

Comparison of catechetical activities and religious education



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The first learning area in the Catholic school curriculum as well as the first priority in the system is Religious Education (CECWA, Policy Statement, 2004). The Religious Education program in Catholic schools is implemented to guide students in learning the teachings of the Gospel as proclaimed by the Catholic Church. It is there to help students develop a sense of Christianity and proclaim the mystery of Christ to non-Christians (CECWA, Policy Statement, 2004). Religious Education must permeate through the whole school. It is important to recognise the moral convention which is supported by the catholic faith. The Gospel of Christ must be valued across the whole curriculum. Catholic schools today play a vital role in the mission of the Church and in particular in Australian society. The mission of the Church translates through Religious Education teachers, as teachers we are able to evangelise. We are able to bring the good news of God into all of the community, spreading the word of who God and Jesus were and what they did (Paul VI, Evangelisation in the Modern World, 1975). The evangelisation of God has 2 important components, the Christian witness and the ministry of the word. As a Christian witness, all teachers are involved, it is when all staff must act in a Christ like manner, living and supporting the ethos. Whereas the ministry of the word is when the gospels are the word, living in the scripture. This essay will cover the difference between catechetical activities and religious education, the structure and content of Religious education units in Western Australia and the link to the divine revelation and the different faith situations that can be encountered in a classroom.

According to Ryan (2014), there are 3 approaches to the teachings of religious education; catechetical, comparative and educational. Catechesis

and Religious education are 2 components of the ministry of the word. In the modern religious education classroom, there has been a shift from using the catechetical approach to using the educational approach. The catechetical approach that was used nearly fifty years ago is based around nurturing the existing faith of individuals, it aims to help people grow in their faith (Goldburg, 2008). Whereas the educational approach, such as religious education, is the process of learning about faith. Both catechism and religious education are activities of evangelisation, they both contribute and develop the Christian faith through the spreading of the good news in different ways. According to Holohan (1999), Religious education and catechetical activities support each other in times of negative attitudes towards religion. For example, students can resist the discussion of faith, they may be closed off to the effects of the ministry of the word. In situations such as this, religious education can still provide evangelisation of students. Religious education can always be offered to the non-Christians and non-believers. Although, religious education and catechesis have their similarities they also have their differences. The main difference of the educational and catechetical approach is that religious education does not just assume that students have Christian faith, it is open to non-believers. Whereas the catechetical approach, assumes a level of Christian faith in those that will be acknowledging and receiving it (Hologan, 1999). The receivers are different for these approaches, students within the same school year level will progress through religious education, where groups and individuals of the same stage of conversion will progress though catechesis. Some other differences between these 2 approaches include the methodology and principles. For example, the catholic educational principles are reflected <https://assignbuster.com/comparison-of-catechetical-activities-and-religious-education/>

through religious education and catechetical principles are reflected through catechesis. It is still common today for there to be confusion between religious education and catechetical activities and whether or not they are the same activity, but it is said by CECWA (2004), that religious education compliments the catechetical activities of the individual's school, parish and family.

In schools, the Religious Education program plans to help students to understand and learn the teachings of the Gospel as proclaimed by the Catholic Church. Throughout the Religious Education program students will develop a sense of Christianity and how as Christians they are able to live their lives as part of their learning. There are 8 principles of the Religious Education curriculum that must be followed in all Catholic schools in Western Australia; the RE program must complement catechesis, the RE program is promulgated by the diocesan Bishop, RE must always respect parents as the first educators of their children, the RE curriculum must have the same commitment as all other learning areas, RE must serve the evangelisation process, RE shall relate all Catholic faith to students life experiences, RE must always present catholic beliefs in the context of Christian promise of Salvation and most important teachers of RE shall be committed Catholics (CECWA, 2004). These principles are a guideline of how a religious education class should be structured and outlines the content and how to teach it. In regard to revelation, students should be experiencing God through these principles using their life experiences and experiences of faith. Revelation, at its most basic, is a way of communication, it's a way of telling or expressing to someone who we are. It is the process in which God self-discloses and

self-communicates with humanity. Knox (1999) proclaimed that God communicates who God is to us, God wants to be known and wants to be experienced and we are able to accept and recognise his revelation. The content being taught in religious education activities in Western Australia is done through the revelation of God. This revelation is done through teaching content based around student life experiences, faith, creation, history, prophets, Jesus Christ and the Church.

Religious education courses have independent and different programmes that are designed for students who are non-believers, who are searchers or doubters and who are believers. These Religious Education programmes will differ in how much content and exposure of God is presented, the language that is used by the teacher or educator and how each one of these programmes in Religious Education relates to life experiences of the students. For example, for those students that are believers of God, less time will be needed to explain the teachings about Jesus, where as those students who are non-believers or doubters and searchers will need more explanation about these teachings.

The teachings of Religious Education to non-believers and doubters or searchers seeks to show the mystery of Christ. As teachers, you need to demonstrate and explain what faith in Jesus looks like, feels like and expose the knowledge behind the message of Christ without imposing and forcing it on students.

Teacher also need to account for the students who are baptised Christians that are no longer engaging in their faith. These students cannot be categorised as non-believers and teachers must respond with New

Evangelisation. The process and response of new evangelisation proclaims the message to these students, it gives the students an opportunity to reawake their faith and live an active Christian life.

The content of Religious Educations needs to be appropriate the students situations of faith, when teaching non-believers and searcher or doubters, the content must not be adjusted or simplified. It needs to be authentic which will assist in the developed of the student's faith (Holohan, 1999).

Adolescents today may not be concerned with attending Church on a regular basis, but they are concerned with what makes life worthwhile. The only way to guide an understanding for these concerns, is to understand the concept of spirituality and the yearning of youth.

Spirituality can be defined multiple ways, whether it be the way we understand the meaning of our lives, the guidance that gets you out of bed in the morning or the sense of a relationship and connectedness to self, others and the world. Just like human spirituality, Christian spirituality sees life as the Spirit of God and understands that Christ is always the centre of energy and power (Hackett & McGunnigle, 2015).

Students religious yearnings for identity, purpose and guidance can be achieved through the inculturation of numerous practices. According to Holohan (1999), inculturation is the catholic belief that every human culture should incorporate Gods presence and influence. Holohan (1999) also suggested that inculturation needs to frame and identify what God is already doing in different cultures. The spirituality and yearnings of adolescents can be fulfilled and strengthened through the inculturation practices in Religious

education. Prayer, meditation and journaling are a few of the practices that enrich and enlighten student's faith (Canales, 2009). Prayer is modelled into the Christian community through the person of prayer, Jesus Christ. Prayer is sometimes used to express individual spirituality amongst youth, but more commonly it is used to reflect. Teaching youth to pray in Religious Education classes and offering them numerous prayer experiences can empower their spirituality and allow them to develop a more compelling relationship with God, in which they can then address throughout different aspects of their life (Canales, 2009). Meditation is an intense form of prayer that can stimulate the reflective practices of spirituality, which requires a strong sense of self identity in youth. Through meditation in religious education classes, adolescents will deepen their awareness of God and use their life experiences to understand the nearness and relatedness to Christ. The use of regular journaling activities can help adolescents discover patterns of spirituality in their lives. These individuals can use journaling to account for the patterns of God being present in their lives. Ultimately, these few practices of inculturation help develop the spirituality of adolescents which moves these individual's closer towards Christianity and understanding faith.

Religion must always be the first priority of learning in a Catholic school. It is implemented to help students learn the teachings of God through the Gospel which is proclaimed by the Catholic Church. Catechesis and Religious Education work hand in hand to offer these teachings to students who are of faith, students who are non-believers and to students who are doubters or searchers. Religious Education use the revelation of God to teach the content and form the structure of these classes. It reveals God through creation,

faith, life experiences, history and the Church. For those students who religiously yearn for identity, purpose and guidance can use practices of meditation, journaling and prayer to move closer to God. The process of inculturation gives students the opportunity to use these practices in different areas of their life.

References:

- Canales, A. D. (2009). A noble quest: Cultivating Christian spirituality in Catholic adolescents and the
 - usefulness of 12 pastoral practices. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality* , 14 (1), 63-77.
- Catholic Education Commission Western Australia. (2004). Religious Education. Retrieved from:
 - <https://www.cewa.edu.au/policy/religious-education/>
- Goldberg, P. (2008). Teaching religion in Australian schools. *Numen* , 55 (2-3), 241-271.
- Holohan, G. J. (1999). Australian Religious Education-: Facing the Challenges: a Discussion on Evangelisation,
 - Catechesis and Religious Education Questions Raised for Parishes and Catholic Schools by the General Directory for Catechesis. National Catholic Education Commission [for] Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference Education Committee.
- Know, I. (1999). *Theology for Teachers* . (3rd ed). Ontario, Canada. Novalis.

- McGunnigle, C., & Hackett, C. (2015). Spiritual and Religious Capabilities for Catholic Schools. *eJournal of Catholic Education in Australasia* , 2 (1), 6.
- Oppong, S. H. (2013). Religion and identity. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research* , 3 (6),
 - 10-16