

Report on teacher interviews (April 2015)

Executive summary

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with nineteen volunteer teachers and responses were categorised according to emergent themes using an inductive approach of data analysis and thematic content analysis. The current report focuses on the respondents' perceptions of a) the characteristics and purposes of Catholic schools and b) the integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum.

Interviewees, particularly females, emphasized the importance of the characteristic of care, community spirit and hospitality as key features of Catholic schools. A number of those with experience of working in government schools drew favourable comparisons between the two systems in these respects. Catholic schools were also portrayed as nurturing, safe and caring environments. Many interviewees highlighted the holistic nature of education in Catholic schools with some remarking that Catholic schools do not have a monopoly on pastoral care or values education. Many interviewees emphasized the evangelical role of Catholic schools in the modern world (including some references to school charism) as well as the centrality of prayer and liturgy and education around the Catholic worldview. Values education was seen as an important characteristic of Catholic schools from the dual perspectives of teaching morality, ethics and role modelling on the one hand and promoting social justice, gospel values and citizenship on the other hand.

There was a general sense that the integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum was not a high priority in schools and interviewees had a variety of understandings of what such integration might look like. Such understandings fall under five main headings ranging from:

- positive reactions
- limited planned integration using individual subjects
- incidental teachable moments
- teacher-student relationships ('I teach who I am')
- strong reservations regarding the feasibility or desirability of integration.

English was the school subject seen to provide the best opportunities for integration while other subjects mentioned include Science, History and Economics. One interviewee had, at different times, worked with teachers from different subjects in promoting social justice. Interviewees were particularly enthusiastic about the effectiveness of teachable moments and commented favourably on their unforced, organic nature. Some teachers stressed the particular value of student questions as springboards for teachable moments. Respondents who believed in the personal witness approach (I teach who I am) emphasised the importance of student-teacher relationships and role modelling. The reservations expressed by interviewees about an integrated approach were primarily based on perceived lacunae in teachers' knowledge. Two interviewees identified the need to develop a curriculum framework that would facilitate integration while reflecting recent ACARA developments such as cross-curricular themes and general capabilities.

Introduction

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with nineteen volunteer teachers using the interview schedule at Appendix 1. The purpose of the exercise was to generate qualitative data that would complement the findings of the survey of teachers' beliefs, opinions and attitudes in Catholic schools in Queensland.

Interviews lasted between 30 and 40 minutes and they were audio recorded with the consent of the interviewee. The main focus of these interviews was on the purposes and characteristics of Catholic schools, the integration of a faith-based identity across the formal curriculum, teachers' knowledge and professional development and challenges facing Catholic education systems.

Interview responses were categorised according to emergent themes using an inductive approach of data analysis and thematic content analysis (Lewis, 2009). Transcripts were studied, themes were identified and responses were indexed, organised and classified in line with the emerging themes (Creswell, 1994).

The profile of the interviewees by school type and gender is as follows:

School type	Female	Male	Total
Primary	3	3	6
Secondary	8	5	13
Total	11	8	19

These interviewees represented a good spread in terms of age and experience of teaching in Catholic schools. Four of these volunteers worked in the RI sector (2 male, 2 female), all at secondary level, while the remainder were in BCE schools.

The current report focuses on the respondents' perceptions of a) the characteristics and purposes of Catholic schools and b) the integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum. Respondents from the primary sector are identified by P while those from secondary are identified by S (PM means male teacher working at primary, SF means female teacher working at secondary level etc.)

Perceptions of the characteristics and purposes of Catholic schools

The main characteristics identified by interviewees were in keeping with data emerging from the survey of the beliefs, attitudes and opinions of teachers in Queensland Catholic schools (Gleeson and O'Neill, 2015). These can be summed up under the headings of caring community, holistic education, faith-based education and values education.

Caring community

Interviewees, particularly female interviewees, emphasized the importance of the characteristic of care in a number of related ways which may be summed up under two main headings: community spirit and hospitality; nurturing, safe and caring environment.

Community spirit and hospitality

Some made specific mention of the importance of hospitality e.g.

... being in a Catholic school means that first of all you welcome the children (PM)

It's the sense of hospitality, feeling you're welcome... everybody is welcome to enrol (SF).

The perceived importance of community and family spirit was mentioned by a number of interviewees:

We have a definite guideline from our charism to be together in heart and mind, be part of the community... that is the basis of every decision we make (SF)

In Catholic schools a very strong sense of community is encouraged... (SF)

They all are community focused on top of their normal studies (PM)

There is a fantastic sense of community here... we have an almost family environment within the school.... (SF)

... a sense of family spirit is very important. That has been strong in all the [Catholic] schools I've been at (SF)

The cornerstone to a Catholic school [is to] build firm relationships amongst parents and families, then it allows them to experience the presence of Jesus perhaps (??)

There's a strong sense of community, everybody's welcome, parents are welcome here all the time, people from other places are welcome here all the time... feeling you're welcome is very important (SF).

.... we are a bayside community and people do talk about the community aspect of the school (SF)

Parents say that Catholic schools give students a bit of structure, routine and discipline and also a sense of community which I think is a good purpose of Catholic schools. We do that really well here and everyone really enjoys the sense of community (SM).

The clear implication is that Catholic schools should be inclusive places e.g. ‘we would never deny anybody enrolment because they had a disability or a difficulty or come from Sudan or whatever’ (SF).

Some made comparisons with the state system from the perspective of community:

Their interaction with the local community and also with social justice groups in the broader community is stronger in Catholic schools... (SF)

The real difference [with state schools] is that our students learn to give back to the community, not always to take... (SF)

I found the environments of Catholic schools much more caring and supportive... (SF)

We come across a group of people who don't want a faith based education but do want the sense of community and belonging. They often use the discipline word we don't need to discipline the children better than the state schools because we look after the relationship (SF)

Our students are all community focused on top of their normal studies. Whereas I don't think people I've taught in the state system aren't community aware and aware of problems in community when they don't contribute to a community.... (SM)

In my experience, Catholic schools are a lot more pastoral.... teachers are encouraged to build a really positive rapport with students based on those Catholic values that the school tries to instil in all of those students.... teaching them respect and compassion while striving for excellence is something that I've found in every Catholic school that I've taught in (SF).

Some interviewees made specific mention of the importance of hospitality e.g.

... being in a Catholic school means that first of all you welcome the children (PM)

It's the sense of hospitality, feeling you're welcome... everybody is welcome to enrol (SF).

Nurturing, safe and caring environment

Interviewees also recognised the importance of a safe and caring school environment:

The main purpose of Catholic Education is creating a supportive and safe environment built on Christian values (SF)

It's a safe and supportive environment where they're nourished by education from the Christian perspective (SF)

This environment was also seen as helpful to non-Catholic children:

It's a safe place for non-Catholic children to ask questions and get the correct answers (SF).

A female primary teacher described ‘the school’s pastoral care system [as] very good, particularly when families are experiencing distress’. Her enthusiasm was influenced by ‘the depth of love and support’ that she received from her colleagues at a time of personal tragedy – ‘it was excellent. We're all in this together, what we do affects other people so’.

One secondary female teacher remarked that ‘we become pseudo-parents and pseudo-nurses’ while another commented that ‘we approach everything with a high degree of care for our students ... they're a lot more caring people when they leave school’.

Summary

Interviewees placed great emphasis on community spirit and hospitality as characteristics of Catholic schools and a number of those who had experience of working in state schools drew comparisons between the two systems in this respect. Catholic schools were also portrayed as nurturing, safe and caring environments.

Holistic education

Various respondents emphasised the holistic nature of education in Catholic schools as well as the role of Catholic schools in promoting moral and spiritual development.

We spend a lot more time trying to develop the whole student, as opposed to just getting an academic outcome. I think that's a uniquely Catholic approach in a Catholic school.... (SM)

It's a more holistic Catholic perspective... We have a good social wellbeing program (SF)

... they're actually quite well rounded as people.... They've got a broader sense of the world because of being in a more open school (SF)

Parents sending their boys here want that holistic development (SM)

... it's really holistic education, it's not just purely academia, we look at the student as a whole, spiritually, culturally and academically (SF)

Not every interviewee felt that a holistic view of education is motivated by religious beliefs:

Teachers want to develop the whole person... from what I've seen that motivation isn't driven by religion (SF)

Again, several interviewees drew comparisons with the state system:

I certainly believe that Cath Ed schools produce a more rounded person, a person who is more empathetic towards others in society, and that's through their studies of religion and ethics that they actually have to study as part of their curriculum (PM)

When you're working in a state school the legislation or the curriculum intent is at the basis of every decision. You're forgetting that there's a little person there that needs to work with

you and that it's the relationship that you get with the kids, or the opportunity to develop that relationship through their families is not just legislation or content curriculum driven. We're looking at the whole person first. I think that's the big difference (SF)

We spend a lot more time trying to develop the whole student, as opposed to just getting an academic outcome. I think that's a uniquely Catholic approach in a Catholic school (SM)

In a Catholic school it's more pastoral, more holistic (PM)

I think a Catholic school is more pastoral. It's more holistic. I think you can't sort of talk about the development of a kid without mentioning spirituality.

While Catholic schools must follow rules and regulation, they are willing to bend them a little bit to serve the pastoral need of a person more than the state system does (MP)....

I was able to do a couple of pracs at state schools [and] it did strike me how similar they were in the end ... it's just that there's more of a vocational or a church mission type feel of teaching in a Catholic school (PM)

If I compare my school to what I've experienced in the UK and even in Queensland, the thing that really stands out for me is service programs and values education. So I think there's a much bigger focus on developing the whole person and developing global citizens... in my experience that is something that faith based schools have done differently to state schools (SF)

I think we probably have a more holistic approach to a child's development because we are able to include that final element that the secular organisations really can't touch. If that makes sense (PM)

Another teacher however drew an interesting comparison between cpd provision in state and Catholic schools:

In state schools the professional development is all about what you're teaching in the classroom.... the professional development that I've had here is about nourishing all parts of you, as well as your curriculum.

Others however were at pains to point out that Catholic schools do not have a monopoly on pastoral care or values education:

Staff don't realise that there are plenty of teachers in Education Queensland schools that do that as well, that are pastorally caring, that foster their kids and all that sort of stuff (SM)

We're happy to stand behind social justice in a sharing, caring way, but we're not necessarily naming it as Catholic. We're happy to go out and fundraise every time there's a tornado

somewhere, but Christians or Catholics don't have a monopoly on social justice... It's a human rights question (SF).

The purpose is to serve... trying to go out in the world as a public face of principles and ways of being. I believe in the social justice model of options for the poor, justice centred, equity centred service... Jesus, that service of humility, equity, to constantly struggle and reflect on where you sit and how you buffer your own students to cope with the world, to give them a place and a compass and all of those things. I think that's the core job of the Catholic school.... We struggle against the leagues tables... we really do need to grapple against this drive for economic rationalism (SF).

One interviewee talked about the importance of holistic education for the development of the professionals of the future:

It's holistic in terms of equipping kids across a holistic area. These kids are going to be the researchers and the doctors and the workers in a whole range of different areas into the future of all sorts of ethical minefields (SM).

Others emphasised the importance of moral and spiritual development.

You can't talk about the development of a kid without having spirituality as part of the day.... I think that's probably one of the defining characteristics of a Catholic school (PM).

Parents choose us because they know their son will also get developed spiritually and morally. They'll get a boy who's got some faith, some spine, and a bit of get-up-and-go and some compassion... (SM)

The children need to develop their own spirituality. That's our job to give them that base.... (PF).

A male primary teacher however felt that 'a lot of parents just naturally assume, because you're a Catholic school, you're a private school'.

Summary

Interviewees were acutely aware of the holistic nature of education in Catholic schools. Although teachers generally believed that the Catholic system was particularly committed to holistic education, others pointed out that Catholic schools do not have a monopoly on pastoral care or values education. Some respondents highlighted the important contribution of Catholic Education to the moral and spiritual development of students.

Faith-based

Interviewees highlighted the centrality of a faith-based approach from a number of different perspectives that included: handing on the faith; evangelization; prayer and liturgy; Catholic worldview and perspectives; charisma and symbols.

Handing on the faith

A female secondary teacher set the tone when she said that ‘people who teach about faith consider it important.... there’s a real recognition of the importance of faith in Catholic schools when we teach them our subjects, religion or study religion or whatever it is’. Other teachers also emphasised faith-related aspects of Catholic schools:

- Our students are nourished from the Christian perspective (SF)
- Having the person of Jesus Christ front and centre...in a Catholic school the history and foundation are wrapped up in a faith... it’s more than an educational institution.... there’s a real recognition of the importance of faith in Catholic schools (SF)
- ... the Jesus centred philosophies are central to what we do (SF)
- A community around our faith has hopefully inspired parents to want their child to come here (PF)

Evangelisation

A number of interviewees, particularly primary teachers, emphasized their evangelical roles. An experienced teacher who was strongly committed to the Catholic faith expressed concerns regarding the diminishing levels of faith he had observed over the years. He was particularly conscious of the reduced levels of support from the home and the implications for the work of the teacher.

My understanding of my identity and the way I teach has had to change because of the students that I have. If I was in a school that was all Catholic and they all went to Mass, there would be a lot less of the foundation stuff. The kids would have received that at home. The kids today aren't receiving that at home, so that's my job to ensure that they have an understanding and an interest... We're the face of the church to these guys. They don't visit an actual church building anymore. But we are the church.... I don't mean to be presumptuous but we teachers are the priests and the brothers and the sisters.... that defines a Catholic school (PM).

This certainly was not an isolated opinion:

The clientele is not necessarily predominantly Catholic now.... if you were to do surveys of religious people they would see that some schools are maybe 50% Catholic, some may be 45. I do know some are probably even lower and so that's one big change.... (PM)

It's really clear that the future of faith-based schools is to be the church of Australia and the sooner that we can get the clergy to wake up and smell the roses around that the better (SM)

Out of my class of 28 I would probably have two kids who would sometimes see the inside of a church.... So the religion that I teach now has to be essentially very different than when I first started teaching at a Catholic school [when] it was more the experience of church (PM)

I am in a situation now and have been in many Catholic schools in country Queensland where I have got maybe 40 per cent kids saying that they're Catholic.... a characteristic of a Catholic school is obviously having the person of Jesus Christ front and centre (SF)

... a lot of our families are not heavily involved in parish or community... so it allows us to make that link between the church and families (PM)

In our schools it's evangelisation really... three per cent of our students actually attend Mass and - so we don't have a lot of experience or knowledge amongst the student body about what it is to be a Catholic (PF)

Students who aren't Catholic themselves or have a very little understanding of the Catholic religion and other religions [are] given a platform to learn (SF)

We are the church in this day and age. We have far more influence and connectivity with young people and families than the church does (SM).

.... the cornerstone to a Catholic school is to build firm relationships amongst parents and families... and that allows them experience the presence of Jesus.... (PM)

The new [RE] curriculum involves Judaism [which] opens up discussion about the history of our faith. I have children in my class who are Buddhist, who are Muslim, who are no religion at all. My job is still to show them that there is this history and that no matter what prophet you believe in, the idea is that we love one another. We nurture one another and we should respect that about each other (PF)

Some teachers expressed concern regarding the indifference of some parents and their failure to respect faith-based identity

This year we had to do our internal review and I was the leader of the religious identity and culture group. Parents' survey responses were really interesting [like] "the school wastes a lot of time praying, you're doing plenty of that religious stuff, in fact you could probably cut it down". So when parents don't see the value in it, it really is up to the teachers and the school community to nurture that part of the child (PM)

Sometimes parents will want their child withdrawn from the RE class because they're not a practicing Catholic... they still want their child to have a good education in a Catholic school but they don't necessarily want them to have a Catholic education (SF)

... the perception that people have in the Catholic school is that the teachers will keep you in line is a bit sad because they don't really talk about the faith (PM).

Prayer and liturgy

The centrality of prayer and liturgy featured prominently in the interviews:

We study the Jesus story... then we celebrate it through prayer and through liturgy (PF)

Something my school does well is celebrating the liturgical life of the church and bringing it to life for children. We mark out the seasons of Lent and Easter.... There's like these visible markers (PF)

The liturgies that we have at the end of every term, special feast days, et cetera, et cetera, throughout... even just right down to simple things where the college prayer is used at the start of every, at every meeting or gathering of the community, including even a parent information night about curriculum issues. We always start with a unique prayer. I think that's very Catholic (SM)

We don't preach but we teach religion and we do that by knowledge, study of the scriptures, prayer and celebration of liturgy (PM, APRE).

The second stream to it all is the religious life of the school and we have a school prayer on the kids' diary (PF).

Catholic worldview and Catholic perspectives

The role of Catholic schools in introducing students to basic Catholic beliefs and perspectives came up frequently in the interviews:

Catholic schools allow students to approach the world with a religious perspective, a Catholic perspective (PM)

There is also a sense that we are part of a bigger picture, that we're not just an isolated little school ... Catholicism is an international network if you think about it (SF)

You need to be careful that the values and the expectations of Catholicism are very clear in all the classes no matter what it is (SM)

The main purpose of Catholic school is to really allow us to identify or to connect the religious life of the school and the religious curriculum.... this is increasingly important today with the number of students who are becoming un-churched... we imbue that information for the children and they make their light shine (SF)

... another purpose is to help students realise who they are as people, to have a different interpretation of their life. What does my life mean in the eyes of God... they receive so much information from the newspapers [and] all the social media online... whereas Catholic schools nourish who they are and encourage them to take action on the word of God... (SM)

Charism and symbols

Some referred to the relationship between faith and school charism while others had little awareness of it. A school principal suggested that

The number one aim is to support Catholic education of Catholic kids in whatever charism your school is but with Jesus Christ as a focus.... One of the great things about Catholic schools is that the values are explicitly said aloud. So for example the staff and students know the five characteristics of the school's charism... (SF)

Others emphasised the role of Catholic symbols

Symbols of Catholicism are really present in the logos and the branding of the school (SF)

We have the religious symbols, the cross in every room, our name, our logo (SM)

Summary

Many interviewees emphasized the evangelical role of Catholic schools in the modern world (with some references to school charism) as well as the importance of promoting prayer and liturgy and introducing children to the Catholic worldview.

Values education

Many interviewees mentioned the contribution of Catholic Education to values education. For example one school principal argued that 'one of the great things about Catholic schools is that the values are explicitly said aloud and that Catholic Education can be a wonderful mode of breaking down some of those barriers and getting other religions and also Catholic kids to learn tolerance.... '.

A male secondary teacher saw values-based education as the common attraction for parents:

We have parents and kids who are really poor and we have people from the top end of town, but what they all want for their kids in values-based education is the same.... any time you get a community of people who share that desire around those common values, together then you can really achieve great things. Parents pretty much all say the same thing, that they want a values-based education for their kids....

A number of sub-themes emerged under the broad heading of values education including the teaching of morality, ethics and citizenship; promoting gospel values; social justice; role modelling.

Teaching morality, ethics and citizenship

The role of Catholic schools in teaching morality and ethics and promoting citizenship was mentioned frequently by respondents, e.g.

Teachers want every kid to leave as a global citizen, as a well-rounded person (SF)

Our main purpose is to skill our kids so that they're positive and productive members of society in an ethical and moral sense and in a physical sense and an economic sense and so on (SM)

When you do enrolment interviews with parents, whilst they may not have the language, they pretty much all say the same thing, that they want a values-based education for their kids... (SM)

We've recently been talking about abortion within the state of Queensland with Year 12s from a Catholic perspective and students need to understand that there is the approach of a church and there is also the approach of society (SM)

To make sure the students are good productive little citizens that give something back to their community (SF)

A lot of parents just send kids to Catholic schools because of our good values (PF)

The main purpose of faith-based education is to provide them with a framework, a scaffold, knowledge, tools, skills, in order to make good, solid, ethical, moral decisions in relation to what they encounter in the world (SM).

One teacher suggested that Catholic schools are 'a lot broader thinking in terms of society and the challenges that society has and I think they're much better contributors to society... than probably a kid in a state school would be' (SM).

Gospel values

There was a strong sense that Catholic schools promoted gospel values e.g.

We have explicit values and we're teaching about Jesus Christ. It's actually an invitation to be part of something bigger than just learning subjects (SF)

It is gospel values and parents are happy and comfortable (SM)

Teaching students the values of respect and compassion while striving for excellence is something that I've found in every Catholic school that I've taught in (SF)

People... students and parents can still associate with the core gospel values (SF)

Anyone's welcome to come here as long as they buy into what we're on about, which is the gospel values (MP)

It's made very clear to people that we have explicit values and that we're teaching about Jesus Christ (SF)

One teacher observed that, although 'you're taught values [like respect, dignity and social justice also in state schools] there's no difference [yet] we can hang it on Jesus.... that names it' (PM).

Social justice

A number of teachers highlighted the relationship between Catholic education and social justice

We've got a very eco-justice theme because of our environmental issues with the school and the protected species that we have in our environmental park and that sort of stuff. That notion of stewardship is very strong through the school as well. ... (SM)

We seek to educate students from a Catholic perspective... social justice issues, looking at how you can bring the teachings of Jesus into your life to make yourself better.... social justice as explained in the human rights charter is probably our biggest one here (SM)

... a sense of social justice is another very obvious characteristic (SF)

.... in the last few years we are trying to educate them more about *why* we are doing social justice and outreach.... a lot of schools are finding more creative ways to develop a link between the formal curriculum and living your life (PM).

The underlying ethos of the school is how they approach the marginalised through opening the doors for everyone and acknowledging the dignity of each person through their teaching and in that way living the Catholic ethos (PF)

Our focus is very much on service, justice and solidarity... our kids can associate with service such as [our founder's] work with the poor (SF)

Social justice is probably the biggest one in this school We have a dedicated person who is part of the middle management, and their role is to ensure that social justice themes - as explained in the human rights education charter - are implemented across every department throughout the school from Year 5 to Year 12... The idea in Catholic schools is to educate the students from a Catholic perspective; so looking at social justice issues, looking at how you can bring the teachings of Jesus into your life to make yourself better.... anywhere between fortnightly and monthly I work in our service program (SM)

A female secondary teacher, while being 'happy to stand behind social justice in a sharing, caring, peace-loving way' pointed out that she was 'not necessarily naming it as catholic':

... the strongest thing going for the Catholic church is its philosophy... The purpose is to serve... trying to go out in the world as a public face of principles and ways of being. I believe in the social justice model of options for the poor, justice centred, equity centred service... Jesus, that service of humility, equity, to constantly struggle and reflect on where you sit and how you buffer your own students to cope with the world, to give them a place and a compass and all of those things. I think that's the core job of the Catholic school.... We struggle against the leagues tables... we really do need to grapple against this drive for economic rationalism.

Teachers as role models

Some interviewees emphasised the responsibility of teachers to act as role models for their students:

Teachers in Catholic schools have to live by the way they treat [and] talk to the students and the families (PM)

... displaying values such as respect and compassion yourself as a teacher is really important (SF)

I think our teachers model what a Christian person or adult should be to their students and their students are certainly well guided by them (SM)

Teachers will best model values from the behaviour of the teacher. So, how the teacher deals with their behaviour management, that they are compassionate, that they don't have favourites (SF).

...teachers in Catholic schools have to live it... by the way they treat people, the way they talk to the students and to the families (PM)

Summary

Values education was seen by interviewees as an important characteristic of Catholic schools from the dual perspectives of teaching morality and ethics and acting as role models on the one hand and promoting social justice, gospel values and citizenship on the other hand.

Curriculum integration

Differing interpretations of the meaning of integrating a Catholic perspective in a planned way across the formal curriculum inevitably emerged. Some felt it had to do with the place of prayer in the school:

Most of the lessons in this school start with a prayer... The whole school stands at the end of the day and we have a prayer over the PA. So it's not as though religion is inside the mathematics that they're being taught or the English, but it is inside their classroom (SM).

We have a school prayer that's in the kids' diary. We have the religious symbols, the cross in every room, all those sorts of things, the [school name]... (SM)

Retreat days allow them to experience different forms of prayer (PM)

The students are connecting with the higher being through different forms of meditation (SF)

Others saw integration as emanating from, and grounded in, aspects of RE.

The RE programs that BCE have put in place have always lent themselves to integration while still enabling religion to stand on its own.... you hear a lot about inter-connected or interrelated.... we try and link up all our KLAs to religion as best we can.... Like anything else it could be better but I think we're doing a really good job at the moment (APRE, PM)

While [integration is] a major component, it's not a be all and end all, because we look at students holistically, we have a very strong pastoral curriculum [and] religious education programme ... the younger students still engage with their spirituality [while] senior students look at ethical issues in SOR... from the church's perspective versus the secular perspective (SF).

A lot of the history of the church is included throughout the curriculum... (SM)

Two male primary teachers associated integration with immersion and outreach activities:

We'd also do things like a sleep out for our 6 and 7s for the homeless....

.... our religious life program has to be about social justice as well and outreach... Caritas has brought on board a more educational programs. So I do know in my own school we do assemblies and pick different stories so we try and immerse it a bit more....

It was interesting to hear these same two male primary school interviewees emphasise the recent shift towards meaningful giving, possibly suggesting a move from a charity to a justice perspective:

I've noticed in the last five years that there's a real attempt to give a bit more meaning to those experiences... moving beyond bringing a gold coin for Caritas, to let's have a cup of rice to experience what people would eat for one day....

There has been a change in the last few years where we are trying to educate them more about *why* we are doing this social justice.

General reactions

The general understanding that emerged from the interviews was that the integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum was not a main priority in schools. For example, a male teacher working in middle management at secondary level suggested that 'the threading of that [Christian] philosophy and understanding through the broader curriculum is, to be honest, a bit hit and miss. I think we could do a lot better there... We try to plan it in some way into our units'.

On the other hand an experienced female secondary teacher recognised that 'there's opportunities in Catholic schools to develop a side of you which isn't strictly [on the] curriculum [whereas] in the state schools the professional development is all about what you're teaching in the classroom' while a male secondary teacher in middle management acknowledged that 'we do hear and we ask questions like if we're not teaching mathematics from a faith-based context, how are we different from a state school?'

When asked directly about their own curriculum planning and implementation practices, interviewees expressed a wide range of views regarding the integration of a Catholic perspective across the school curriculum outside of RE. These responses ranged from a small number of quite positive responses to those who felt that the planned integration of Catholic identity across the formal curriculum was either not desirable or not feasible. Interviewees' positions on this emerging continuum can be categorised under five headings:

- Positive reactions
- Limited integration in the case of some individual subjects
- Spontaneous use of teachable moments when they arise
- Emphasis on teacher-student relationships as reflected in the popular axiom, 'I teach who I am'
- Strong reservations regarding the feasibility or desirability of integration.

Each of these categories is now considered in turn.

Positive reactions

Two female secondary teachers gave particularly positive responses which do, however, need to be read in the light of the limited understandings of curriculum integration mentioned above:

It really happens across all of our formal curriculum and also within our extra-curricular activities

Teaching Catholic characteristics is not just limited to the RE curriculum but is throughout all school curriculum documents, in English and Maths and History and others, trying to give the perspective of the Catholic teachings [but] it's more difficult to teach in some subjects

An experienced male primary teacher who saw integration as being grounded in RE suggested that

the majority of teachers when they plan and work out their year overview do try to integrate.... in my school situation religion isn't a standalone anymore, it has to be part of the full curriculum.... there's been a change of psyche over the years [so that] when teachers plan they don't just plan for [Maths and English], they plan for an integrated holistic unit.... you really have to try and cover everything.... in any planning situation I ensure that religion will be integrated throughout. It may not be the main focus, but when we do a unit of work we try and see where can we fit in... when we're doing narratives or storytelling we'd always try and look at some scripture stories as an example of a certain kind of genre.... we talk about modelled in the text and then modelled outside of it... it can be used in any other style of literature.

Limited integration/fusion

Those teachers who offered examples of curriculum integration generally referred to their own individual subjects rather than cross-curricular approaches or initiatives. Even the coordinator of the social justice programme in the most active school included in this phase of the research acknowledged that their activity is 'restricted to one subject area at any one time, there's not a lot of overlap at all between subjects' adding that this 'would only happen with the right teacher knowing the right things about the content'.

Of the subjects identified as exemplars of integration by the current interviewees, English was by far the most popular, as reflected in comments such as:

All Year 8 English teachers have been teaching a unit on recycling and doing a feature article. That's a whole term about recycling and sustainability in and around this school (SF).

... if we're looking at a certain text in English, it's easy to present a Catholic viewpoint on an issue, for example, in a novel. You could discuss the church's stance on a certain issue or something like that... [but] you can't really talk about the Catholic perspective in lessons on grammar and spelling, it's a lot easier to do through literature (SF)

We might read English texts where religion is important in terms of our characters and I guess it allows us to relate with or dislike the characters (SF)

We are selecting texts knowing that we talk about them from a Christian perspective especially. And then, depending on the nature of the text, talking about it from a Catholic perspective, and keeping those sensitivities in mind. ... This approach is promoted by the assistant principal for mission or religion. We are allowing social justice perspectives to come through as well.... we have a common theme, so for example in this one I've been looking at Nineteen Eighty-Four (SF).

The latter felt that 'it wouldn't be as planned in other subjects' as it is in humanities, SOR or RE, adding that, 'apart from our mission statement and the crucifix we have in the class rooms, planning them into those other units can be difficult'.

A school principal gave the example of a commonly taught Grade 12 English unit looking at the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights where students are invited to pick a topic. She has been 'astounded [by] how many kids have chosen an anti-abortion stance [in a context where] we might touch on that around Grade 9/10, we don't shove it down anyone's throat, but the kids have a strong sense of the sanctity of life'. Her position was that 'if a kid comes up with a pro-abortion position you need to think about this because within a secular subject area that can be a B or an A'.

This principal elaborated on the opportunities provided by English where you can have 'so much rich discussion about what makes a good person with kids who aren't necessarily from the Catholic tradition from looking at literature such as Shakespeare, in Hamlet and Romeo and Juliet.... This is how you can explore relationships between teenagers. You've got two kids wanting to have sex, that's normal behaviour, but there's a commitment'.

On the other hand, a female secondary teacher of English asserted that she 'doesn't agree with looking for the Catholic slant in The Crucible or Jane Austen or whatever I'm teaching'. In her view planning should be informed by subject knowledge because 'you lose your academic rigour if you start to superimpose a layer of values'.

A male primary teacher also spoke about the possibilities offered by English.

[You can do it] in English literacy groups where you might be doing recounts or narratives, you could use the text of Bible stories to deconstruct or for spelling.

Differing views were expressed regarding the potential of Science for the integration of a Catholic perspective. A female school principal saw good opportunities there, noting that 'my science staff are very aware of this' and raising again its capacity to imbue awe and wonder:

My science head of department was talking the other day about how they've been talking about the human body as a beautiful amazing thing that God created and the more one learns about it the more it makes one realise the love of God.

Three primary teachers and a secondary teacher indicated that they found Science to be a good vehicle for integrating a Catholic perspective. One female primary teacher remarked that the 'Life and Living' grade two programme deals with 'the life cycles of animals and is connected to Easter and the Resurrection'. Another female primary teacher, one with a strong faith commitment, felt that 'the science debate would be interesting [especially] with the Pope making his "Big Bang" proclamation'. She went on to give the example of sustainability:

Sustainability is a big part of the year for science curriculum. We've been teaching them about how to read maps and we're looking at the topography, starting to get into that global warming thing because it's stuff the kids are hearing about on the news. Then you say, so instead of the scientific perspective, let's look at our religious perspective. If we are being called to be creators of a sustainable Earth, then how do we go about doing that? I like to get into the theological questions with them, so is it our duty as people of the world to look after our Earth so that our children have somewhere to live, or is it our duty as Catholics, or good Christians to take care of the Earth that God has given us? Then throwing it back to the kids and letting them debate it and discuss it. You can pull bits out of the Bible, so that they're getting access to that.

A male primary teacher mentioned opportunities when

we do space and science for Year 3s... while there's very practical things to learn about our solar system, it does allow that awe and wonder to be raised as well... we're learning these wonderful facts about our universe, that amazing thing that a creator that did this knows us intimately

A secondary APRE pointed out that:

I teach physics and often talk about the Big Bang theory and what actually happened prior to the Big Bang theory ... initially it was a conflict between religion and physics, but eventually they realised that there was the beginning of something, a more supernatural being.

A female secondary school respondent suggested that Economics had possibilities: 'there's definitely opportunities for social teaching and the Catholic perspective [in Economics], it depends on the things we look at'. She offered the example of 'business concentration', using the cases of different coffee companies, one with a really strong Mormon background that donates significant amounts of money to different religious institutions.

A male primary teacher gave an example from history:

I was able to use it during the history... when we talked about the effects of colonisation we were able to link in religion and challenge it... we've been looking at explorers and the Columbian Exchange, with the bringing of Christianity and asking was that a right or wrong

thing to do as well. Depending on your year level you could bring up and discuss and give the church's perspective and teaching on social justice to whole world problems.

The female secondary social justice (as against Catholic Social Teaching) coordinator has worked on a subject by subject basis with teachers of Art, English, Geography, HPE and Science at different year levels on various related issues. She remarked that few, 'if any', of the those who taught a unit on sustainability to Year 8 'make an explicit link back to Catholic social teaching, gospel values, back to what they would have done in RE' due to their lack of awareness of the content of the RE programme. This same interviewee identified an interesting link between her own subject (HPE) and RE, social justice and outreach – 'our Year 9s were doing homelessness in RE and nutrition in PE... they had to go to the homeless barbecue on either a Tuesday or a Thursday and cook a nutritious breakfast, which was their assessment for PE'.

Two secondary teachers who had not previously considered the issue of integration a Catholic perspective across the formal curriculum began to identify examples of possible activities during the interview:

The Catholic social teachings in geography and the option for the poor and the vulnerable, if you look at demographics and then poverty... Using English novels you find injustices... for example there's a lot of Christian message behind the C S Lewis characters and the morals of the stories... *Twelve Angry Men* brings in Christian morality... SF)

There are possibilities in the history curriculum (SM)

Some respondents were at pains to emphasise the importance of an organic rather than a planned approach e.g. 'we try not to force it too much... there are those opportunities without making it artificially forced' (PM); 'there are opportunities without making it artificially forced' (MP); 'if you try to force issues sometimes, it's too false' (MP). An experienced and committed male primary teacher, who regards teachable moments as 'precious', felt that an organic approach was the correct one. Such moments are in his view 'hard to plan for' and need to be 'sincere' which is when you 'get the most benefit from it... if you try to force issues sometimes, it's too false'. This leads nicely on to the category of 'teachable moments'.

Teachable moments

Teachable moments, which were frequently referred to as 'incidental' opportunities, were a popular option when interviewees were asked about the integration of a Catholic perspective in a planned way. For example, a school principal felt that 'teachable moments are a great gift. It's almost like the Holy Spirit suddenly appeared in your room'. One female secondary teacher spoke about 'availing of the opportunity when it arises naturally [where] a Catholic perspective is there accidentally or coincidentally'. A male secondary teacher put it like this: 'we don't care if you're a maths teacher or a PE teacher, you'll say prayer at the beginning of class and if things

come up regarding something that might be theological – for example HPE and sex education – you run with that’. A female secondary teacher of English, who is well disposed towards a planned approach to integration, pointed out that ‘while we try to plan, I have to honestly say that I don’t see much of it actually planned... but I do see a lot of teachable moments.... it’s an incidental’.

There was a definite sense that the use of teachable moments depends on the teacher. A female secondary teacher with a background in theology remarked that ‘it’s not something that’s pre-planned but the knowledge that I have from the study I’ve done has allowed me to encourage those discussions... having that understanding makes it a lot easier to include it in cross-curricular subjects’. Along similar lines, a female teacher of HPE felt that ‘there are little incidental elements in HPE ... it depends on the teacher and on the teacher’s familiarity with the RE curriculum’. A male secondary teacher suggested that, with the exception of Humanities, ‘it happens incidentally in other subjects and some of it comes back to the teacher. When I would teach manual arts, I talk about the need to be mindful of the use of our resources and to show stewardship for what we’ve been given and those sorts of things. I’d make those connections to the RE curriculum when I was teaching in practical subjects’.

When talking about Indigenous issues a male primary teacher suggested that teachers need encouragement to go down the road of integration. Explained how ‘it just happened to come up’, he added that ‘knowing that now, for next year, I would plan to make sure it was included... we need a bit of a push’. Similar sentiments were expressed by a male secondary teacher in middle management: ‘it’s something that we could make a lot more of and do a lot better. There are elements there and it’s incidental... once you explore social teaching you can then see well how it can be incorporated into the curriculum... you can sometimes find a bit of a push against it because it’s seen as something else we’re adding, sometimes it’s there, you’ve just got to highlight it or make that link’.

A male secondary teacher also highlighted the opportunity afforded by student questioning

If I’m starting a topic, then, obviously, I can prepare for that, I can plan for that.... Quite often you will have a student that’ll say to you what about this? So it’s a bit of both... (SM)

A male primary teacher also highlighted the value of student questions:

... the most valuable time to teach Catholic spirituality is when children have questions [leading to] discussions about God stuff.... these kids are just itching to ask such questions especially when they’re taught doctrinal stuff.... but no one really discusses it with them.... because they don’t talk religion at home....they don’t discuss. There’s no round the table discussion at tea time.

The interview with this teacher took place in November and he gave the example of Halloween as a way into ‘the whole issue of heaven and hell and purgatory’. Again he spoke about how

discussion about conscience leads into a discussion of sin and gave the doctrinal example of the Trinity – ‘they have questions about that and that’s a really good time to discuss stuff.... Things just pop up’.

Another experienced secondary female teacher gave a number of examples of relevant, unplanned, ‘teachable moments’:

I can find lots of opportunities... The other day with grade 10s we were talking about their SET Plans. So, what are you going to do when you leave school? What is the value in hard work? What do we value? Where is your moral compass? Is it just looking at work for work's sake? What does Jesus tell us about? What does St. Augustine say about that? These kids know a great deal but they're not quite as sophisticated as you think.

Just the other day I'm doing a unit on investing your money, starting off with the basic things, stock exchange, whatever. This generated into a discussion on the good and bad of gambling. So I said, well what does Jesus talk to us about gambling? What do you think he would say? Let's jump on Google and find out what Jesus says about gambling and trading off those sorts of things instead of giving to your family and the selfishness of that.

The other day we were supposed to talk about some mathematical stuff. Anyway, there had been some Facebook stuff happening and I just felt the kids were a bit antsy. I go, alright, what's going on here guys? we got around to discussing what about that person who filmed that and put it on YouTube? Why didn't they put their camera down and go and help? What does Jesus say? Where's the good Samaritan story in all this? But I don't specifically plan to bring those things in. But they just happen. I don't specifically write in my plan for the day...

This latter teacher explained how her use of teachable moments was so well accepted due to the flexibility afforded her based on the values of her school:

I love the freedom that I can do that. If the principal or the head of maths walked in and saw me working with these kids trying to sort out this thing, they would be so happy for me to do that. They wouldn't be on my back because we weren't talking about simultaneous equations

A female secondary teacher of English gave examples such as ‘using a text that discusses orphanages in Australia’ that was resulting in ‘discussion around the royal commission going on at the moment, what’s happening in the media right now, from a shared perspective with that Catholic perspective in mind’.

I teach who I am

A female primary teacher with a strong faith perspective represents a good example of this particular approach:

The religious aspect of curriculum is always in my mind because I'm a religious person... religion lessons are still required to teach specific things [but] a lot of that underlying part of our faith should come into everything we do... Catholic identity for me is in the whole curriculum because it's who I am. That just comes naturally to me. When you're teaching history and teaching about the treatment of the Indigenous people or you're teaching them about geography and caring for the world, for me that just comes naturally. That again is who I am.

Two main sub-themes emerged under the recurring theme of 'I teach who I am' – relationships and role modelling. Those who emphasised relationships referred to gospel values, behaviour management and pastoral care aspects of curriculum:

... the whole spirituality of Christianity, Catholicism, can't just be restricted to that half hour each day... by necessity it has to be throughout the whole day... religion is not just one little compartment, it's the way we relate to kids and the way we deal with problems and the way we confirm or affirm what they're doing, I think they're all opportunities to bring forth the gospel message basically (experienced MP)

It would come out through your relationship with the students within the subject class, for example through behaviour management... I'm never going to judge you, it's just I'm just to manage your behaviour and then the kids really respect that because they realise [that] if you take the time to go and speak to them afterwards about why that had to happen and really explain to them what's going on and that you really respect them as a person, I think that really helps the Catholic perspective come through (SM).

Our maths classroom should be different to the maths classroom at the state school... staff see it mostly in terms of the non-curriculum aspects, the religious life bit, the pastoral care, the way that teachers work with kids and that sort of stuff. Teaching Mathematics is more about relationships in the classroom.

Just as when asked about the characteristics of Catholic schools, a number of interviewees also made reference to the teacher as role model when asked about curriculum integration:

For some of the younger ones it's more explicit teaching of what the Catholic Church believes... But as they become more comfortable within the Catholic system and have that confidence, when they see you they know you are a Catholic and you have those standards and it emanates from you and the students understand that (PM, APRE)

Teaching in a Catholic school isn't a job ... it's actually an invitation to these kids to be part of something bigger than just learning about science or PE, to be a better person in some way and they will best model that from the behaviour of the teacher (SF, principal).

Teachers in a Catholic school [are] the lay teachers of Catholicism to the wider public and Catholic schools... out there are modelling to our kids and modelling to the parents what it is to be a Catholic and what it is to live the life in a Catholic school in general in society... without Catholic schools and Catholic teachers living the Catholic way of life, Catholicism would shrink even more (MS Science teacher).

You can't just restrict it to your 30 minutes of RE and it's becoming harder and harder to do that because of our clientele.... Because you teach what you are by default, unless you're a very, very good actor (experienced PM).

I teach who I am.... children will know if you're sincere in something. So I'm ever mindful that, whether I agree with a particular teaching or not, I can't bring that into the classroom. However, when you talk about what your faith means or what you get out of it, you have to be very sincere (PM)

Strong reservations

One respondent felt that the identity of a Catholic school was not a curriculum issue but rather 'more about the spirit of the school where you actually have a history and a foundation that's wrapped up in a faith.... [where] people are realising they're part of something bigger than an educational institution'. Those with reservations about the integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum focused on a perceived deficit of relevant knowledge on the part of teachers and on organisational and structural issues.

From the perspective of teachers' knowledge, a male science teacher (secondary) felt strongly that faith-based identity was

... definitely a matter for religious studies, backed up with outreach... integration is not always possible. Say I'm teaching reproduction in senior biology to my students, or, even a better example, evolution, I'll only ever take the view of biological theories. I won't actually include religious views in terms of say evolution versus creation... that should be left with people who have got much more formal training than myself to talk about evolution versus creation

A male primary teacher suggested that 'the church's social justice teaching is probably one area that our school staff is not aware of'. Similar concerns regarding the limitations of teachers' knowledge were expressed by others:

One of the biggest challenges that we have in Catholic schools at the moment is because so many of the teachers who are teaching in there are not practising Catholics themselves... That's the challenge that's facing us. As a Catholic institution I think there's a lot of people whose knowledge of the Catholic faith has stopped in Grade 7 are now teaching kids

unfortunately... You have to have that knowledge base. Because if you don't, you can easily lead these kids astray... (PM)

... as someone who's studied theology and been really present in the Catholic school I think I have a more in-depth understanding than other teachers who haven't studied it at all. The school might hire a teacher that's a science and maths person but has never taught at a Catholic school or even been to church or understands the key Catholic teaching. So it can be really difficult for those teachers to present them in their subjects if they've never learnt about them or studied them before (SF)

Sometimes I feel that because I work in a shared teaching partnership and my co-teacher is not a practicing Catholic. I think sometimes if it was just my own class and I had that autonomy, I would be able to put in more decisions about how I teach things (FP).

Some respondents identified lack of familiarity with the RE programme as a stumbling block:

[teachers of other subjects] wouldn't actually know what's taught in RE, so they wouldn't know if it aligned with a current unit, unless they were teaching it themselves which very few of them would be... it would be more up to the kids to come up with that connection themselves (SF)

If you've got a HPE teacher who's never taught RE, hasn't engaged with the RE curriculum and doesn't have any RE qualifications, then they're going back to when they were in Grade 12 to try and dredge up some knowledge of RE and what it's about (SF, Principal)

A female secondary principal with similar concerns suggested that younger teachers might be more familiar with the school's founding charism than with the Christ of the gospels:

You've got to be a little bit careful... my staff are very green young people who might be a little bit unsure about Catholic teaching. They also would question some of the morality that Rome would teach... their lack of theological knowledge is an issue, I think some of the kids in Grade 8 know more about Marcellin Champagnat than Jesus Christ.

An experienced primary APRE made a similar observation

I'm from the Anglican faith - having not gone to school in a Catholic school myself as a child, I was always learning something new. I think, generally, the staff have probably a better understanding about Edmund Rice and the teachings of Edmund Rice than they do of Catholicism as espoused by the church (SM)

A number of more experienced teachers felt that there was an age factor at play when it comes to teachers' knowledge:

I don't think there's as much spirituality coming through.... you can teach teachers how to teach maths, how to teach religion, but not to be religious... I think the younger generation don't have that same background as I have (PM).

... the new generation of teachers coming through don't have their own faith themselves... they do get accreditation to teach religion but I just wonder how many of them actually are religious themselves.... you can't force religion on anyone but I think that's why we have accreditation (PM)

It depends on the age of the staff.... younger people at this campus are not as familiar with the traditions or the teachings.... it's probably one area that just needs to be monitored, allowing teachers to develop that knowledge and making sure they've got that knowledge... it becomes an issue for professional development courses... Brisbane Catholic education is very good, particularly in that spirituality part where they run a Catching Fire program....if the younger teachers coming through haven't had that church experience it makes it difficult I think to pass on that experience or what it's all about (PM)

It's more of an issue with younger teachers because teachers of my ilk, we were traditional Catholics. So even if you didn't feel it as personally as you might, at least the traditions, the rituals, all the trappings of Catholicism were still ingrained into their life. They still knew what holy water was. They still knew what the host was. You know what I mean? Yeah, the traditional type of stuff is very hard for a lot of people to... But you have to operate from a knowledge base there. You have to be that type of person (PM)

At my last school they weren't really practicing Catholics. The demographic of teachers there were a lot of younger teachers at my last school, whereas here I noticed it was an older age bracket, so whether that's just coincidental, but I think that does also match up with the people who are going to church these days.... I wondered if it was a generational thing as well (SF)

... teachers don't have the capacity... they certainly don't understand doctrinal positions in the old classic sense (SF).

While accepting that knowledge is a big issue, one female primary teacher felt this issue was not an unsurmountable:

Not all have the knowledge I have..... If the individual is of the disposition, they have access to someone who has. We all get planning time with our APRE... their job is to help us put religion into our curriculum. If it doesn't come naturally to them, like it does for me, then there is the opportunity for them to have access to someone who hopefully can help them with that.

Another female secondary teacher saw 'better training of our Catholic teachers' as the key on the grounds that we need to have 'well trained people and not back away from scripture teaching'.

Other interviewees identified organisational and structural issues as problematic. For example, a teacher in a middle management position suggested that 'people are probably just too busy to look at a whole interconnected RE curriculum and put it through the other subjects'. This teacher went on to highlight the significance of organisational factors such as the timetabling of just one teacher with the Years 7 and 8 Humanities core where that person 'teaches RE, English and SOSE so that it's much easier for them to make connections.... Similarly in Year 9 where we have one teacher teaching English, SOSE and RE as three different subjects'.

A female secondary teacher who emphasised the importance of academic rigour felt that 'we never have enough hours for the three Rs' adding that 'many people in Catholic schools feel disadvantaged when they have to study religion to Year 12.... So in Years 11 and 12 there's great pressure because the hours in the day are limited'.

Another interviewee was concerned about the issue of consistency with Church teaching in the case of 'subjects like science when you're trying to teach concepts like evolution that contradict some of the teachings of the church'.

A female teacher of English expressed strong reservations about the whole idea of integrating a Catholic perspective across the curriculum in a planned way:

It worries me... If you look at the Christian evangelical stuff in America, it's horrific; so whenever you see a moral position based on who's going to decide what that stuff is. So you get these crazy extremists who are indoctrinating kids in the wrong sense, and they're embedding it so that science is a minefield for it... I keep a lot of those controversial elements out of my English choices for that reason, because I don't like to expose them to things that are too problematic or beyond their understanding... Bit I would hate to have some thought police, 1984 style, making everything have a religious slant or a Catholic slant or something, because that is equally ridiculous.

Future directions

Two interviewees from different schools identified the need for a curriculum framework that would support the integration of a Catholic perspective. A male secondary in a middle management position remarked that 'integration is on the agenda now with the new RE curriculum in middle school in particular, to say we need to find ways of making sure that our whole curriculum is faith based'. He went on to explain that:

We're looking at the whole way we do curriculum in Years 7 to 9 and the way we do assessment and the pedagogical approach we use, everything is up for grabs basically in middle school. I think it's an opportune time for us to look at the integration of the faith-

based aspects, as broadly as possible, through the curriculum. I don't think you force it. I don't think you push it for the sake of pushing it but where there are logical and clear connections, purposeful connections, then yeah, of course it's just common sense, with RE playing a central role... they're the ones with the knowledge of the curriculum.

The social justice coordinator at a secondary RI school wants to develop a curriculum framework in concert with recent ACARA policies that moves towards 'a really rigorous well thought out framework which would mean that we can actually approach teachers and say well actually, this is what it says you need to do, why didn't you'. She is focusing on cross-curricular themes and key capabilities such as 'embedding Australia's engagement with Asia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander's histories and cultures, sustainability and then intercultural understanding and ethical understanding (SF). She recognised however that this different approach would be problematic:

Although all teachers know that [cross-curricular themes and key capabilities] are part of their responsibility as teachers and heads of curriculum, they prioritise the [subject] content because that's their prime job and that's at the end of the day what students get grades from, what they get OPs for... it's about creating whole units around a stimulus that has an intercultural or values type focus.

An experienced male primary teacher identified the need for backup guidelines for teachers along the lines of the approach taken by Ontario Catholic Education:

I think it would be very worthwhile to have a document where every KLA that's introduced into a Catholic school would have a Catholic perspective with background information for teachers on just about all the lessons that we have which most people would read. So it would be interesting to actually include as part of that, a Catholic perspective on some of the things that are actually taught. It's just background reading and then that becomes part of the knowledge base that a teacher operates from.... Then it's up to the teacher when the opportunity presents itself to use that

One of the developmental spin offs from the interviews was that some teachers who had not previously thought about the integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum began to identify possible options for the future. For example a female primary teacher said that she

can see there are a lot of possibilities.... in upper primary if we're doing a novel study, we could do something like *The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe* which has some beautiful Christian things that you can draw out and develop. In grade five science we're about to go onto a unit looking at the solar system. Even just giving students a touch, a taste of the idea that in cosmological studies there's a lot of evidence for the existence of at least a prime-mover or a God or something... that faith isn't just your feelings and your emotions, it needs to have reason behind it. So I think there's ways you can do it there.

Summary

There was a general sense that the integration of a Catholic perspective across the curriculum was not a main priority in schools and interviewees had a variety of understandings of what this might look like. These understandings come under five main headings: positive reactions, strong reservations, integration in the case of some individual subjects, spontaneous use teachable moments when they arise and teacher-student relationships – ‘I teach who I am’. English was the school subject seen to provide the best opportunities for integration while other subjects mentioned include Science, History and Economics. One interviewee had worked with teachers of Art, Geography, History, English and Science at different times in relation to the treatment of social justice within these subjects. Interviewees were particularly positive about the effectiveness of teachable moments due mainly to their unforced, organic nature. Some teachers stressed the particular value of student questions as springboards for teachable moments. Respondents who believed in the personal witness approach (I teach who I am) emphasised the importance of student-teacher relationships and role modelling. Interviewees’ reservations were based primarily on concerns regarding lacunae in teachers’ knowledge as well as school organisational and structural issues including timetabling. Two interviewees identified the need to develop a curriculum framework that would facilitate integration while reflecting recent ACARA developments such as cross-curricular themes and general capabilities.

Concluding comment

The primary intention in this current report was to present a coherent analysis of some twelve hours of interview data. Appropriate literature and commentary will be included in the final report.

It should be noted that the qualitative data presented above is reflective of the more statistically significant findings emerging from the teacher survey data and these relationships will be explicated when the survey data has been analysed more fully.

The next phase of teacher interviews will pursue common issues emerging from the interview and survey data in a more focused way e.g.

- Almost 60% of teacher respondents to our survey said that they already integrate a Catholic perspective in a **planned** way. From your experience is this the case? Why?
- The integration of a Catholic perspective in a planned way had a relatively low priority when survey respondents were asked about the characteristics of Catholic schools ... how can this be explained?
- 75% of teachers said their knowledge of CST was good/very good. From your experience is this the case? e.g. how many of the principles of CST would they be able to name?
- Religiosity and age emerged as very significant variables from the survey data.... So while the Catholic school sector is getting stronger in terms of numbers and applications, to what extent will they be identifiably different in say ten/twenty years?

- Why are primary schools somewhat more open to the integration of a Catholic perspective?

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DRAFT

Appendix 1: Teacher interviews (June 2014)

<p>1. Size of school; your profile (length of time teaching, schools, subjects, responsibilities, time spent in Catholic schools, etc.?)</p> <p>2. Why did you choose teaching? How do you feel about your decision now?</p> <p>3. What sectors have you worked in? Why did you choose to work in Catholic education? What differences if any do you see between Catholic schools and other schools?</p>	Profile
<p>4. What do you see as the main purposes of Catholic schools? (How well are they being achieved?) Same as other schools or different?</p> <p>5. What are the most important characteristics of Catholic schools? Why?</p> <p>6. Is the identity of the Catholic school a matter for RE and Outreach programmes only, or is it relevant to the rest of the formal curriculum?</p>	Identity and characteristics
<p>7. If relevant to the formal curriculum, how would you see a Catholic perspective being integrated across the curriculum?</p> <p>8. In what ways if any do your own teaching subjects enable the <i>planned</i> integration of Catholic identity? (secondary teachers)</p>	Curriculum
<p>9. How do you see the relationship between school charism and Catholic identity?</p> <p>10. How would you rate your own and your colleagues' knowledge of Catholic teaching?</p>	Charism Knowledge
<p>11. Did your initial teacher education programme deal with faith-based identity?</p> <p>12. What continuing professional development have you experienced in relation to faith-based identity?</p>	Professional Development
<p>13. How do you/your colleagues see the future of Catholic education? What are the main issues?</p> <p>14. Any other comments please?</p>	