and the alienation between the religious and secular sections.

1. The change in the social structure of the community

The adolescents (males & females) from the three villages expressed emotional and social belonging to the Druze community both in its past and present forms, although their lifestyles were different today. Most of them thought that the community’s life had been good, moral and beautiful in the past, and that it was characterized by social unity, reservation of norms and customs and conservation. Such principles can be found in most the traditional communities, including the Druzes. The following excerpts from the data collection provide insights into the perceptions and thinking of Cruze adolescents.

Examples that reflect appreciation of the past life style of the community:

Nezar (male) said that: *in the past a person had to behave well. He had to be good with everyone because back then the community was much more united. In the past there was a feeling that we were in control and we made the decisions. It was much easier. It is true that we did not have an independent country but we had leading figures that knew what to do like Kamal Jonblat and others. In the past a Druze person behaved well because otherwise people did not appreciate him. Today the situation is very difficult, people do not show that they care for each other as in the past*.

Adam added: *The Druze lived on agriculture in the past, the number of people in the village was small. The houses were close to each other. In the past people helped each other unlike today. In addition people in the past accepted advice from others but today no one accepts advice*.

Abeer emphasized: *in the past the Druzes were more conservative about everything unlike today. In the past the most important thing was the religion especially when the village Sheikh was still alive [...]. In the past the Druze were prominent in the country*.

On the other hand, such appreciation of the past did not prevent the adolescents (males & females) from criticizing it. The living conditions in the past were hard, they were characterized by lack of education and discrimination against women. The difficult conditions were explained as: agricultural, bad transportation, physical tiredness, undeveloped technology and lack of rights in the country.

The following are examples of the difficulties of past lifestyles:

Nasreen (female) said that: *people lived in a primitive way in the past; there was no education or understanding. The Druze had no status in the army or in politics. Today the Druze have progressed in everything*.

Najma (female) added: *in the past there was no water and electricity. Women gave birth at home and the children stayed home and did not study. There was work but no education. Druze’ life in the past fit the country and the environment, they did not feel shame. Today it is impossible to live like they did in the past. Today it is absurd to live in a tent without water, electricity, and education, it is just impossible*.
Fareed (male) emphasized that: "life in the past was not developed and the people were not exposed to the modern life. In the past each one lived by his pace, people worked hard unlike today. In the past the living conditions were hard".

The discussion about the life style of the Druze community in the present era was the longest and involved most of the interviewees (50 out of 52). The content of this discussion reflected the change in the social structure of the community. The adolescents criticized the present life style of the community. They expressed a clear distinction between the good and bad changes. In addition, they explained the implications of such changes on their feelings of belonging to the norms and customs of the community. The adolescents thought that the community developed from different aspects like education, knowledge, life quality and so on. On the other hand, such developments do not encourage the feelings of belonging to the community and its special characteristics. The adolescents reported that today there are changes in the norms, the group is collapsing and people are moving from the spiritual life to the material life. Such changes kept the adolescents away from the norms and customs and even from the religion itself.

The adolescents (males & females) mentioned five main negative changes in the communal structure of the community today:

1) **Material life:** the Druze do not focus on values; there is no moral education; the parents who are responsible for their children’s education face difficulties and so they give up; there is no supervision on the behavior of children and adolescents; and people are fixated on money.

2) **Lack of social unity:** there is alienation between friends and a lack of unity and brotherhood. The Druze are losing traditional norms and special ceremonies; the number of religious people is decreasing; and there is a lack of leading traditional figures.

3) **Intensification of the individual not the group:** caring for the personal interests; people act freely and do not care about others; people do not accept advice from others.

4) **Changes in norms and customs:** blind imitation of others' clothes, life style, appearance and language. Further, the Druze, today, marry non-Druze; as well there is a lot of violence for instance, murders, and the parents are losing their authority.

5) **Forgetting the religious principles:** turning to the secular life style, the secular people are not aware of the religious principles, and they follow the norms of other communities and this is very worrying.

The following are examples that were identified with the material life of the community today:

Waleed (male) said: "today life is materialistic. The materialistic race is more important for people and they do not care about each other, all they think about is their personal interest. This has good and bad aspects. It can be good for the person himself but it can be bad for the society".

Carawan (female) emphasized that: "in the past the Druze were like one hand, so that they supported each other. Today everyone is looking for his/her own interests and they want to be rich so that people like them; and poor people feel ashamed of their circumstances. Life today is materialistic people care only about money and work. In the past rich and poor people were equal".

Examples of decomposing the group and intensifying the individual:

Raed (male) said: "Druze' life was more traditional, people were close to their religion and they worked in agriculture. People supported and loved each other. However, today life is more comfortable, many things make our lives easier but people are not close to each other, everyone cares for him/herself".
Ola (female) said: "In the past, Druze lived in unity and brotherhood, they loved and supported each other and they shared each other’s happy and sad moments. But today, a brother does not support his brother or his neighbor. Today everyone is occupied with his/her own life and work. People do not care for each other".

The following were examples of the change in traditional norms and customs:

Dina (female) said: "we started changing our norms and customs by changing our clothes and our language which is mostly Hebrew today, we also started spending time in different places. If you look at the village market you can see that it preserves our traditions. The stores sell traditional items but the rest of the stores sell fashionable things. The language, the behavior and our jobs are all affected by modern society. This phenomenon is found amongst secular people and not amongst religious people. Religious people are attached to the religion and they keep the tradition even though there are not many religious people today. Secular people need to change, they like to be like the Jews and live like them. They have fun and they stay out late. In the past they used to stay out only till eight o’clock. Today I stay at my friend’s place till eleven o’clock and my parents come to pick me up. There are girls who walk in the streets even at ten o’clock and this is accepted today. Today boys and girls are affected by their environment. Girls imitate each other and they change their appearance at an early age. In the past girls relied on their natural look but today they use different cosmetic products. Many do not take studies seriously and there is a regression in other things in life. Friends and clothes are the things that attract the youth today. In adolescence, girls and boys are attracted to each other and this is interesting".

These examples were presented that indicated a moving away from religion, norms, traditions and tradition-based education:

Sara (female) said that: "at present many changes have taken place in the norms and customs especially in clothes and weddings. Many things changed. Today D.Js are common in weddings. It is important for me to keep the heritage and apply it. It is important to preserve the Druze customs as they were in the past. In the past girls wore a skirt and long-sleeve shirt and some wore short-sleeve shirts. But today the clothes are exaggerated and have become negative. The Sheikhs think that we live in a difficult social era. Today the girl’s body is too exposed and also there is a problem with boys who increasingly smoke".

On the other hand, the adolescents (males & females) pointed at three central positive changes in the community: education, knowledge and life quality. These are some examples of the development of education and knowledge in the community:

Najma (female) said: "today we live in a progressive era. It is important for a girl to study and if her parents do not allow her, people start gossiping about them and say they are primitive. Today, girls finish high school and continue to university".

Ali (male) added: "life is better today, we know other and different cultures and this enriches our knowledge. We know the world around us, we know different places, different cultures and today the Internet allows quick communication. We can compare between us and between others. This comparison teaches us about ourselves so that we learn from mistakes and improve our lives".

Other examples of the improvement in the life quality were:

Ola (female) said: "what is nice today is that we live in an era of progress and development, like airplanes, cars and so on. In the past mobility was difficult, people used animals to move from one place to another. Today they can travel anywhere in the world within a short time. Today our lives are easier and more beautiful".
Reem (female) emphasized that: “today there is an improvement in the economic level. People moved from an agricultural society to a society which works in different jobs, industry and others. Life is much easier today”.

2. The alienation between the religious and the secular sections

The Druze community has always consisted of two central sections (Falah, 2000): the religious section relies on the religious principles and it is linked to the religious contents; members of this section keep the commandments and dress traditionally. They are responsible for preserving the social norms and customs typical to the Druze community and which fit the religious principles. The secular section is not linked to the religion. Its members are not familiar with the religious principles, do not keep the commandments and sometimes do not keep the norms and customs derived from the religious principles. As in any traditional society the community is guided by the religious section whose members also make the decisions related to the community and set the sanctions for certain social behaviors in order to preserve the community and its uniqueness.

Today it is evident that the number of secular Druzes is increasing while the number of religious people is decreasing. In addition, the relations between the religious and secular people are weakening. This resembles what is happening in the Jewish community today which indicates a lack of attachment and increasing tension between the religious and secular sections (Azreal, 2005). On the other hand, one can notice the signs of progress and technology in the religious sector where the life quality of religious people is not so modest anymore.

Most of the interviewees in this research were secular (46 out of 52) and this reflects what is happening in the Druze community which is opening its gates to the secular life style. Secular people are replacing religious people in their involvement in the community and the roles they are taking on themselves. Most of the adolescents knew that the religious people are closely united, that they run a life style which fits the religious principles, and that some of them guide secular members of the community. On the other hand, the religious people are perceived amongst the adolescents (males & females) as a section which forces its opinion on others but is aware of the modern life.

The following are examples of the positive appreciation of the religious section:

Soha (female) said: "we can notice the Druze identity amongst the religious or conservative people but we cannot notice this identity amongst secular people. I grew up in a religious family. Our parents did not force me to read the religion books all the time. My mother knew our duties and knew that the decision was mine. Parents are no more responsible for our deeds. The religion contradicts what is really happening in society. The religion calls for a certain frame called Al-Ekhwan (the religious brothers) and does not encourage the secular society. It is the duty of the religious person to guide the people who do not know the religion".

In addition to the positive appreciation of the Druze section, the adolescents also expressed some negativity. The religious section is perceived as compulsory in children’s education, but does not apply the norms and customs properly and shows lack of appreciation towards the secular people. It is closed to the outer world, its clothes do not fit the modern era, and the explanations it provides to the secular people are superficial and offer little in the way of encouraging understanding.

The following are examples against the religious section:

Samar (female) said: "religious people do not appreciate secular people. In my opinion this must be like this. There is a gap between religious and secular people. As an adolescent girl I am interested to know and understand my religion and its content. If I ask a religious person he gives only shallow
answers and stops me at certain points, claiming that if he answers my questions this will make me an atheist. Instead of explaining what is allowed and what is not, instead of guiding me, religious people reject us if we make mistakes. I would like to get deeper explanations, guidance, support and flexibility”.

On the other hand, the adolescents (males & females) were aware that the secular life needs improvement. The adolescents thought that the secular people were not united which related to their identity. They imitate and follow the norms of other communities, which are different from the Druze belief. This lack of attachment between the secular people and the religion leads to lack of identity or unity among the secular people. These findings imply that there is an ambiguous identity amongst the Druze community members as expressed by Marcia (1980) or an identity of belonging (Beit Hallahmi, 1989). It is true that this can be typical for adolescence but the data concerning the Druze adolescents show lack of clarity of the norms, the customs and the original social rules that characterize the community; and the alienation between the secular adolescents and these customs make it difficult to shape the ethnic identity amongst them.

Finally, there were some examples that referred to the secular section as an imitative and affected section:

Soha (female) added: “today there is no deep faith amongst the secular Druzes. They are very far from the religion, and there is a wide gap between them and the religious people. There are Druze people who know the religious rules but they do not follow them. According to the Druze norms and customs girls must wear skirts and not trousers, but this is not happening any more”.

This example showed that the seculars do not have a crystallized identity:

Sari (male) Said: “the heritage lessons in school help me to know the norms and customs. But if I am asked what a Druze is, I do not know the answer. I blame my society for this and I think this is a shame on us. If each one of us is aware of these things, we will not face problems. On the other hand, if you ask a Jew who you are and where you come from, he will explain everything to you. But if you ask one of my classmates or anyone from my community the same questions you will not get an answer. The most important thing in my eyes is that the Druze should know who they are, where they come from and what their origins are”.

Discussion and Summary

According to the Druze religion and Heritage curriculum, a Druze person must recognize himself, his prophets and their messengers. This is a commandment from God that every Druze believer must fulfill. The Druze adolescents (males & females) said that within the Israeli reality they do not know themselves, or where they came from. Therefore, they find it difficult to explain to others about themselves in spite of the heritage lessons they experienced. Such understanding is based on knowing the Druze religious texts from which they are detached because they are secular. Only religious Druze are allowed to read the holy books and get explanations about the Platonic religion. Acquiring a religious identity which is based on interaction between the believer and the religious principles is perceived as an almost impossible achievement amongst the secular Druze adolescents. Although there are good intentions within certain sections of the religious group to guide and explain the religion, they are still limited by the content they are allowed to pass on.

These principles deepen the gaps between the religious and secular people and the gap between the secular people and the religion and this weakens the shaping of an achievable religious identity among the Druzes. The lack of interaction with the religious principles, rules and texts, threatens the building of an ethnic religious identity that would be strong enough to face the other identities that a Druze would choose for himself (Kaneal, 2006).

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The data show that the communal-religious identity among the Druze adolescents is characterized as an identity of belonging. It is like a social label with which they are born. They are born to Druze parents and their religion is Druze. This label accompanies them their whole life. Therefore there are reasons to shape an ethnic identity like this which is a response to the changing communal-social structure of the Druze community, and the alienation between the religious and the secular sections.

The examples that the adolescents (males & females) provided indicate that the past lifestyle of the Druzes was perceived as containing more solidarity, unity, and brotherhood, all of which are based on religious values and principles and characterized by unique norms and customs. The agricultural community life was perceived as better and it had more values. The adolescents lack this lifestyle today but they still remember it from the narratives of their parents and grandparents. The adolescents identified other things which had taken the place of traditional things. Today, they live in interaction with the material things in life. They experience the disengagement of the group and a lack of solidarity but have a greater intensity on the individual. They clearly imitate the norms of the dominant group around them. This creates alienation between the adolescent and his/her understanding of the elements which provide him/her with knowledge of who s/he is and where s/he comes from (Taylor, 1991).

Although there was some feeling of belonging to the community life of the past (which they had learnt about in the heritage lessons), and although there was some appreciation of such a life, the adolescents find it difficult to develop a similar lifestyle today. The adolescents live in a modern context which they cannot replace with another. Thus, even though there is a desire amongst religious people to preserve the norms, the customs and the solidarity, they have not achieved these goals through the current educational settings that they have developed.

Druze adolescents (males & females) today live in interaction with modern norms that characterize the dominant group in the country. When meeting the dominant culture they try different phenomena and adopt certain norms. These norms are not selected through educated and moral discussion which is based on logic, but they are selected out of free will knowing that they can make certain mistakes (Alexander, 2001). The selections of the adolescents are only imitations because they lack a clear system of values and beliefs which help them relate to the Druze community. The exposure to the world around them and the lack of religious immunization do not help the Druze adolescents (male & female) to form an achievable religious identity.

In addition, the alienation between the secular and religious sections and the expansion of secularism in the modern era require an appropriate response if the unique ethnic Druze identity is to be preserved. This has not happened so there is a danger that the typical and nuclear identity of the Druze community which was preserved for so many years and which distinguished them from other ethnic groups will be lost. As well, there is a realization that the heritage curriculum goals have not been achieved. The lack of communication between the religious and secular section do not allow emotional involvement with the religious texts and beliefs. Therefore, the religious axioms have not become a personal part of the adolescent and an important component in his/her religious identity (Mol, 1978), and they do not help in creating a collective identity amongst adolescents. Thus, the meaning of what they really are does not integrate into the different cycles and components of their human identity within the different contexts of their lives (Rosen, 2005).

In order to build a healthy achievable belief-based identity (Fisherman, 1992) amongst the members of the Druze community, that is to teach them how to move from the first phase of childish faith to a phase of confusion and, later on, to a phase of mature faith, it is important to first examine the complexity of the communal context in which they live. Secondly intelligent discourse should be encouraged between religious and secular members which aims to build a healthy belief-based identity within the current reality. Thirdly, a deep dialogue concerning the beliefs and principles of the religion should be encouraged between adolescents an religious adults. Fourthly, there should be an examination of the ways in which to
apply religious principles in a modern reality. Lastly, there should be a re-building of religious and moral scholastic contents in pre-school education in order to build a healthy religious belief-based identity amongst the young generation.

The Druze heritage curriculum aimed to educate for religious identity. The adolescents showed that their perceptions of heritage education were different from religious education. The latter teaches the religion and its varied aspects - its beliefs, doctrines, rituals, customs, rites, and personal roles. In a secular culture, religious education implies a type of education which regards religious belief as a fundamental tenet and operating modality, as well as a prerequisite condition of attendance. This is not always acceptable in a secular culture so the Druze heritage education provided an alternative to religious education. Unfortunately, it does not appear to have achieved its goals.

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Bert Roebben is Professor of Religious Education in the Faculty of Humanities and Theology at Dortmund University, Germany. This text is a collection of integrated essays in which Roebben “offers the reader a retrospective of fifteen years of postdoctoral work in the field of religious education” (22). Roebben’s book aims to inspire and encourage religious educators, whether they are university teachers, catechists, parish religious educators, youth ministers, pastoral ministers, or parents (12, 23).

The book contains twelve chapters grouped in three parts, with each part reflecting on religious education from the perspective of (i) values, (ii) schools and (iii) the city. The chapters cover such topics as moral education, religious education in schools, theological education in seminaries and university departments, youth ministry, dialogue and inter-spiritual learning.

The theme of “the city” relates to the profound and enriching plurality that marks the European *kosmopolis*. The book has the explicit intention to make the different voices of European researchers in religious education (Dutch, French, German) available to the English speaking world.

According to Roebben, “education is an act of faith – an act of believing in the future . . . . In each and every child the future presents itself in a surprising and unique manner.” Education is also about hope: “to generate hope for the future of this world” (11-13). One could also say that Roebben’s book is also about love, “the love of learning and the desire for God” (to borrow a phrase from Jean Leclercq). The theological virtues – faith, hope and love – inspire the whole of Roebben’s work. He believes that religious education offers “soul food” for our young people who are hungry for spiritual nourishment amidst the complexities of our modern world (17, 119).

His book is primarily concerned with the culture of young people (16 – 25 years). Young adults are too often the “unwilling pioneers of a multi-optional society.” The “seductions are permanent, the options innumerable, the actual power of realization minimal” (191). Young people often experience a certain “religious homelessness” (152). Moreover, while they are exposed to a dizzying array of communication processes (texting, facebook, social networking, etc), young people nevertheless yearn for ways to tell their story and to create their own personal identities, asking: “Am I allowed to tell my own story? Is there anybody willing to listen to my story? Has anybody noticed me in my fragility and vulnerability, as I try to find words and gestures for my way in and out of the moral and spiritual swamp? Has anybody noticed my loneliness? There is so much communication in the air, but where can I find true community?” (192-93).
Roebben insists that we need to listen more carefully to young people: “Young people want adults to take notice of them and not pass them by” (153). He worries that we too often “bore them with a school-like type of RE, because we view them as school-individuals who are likely only able to take in cognitive models of identity-building, and not as human beings with their own existential longing, with their own soul” (163). Indeed, Roebben stresses that “every human being reflecting on important life issues is a theologian” and that young people have the right and the ability to share with each other and to theologize about their personal and communal lives” (181-82).

Young people “have the right to a personally appropriated experience of faith” (91). “In a plural and often religiously indifferent culture, young people are not only entitled to receive solid information and guidance concerning life-questions, but also to learn to ask their own critical religious questions” (129). Roebben’s preferred model is hermeneutical, whereby students learn to deepen, clarify and articulate their own position, and communicative, whereby they come to new learning and insight through interaction and sharing in the presence of others (117, 176).

“Since religion is a worldwide phenomenon, young people in school are entitled to be educated in the dynamics of religion, including how to handle the possible ‘dynamite’ that might ignite when people play dangerously with religious fire. It is vital that young people are given information and interpretive skills to enable them to learn how to recognize, understand and respect their own and other people’s religious worldviews” (127). Knowing and respecting the other involves knowing and respecting myself and vice-versa.

Roebben is concerned to broaden moral or values education beyond a “merely cognitive view” to include the important dimensions of “acting, feeling and thinking” (33). According to Roebben, “young people in modern Western societies are faced with two radical and intertwining challenges: finding a meaningful life perspective that can count as their own and learning to cope with moral and religious diversity while searching for this life perspective” (43). Religious education plays a vital role to help initiate young people into “a world of difference” (31) that avoids the two pitfalls of either a relativistic indifference or a dogmatic fundamentalism (59). Students are invited to cherish uniqueness and to creatively participate in the mutual nourishment of human existence: “This shared humanity – being one in diversity – seems to be the ultimate spiritual project of our times” (59).

Roebben highlights the importance of inter-cultural and inter-religious (and inter-spiritual) dialogue: “learning through encounter.” Encounter implies difference. “Without difference there can be no encounter . . . I am challenged to re-define myself, to know myself better . . . as a human person with dignity, who makes a difference through encounter with others. Another person’s view on a given religious question can only inspire me when I am committed to that question and begin to answer it with others. One has to start somehow. Nobody can see and honor all perspectives at the same time. Without one’s own spiritual view, it is impossible for one to converse with another” (147).

There is a warmth and pastoral sensibility that infuses Roebben’s text. It is obvious that he cares deeply for young people and their own unique religious searching and spiritual quest in our increasingly complex and pluralistic world. For young people and adults alike, the quest does not end in dogmatic or self-assured knowledge. Rather, the quest reveals that we are the ones who are known, seen, and embraced in God’s love:

“I have been seen already, I don’t have to attempt being noticed. I am grounded already, I don’t have to ground myself. In my quest I have already been found. And when I fall, I will never fall into ultimate meaninglessness” (18, 59).

It is with great pleasure that I highly recommend Bert Roebben’s work.

Given western society’s growing realisation of children’s active participation with respect to family, education and the community, Dillen and Pollefeyt’s edited volume, *Children’s Voices: Children’s Perspectives in Ethics, Theology and Religious Education*, is timely. There is much presented in this compilation that will provide a valuable impetus for discussion among religious educators and catechists.

The book consists of five parts. The first, titled “Children’s voices and theological reflection” contains contributions by Bonnie Miller-McLemore and Karen-Marie Yust. Each offers an introduction to contemporary thinking about children, theology, spirituality, and the place of children’s voices within this scope. While Miller’s chapter focuses on the nature of children’s spirituality and spirituality in general (although her treatment of the topic is largely restricted to Christian theological understandings of spirituality with little reference to the wider writings which contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of spirituality), Yust argues in her chapter that children are capable of theological reflection, and provides an insightful pedagogical and theological motivation for a renewed way of theologizing with children.

 Appropriately titled “(Re)thinking Christian sources about children”, the second part in this volume consists of contributions which critically rethink biblical sources about children. There are two chapters in this part from Ma Marilou Ibita and Reimund Bieringer, (the first exploring where the voices of children in sacred texts are heard; the second exploring the question of how Jesus is presented in as a Child in the New Testament and the implications of this for child theology) and an intriguing chapter from Adrian Thatcher, arguing that one must approach child theology in the first instance by turning away from much in the bible and the tradition because it is antithetical to the love of children.

 The third section of this work considers children as they live in contemporary society. Writers in this section include Bruno Vanobbergen, Geert Thyssen, Pamela D. Coulter, John Wall, and Roger Burggraeve, all of whom explore questions concerning whether children are, in fact, seen and heard, and whether adults pay enough attention to their lives and voices in a complex world. Wall’s chapter is particularly interesting in that he develops a “childist ethics” – an ethical vision that searches not only for the faces and voices of children, but which also reflects on the meaning of the attention of children for ethics in general. He shows how the ethical responses to social issues faced by children have often involved the transformation of understandings of Christian ethical norms themselves.

 The following section, titled “Family life, praying with children, and parental responsibilities” presents challenging and thought-provoking contributions from Peter De Mey, Julie Hanlon Rubio, and Marcia J. Bunge. Of particular interest in this section is Bunge’s chapter in which she highlights the various ways to express the sacred calling of parents and children, for instance, by reading the Bible, worshipping, participating in service projects, enjoying the natural world, teaching children, honouring parents.

 Forming a connection with the first part of the book, the final section, titled “(Nurturing) Spirituality of Children” contains contributions from Gerhard Buttner, Elaine Champagne, Rita Ghesquiere, and Henri Derroitte. The contribution from Derroitte, titled “Towards a catechesis where children are not accepted?” is particularly interesting, and some readers no doubt will find this challenging. However, with the exception of Champagne’s chapter, the other writers in this section tend to speak more about theology than they do spirituality, and they tend to limit their discussion to the Christian context, with little
acknowledgement that spirituality is the wider sphere which may lead an individual to give voice to a particular theology.

While this volume represents an excellent compendium of contemporary scholarship and thought in this field, I was both intrigued and disappointed to discover that there is a key factor missing – the voices of the children themselves. With the notable exception of chapters by Yust, Buttner and Champagne, most of the other contributions appear to represent scholarship’s theorizing about children’s voices and perspectives in theology and religious education, without allowing the voices of the children themselves to be heard – an incredible irony given the title of this book! In his chapter, Burggraeve notes that it is no longer fitting to treat the child as a passive object of development and education. Yet, in many ways, this volume appears to have done precisely this by neglecting to include the voices of children themselves which may have been gained through the inclusions of contributions of writers who have conducted empirical research in this area – and there are now many such writers.

A second limitation of this work is that the contributions are largely theological in nature, with little attempt made to integrate the broader fields of research and scholarship, including religious education (in fact, in many of the contributions, these areas are excluded). As such, they tend to be quite insular. Exceptions to this may be found in the chapters by Yust, Buttner, Rubio and Champagne, who draw upon some developmental psychology (in particular Fowler’s work) and make reference to influential religious educators such as Thomas Groome and Jerome Berryman.

Depending upon the stance of the reader, some will find in this volume fertile soil upon which to facilitate dialogue and discussion. Others will find it of some interest. Yet others still may find it disappointing in so much as it consists of considerable valuable theological reflection but little suggestion as to how this might be translated into praxis.

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The vast array of contributors who come from several Christian churches and with a mix of lay and clergy and religious women and men ensures a variety of perspectives are given to this contentious and complex topic. In fact each short chapter compiled of articles by different authors with a range of experience and expertise, is a positive feature of this resource. As this book has been able to capture some of the diversity around the understanding of sin it makes it appealing to a broad audience and suitable for religious educators, parents and parish personnel. Each chapter is easy to read and the catchy titles and frank discussion offers insights for fruitful debate and critique within an educational and parish context which may nourish their faith. The engaging writing style is given rigour from Church documents, Christian theology and scripture and complimented by life experiences, case studies and practitioners’ knowledge.

In the prologue of this book Darragh (2010) suggests that “We may need to find new ways of thinking and talking about sin and wrongdoing “(p. 2). The following chapters showcase the conscious and deliberate attempts of each author to articulate as clearly as possible the varied contemporary understandings of sin. Drawing from a Christian tradition of morality and ethics this book aims to revise or eliminate dysfunctional understandings of sin and propose ways of understanding and talking about sin in a manner that are more suitable for living well in the contemporary world. Given that sin is not a clear cut category of human behaviour this book carefully invites both a focus and stimulus for personal reflection as well as highlighting contemporary shifts in the understanding of sin. Further the considerations forwarded
in fact go beyond sin recognising the journey is thus part of a broader process of reconciliation with God, others, the world, and oneself, a conversion and fullness of life which as Darragh (2010) eloquently claims “leave us not submerged in sin but carried beyond it” (p. 228)

Although the authors draw on their experiences of life in Aotearoa New Zealand it would be fair to argue that the examples and illustrations are useful, practical and may stimulate and challenge readers to initiate their own culturally specific reflections and conversations around sin and wrong doing. In summary then this book may serve as a relevant resource for adult education particularly for the Christian reader who is interested and concerned with sin and wrong doing or who require a framework or stimulus for updating and extending their understanding of sin.

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A perennial and urgent question in Catholic education is what makes a school Catholic? Kostoff writes from the perspective of an administrator with long experience in Ontario Catholic schools. In this constituency the question of the religious identity of Catholic schools takes on a particular imperative as the provincial school system is increasing challenged by a political culture which questions full government support of denominational schools.

The heart of this small but thought provoking book are twenty eight outcomes/expectations sheets, each of which sets out aspirational targets for Catholic schools. There is much to argue about in what Kostoff sees as the key aspects of religious identity of Catholic schools. This is, however, the strength of the book. It has no pretense to being a conceptual examination of some of the foundational issues surrounding Catholic schools in contemporary culture. That being said it does have a brief introduction which introduces some of the issues surrounding Catholic identity in educational settings. Kostoff uses, for example, the notion of intentionality, developed by Timothy Cook, as a guiding principle in the search for a sustaining identity for Catholic schools. Simply put, this is the idea that Catholic schools cannot maintain a pervasive religious dimension unless this is deliberately planned for, supported and evaluated. This insight provides the rationale for the book. It is not enough in contemporary culture to talk about religious identity of Catholic schools as an abstract concept. What needs to be developed are practical and authentic strategies which help realize this goal.

The outcomes/expectations give a sense of the direction and scope of the book. Outcome 1, for example, concerns evidence of an explicit Catholic culture manifested every day in many ways. Each of the eight descriptors are rated on a 1-6 scale, where 1 represents always in evidence and 6 is an area that may require attention and action (this seems quite mild and may be the “unsure” response as 5 is no evidence). The first descriptor is, “Liturgical year (Advent, Lent, Easter) respected and celebrated). Descriptor 2 is “Daily classroom prayer”. Descriptor 7 is “Church teaching and gospel values integrated into all curriculum areas”. Some other outcomes/expectations include: Outcome 11: Parental support -support of parents for the faith and other life of the school; Outcome 13, Sacramentality- Regular and meaningful celebration of sacramentality; Outcome 27, “Ecological stewardship- active ecological stewardship based on clear link with the Incarnation.”

The book operationalizes religious identity in Catholic schools and, thereby, provides a mechanism for auditing it in schools. Such an endeavour cannot be perfect and there are bound to be some areas that are overlooked or overemphasized. Kostoff himself does not give a cogent rationale for why he has chosen
these outcomes and matched them to certain descriptors. The discussion around this is, however, very instructive. For instance, for those working in Catholic schools I would suggest the twenty-eight outcome sheets could serve as an excellent focus for staff reflection and discussion. In such a forum important issues such as; which outcomes relate best to a particular school, which can be improved or deleted could be raised. This is a fruitful way to explore what being a Catholic school means.

In this vein, one major reservation I have about Kostoff’s approach is that he fails to distinguish between outcomes/expectations which are central and those which are more tangential. He does provide a justification for this, using the work of D’Orsa and D’Orsa. They developed the idea that Catholic schools should echo three scriptural voices, namely, that of the Torah, the Prophets and of Wisdom. It is central, however, to the Jewish sense of scripture that the Torah occupies a privileged place. If we apply this analogy to Catholic schools then it follows that the Torah voice, which D’Orsa and D’Orsa define as. “focus[ing] on what is central and always essential” [p18] would similarly have a privileged place in the outcomes/expectations placed on Catholic schools. As it stands here, by providing a wide range of outcomes, some schools could concretise on some which while important are not essential and at the same time neglect those which are foundational in establishing religious identity in Catholic schools. One such foundational area is the staffing of Catholic schools. If this does not reflect a strong emphasis on building up a community of strong and effective witnesses who are able not just to comply with but also to animate the religious dimension of the school then other outcomes/expectations become problematic.

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