

# Involvement in religious education: focus on spiritual in the aspect of tolerance...

[Education](#), [Importance of Education](#)



Young children's spirituality and their spiritual and religious development are of central relevance and importance to who they are as a person and who they will become in the future. Thus, it is of great importance that children's spiritual and religious capabilities are supported to enrich the development of the whole child. Religious Education programs are critical as they work to achieve this by nurturing young children's spiritual and religious capabilities. The following essay will explore Religious Education Programs specifically it's modern research on spiritual and religious capabilities. Furthermore, it will discuss the ways in which Religious Education nurtures and enriches the development of the whole child and caters for diverse spiritual and religious capabilities.

Spirituality has many different definitions; it can be so simple as looking for a higher meaning to life, or so complex that one can base their life, religion and overall life around it. According to McGunnigle and Hackett spirituality is a person's way of being and is considered to be one of the most important components of life, involving a sense of connectedness to the areas of self, others, the environment and god. The four-current spiritual capabilities include; prudence, justice, fortitude and temperance. These cardinal human virtues explore the capabilities of awareness of sense of who they are, what they can become and how they can contribute the community. Each of these key virtues is listed 'to do and become'. Identically, the religious capabilities is closely interwoven yet different to the spiritual capabilities. Religious capabilities focus on the ways people incorporate religious practices and knowledge to become religious. The theological virtues that link with the generic religious capabilities include; faith, hope and charity. Vast research

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has found to uphold young children's spiritual and religious capabilities teachers and educators must nurture these for them to be capable. Young children need to be capable to benefit these capabilities. McGunnigle and Hackett defined human capability as what people are able to do and be. Therefore, it is at utmost importance to encourage and develop these capabilities for children to be able to search for God in wonder and awe as they pose questions about the good in themselves and others exploring their spiritual self, wholeness and religion. Above all, the Inclusion of religious capabilities in conjunction with spiritual capabilities can further deepen students' opportunities for learning. Lastly, children are empowered through the spirituality to love themselves. Henceforth the importance for educational teachers in these programs to nurture children's spiritual and religious capabilities for them to be capable.

Religious Education programs are at the utmost importance to enriching and nurturing the spiritual and religious capabilities in young children. Religious Education programs follow the Religious education policies to enable children to understand, explain and justify the Christian message that is given by the Catholic church to follow Christ's footsteps. This entwines closely to children's spiritual and religious capabilities as it provides children time to delve in their wondering, strengthen their spirituality and practice their faith. Moreover, the intentional nurturing in the early years is argued to be of the most significant importance with research claiming that if young children's spirituality is not intentionally nurtured it will fade and be lost. Therefore, making it at the utmost importance for Religious Education programs to

nurture these two major capabilities. Studies show Religious Education programs nurture these capabilities through the support of early childhood units. Such as, 'The little children come to me' unit. This unit guides children in the early years to know of God's great love and presence raising religious awareness in young children. 'The Little Children Come to Me' unit nurtures and satisfies children's needs by building their identity, resilience and encouraging self-discipline in their learning environment. Additionally, Religious Education programs constantly nurture these capabilities by building children's resilience to become capable. In summary, children are interested in the meaning of life, understand life as a journey and are able to pose questions of ultimate meaning. Consequently, Religious Education plays a vital part in nurturing young children allowing their spiritual and religious capabilities not to be faded or lost in the process.

Looking at the wholeness of a child and enriching their learning and capabilities, Religious Education programs play a major role in exercising a whole child approach. Hence, Religious educational teachers playing a further role in inspiring these capabilities. Referring to Bronfenbrenner's ecology system theory it is necessary to consider the whole child when exploring religion. This is significant as young children have different ways of understanding and connecting with their faith from their outer influences, such as their community or family members understanding of religion. Teachers should ensure employ a whole child teaching approach to gain a better attachment with their students, thus allowing students to feel at ease when learning and feeling emotionally connected to their teacher. For

instance, when children are engaging with their spirituality and religious faith, they need to feel comfortable when sharing and learning. In fact, opening up to these in-depth thoughts and teachings, students will become more in touch with themselves. Teachers should however be considerate that discussing spirituality and religion is very personal and hard to express, especially for young children. Teachers in Religious Education can overcome these challenges by having resources manipulated to a certain child to make it easier for that child to open up and explore their greater understandings. Therefore, seeking a whole child approach enriches their development across the spiritual religious domain. Lastly, teachers have a vital role in enriching the whole child through Religious programs entwines closely to the child's spiritual and religious capabilities. Since Religious Education integrates faith, life and culture it allows children's natural spirituality to be nurtured, and consequently allow religious capabilities to develop. In summary, Religious Education forms a learning environment for children in the early years nurturing their spiritual and religious capabilities ensuring a whole child approach.

In Religious Education programs children come from a wide range of religious traditions, ethnic backgrounds and Christian denominations. Therefore, it is vital for Religious programs to acknowledge and be aware of this diversity in order to sufficiently nurture the development of the whole child. McGunnigle and Hackett believe Religious Education programs empower young children to live in the spirit and faith of Christ by 'embracing the diversity of the Earth and all its people'. Therefore, to live in the spirit

and faith of Christ it is important for Religious Education programs and teachers to have a diverse understanding and notice all children, believers or not, as a unique, whole child. According to Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Diversity can be nurtured throughout these programs by promoting cultural awareness in all children, support and develop a sense of place, identity with their natural world. Furthermore by ensuring the interests, abilities and culture of every child children will be able to feel safe, secure and supported in their environment.

- Diversity relates closely to the development of the child as we when we talk about the whole child we talk about their diversity.
- More on Catering for learner diversity
- Notes: As currently stated in the .... 5% of catholic schools need to have non-Catholic students, this reflects with our Australian multi-cultural society. In having a religiously diverse school. Following in the footsteps of Jesus as he shared his stories and taught the non-believers. Teaching religion to a diverse class does not intent to push our teachings onto someone but teach it as a way to broaden one's spirituality.

In conclusion research strongly suggests that if young children's spirituality is ignored it will fade and subsequently be lost. Therefore, it is of great importance that Religious Education programs and teachers nurture and enrich the development of the whole child, while catering for diversity and different religious capabilities. Teachers should harness children's spirituality and give them open-ended opportunities as all children can be spiritual even

if they are not religious and baptised under our God. Otherwise, If a child's fundamental human-spiritual needs are not met and nurtured to enable them to establish a Religious identity.